This is to certify that the
dissertation entitled

TEACHING STUDENT LEADERSHIP AS A PRACTICUM OPTION IN A STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATION MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

presented by

PAUL JOHN KURF

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Ph.D. degree in Educational Administration

Kirsten A. Kerr
Major Professor's Signature

5/9/08
Date

Doctoral Dissertation

TEACHING STUDENT LEADERSHIP AS A PRACTICUM OPTION IN A STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATION MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

by

Paul John Kurf

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Educational Administration

2008

ABSTRACT

TEACHING STUDENT LEADERSHIP AS A PRACTICUM OPTION IN A STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATION MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

By

Paul John Kurf

Teaching as part of student affairs administration masters degree programs, while not always a program requirement, is a popular option for many students aspiring to work or advance in the field. This is a study of one group of students who shared the experience teaching an undergraduate student leadership training class while pursuing their graduate degree.

Through interviews with ten student affairs administration master's degree graduates now working in various positions and/or in the beginning stages of doctoral programs, I looked at the impact such a teaching experience had on their professional lives shortly after receiving their degrees. Taking a phenomenological approach, this qualitative study focused on individual personal experience and the learning that occurred during (and as result of) that experience as gleaned through personal reflection and during the course of reflective practice in the field.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated

in loving memory

to my parents

Heino Armas "Hap" Puotinen and Lillian Sylvia (Macki) Puotinen,

my godparents

Ray T. and Elma Marie (Macki) Kangas,

and my maternal grandmother

Maria Elizabeth (Lahdesmäki) Macki.

Kiitoksia kaikkesta. Minä rakastan teitä.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many individuals to whom I am sincerely indebted for the support, professional guidance, advice and friendship which inspired, sustained and nourished me while in pursuit of the Ph.D. Without the collective contribution of these colleagues, mentors and cherished friends, the road to the doctorate would've been a much more difficult and frustrating, if not impossible, path to navigate.

I wish to thank my doctoral dissertation director and advisor, Dr. Kristen Renn, for her thoughtful optimism, keen professional insights, and relentless positive spirit throughout this project. As researcher-scholar, I am most indebted to Dr. Renn as one of the best examples of excellence and professionalism I can name.

To my remaining dissertation committee members, Dr. Roger Baldwin, Dr. Matthew Wawrzynski, and Dr. Lynn Fendler, I am most grateful for their support, sharp insights and willingness to lend the most appropriate suggestions and words of advice at the most opportune times.

To my initial guidance committee members, Dr. Marilyn Amey (Chair), Dr. Marylee Davis, Dr. Ann Austin, and Dr. W. Patrick Dickson, I offer my thanks for their early support in my program and their willingness to lend an ear throughout.

To my study particpants, I owe my abiding respect, admiration, and gratitude. To have had the opportunity to study a group of young professionals of their caliber continues to be a treat I will continue to savor throughout my own career. Hearing their stories of teaching EAD 315 was an inspiring process and a genuine education for me–an education that continues to fuel my interest in professional preparation. How richly our

diverse professional field will continue to grow through their contributions!

I give many thanks to Dr. Patricia Enos, for her inspiring leadership as an instructional mentor. Among faculty, there are few among her esteemed ranks.

While on the subject of professional models, I am continually inspired by the following colleagues with whom I am privileged to work at Michigan State University: Dr.Gail Richmond, Trudy Sykes, Kelly Hodges, Dr. Andy Anderson, Dr. David Fortus, Dr. James Gallagher, Dr. Janet Alleman and Dr. Mark Conley. Each of them provide me with ongoing examples of professionalism and collegiality. Others who are either staff, students, and/or fellow doctoral pilgrims, always provided uplifting, unconditional support include: Tena French, Rosario Garcia, Kristin Gunckel, Amanda Gray Idema, Lisa Jilk, Scherrie Kilgore, Kathy Lessard, Rui Niu, Amy Peebles, Judy Redding, Sandra Schmidt, Marian Stoll and Marcy Wood.

To the following friends and mentors, I owe a special thank-you: Dr. Paulette Kilmer, David Scherburn, Dr. Carla Monestere, Elizabeth Glew, Dr. Carolyn (Lee) Kyyhkynen, Deb Lavoy, and Dr. Patti Hogan. A special "shout-out" goes to Nikki Taylor, Jeff Hall, Peter Berg.

Kristine Baclawski, my dear friend and "adopted sister" is one of the unexpected and joyful surprises in my life. Her love and friendship have been both a net to fall into as well as the fuel under many creative fires. It is Kris who has been my most vocal cheerleader, not only in this endeavor, but through many life challenges. There are not enough words to convey my gratitude.

To Dr. Joseph Baclawski, Dr. Marjorie Baclawski, Diane Baclawski and "The

Welsh B-Zs" Karen Baclawski, Bill Zajac, Alexander Zajac and Joanna Zajac, I thank you for your interest in this work and for the generous inclusion within your family circle, both here and in the U.K.

A special "thank-you" goes to fellow members of the vocal quartet, "The End Notes," Alison Billman, Dr. Dean Grosshandler, and Dr. Annie Moses for the great music and fun we've had singing and dining together for the past couple of years. Your friendship has been a multi-faceted gift I will treasure forever.

Thank you, Suzie, Punkin, Tassie, Annabelle, Caroline, Jonathan, Katydid, Sara, Lucy, Chiron and Clancey. To not acknowledge the therapeutic and loving influence of the "felinabim" and "caninabim" would be a travesty, indeed.

Finally and most importantly, my gratitude begins and ends with my Lord, Jesus Christ, who continues to bless and use this vessel in ways that never cease to surprise and humble me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One

Introduction To The Study

Graduates of Michigan State University's Master of Arts program in Student Affairs Administration (SAA) spend two or more years in preparation for entry-level or more advanced positions in a variety of college student affairs settings. One of two Master's programs in the Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education (HALE) program unit in the Department of Educational Administration, the 40 credit MA program combines course work with strong field-based opportunities to connect theory to practice in a variety of settings both on and off-campus. Founded in 1949, the Student Affairs Program at Michigan State is one of the oldest of its kind in the nation (MSU, 2005). Courses in major and supportive areas are often taken with doctoral candidates in a department that is known for its highly respected faculty and academic rigor. Students are required to participate in two distinct professional practica (internships) and must take four credits (one credit per semester) of a professional development seminar (MSU, 2005).

One option for fulfilling the practicum requirement is teaching EAD 315: Student Leadership Training. EAD 315 is a 3-credit, pass/fail course open to all undergraduates at Michigan State and combines readings and discussions about leadership theory along with a student leadership project in a community setting (Enos, 2001). Classroom activities include assessment of personal values, discussion and analysis of personal leadership styles, the development of a personal leadership plan, and reflective discussions on understanding and insight gleaned during the course (Enos, 2001). While the basic content of the course is approved and laid forth by the University Curriculum

Committee, additional materials, projects, and guest speakers can supplement and support course objectives but must be included in a syllabus that is reviewed and approved by supervising faculty (EAD 315 instructor group discussion, 2001).

EAD 315's teacher population comes from a variety of graduate programs at the university and is taught on a volunteer basis, without pay as in a regular university-funded graduate teaching assistantship. Sections of the course are typically team-taught by two candidates in the MA program in Student Affairs Administration or by teams and occasionally individuals in other graduate programs at MSU. Teaching EAD 315 provides its instructors an opportunity to obtain college-level teaching experience and to hone skills as student and professional leaders while at MSU and in preparation for future positions on campuses across the country and throughout the world (EAD 315 instructor group discussion, 2001).

Though these volunteer instructors are not regular departmental graduate teaching assistants, they receive EAD supervision, scrutiny, and evaluation. Over the past three decades, much of the research, data, and subsequent understanding of the course has focused on students taking the course and to some extent, the immediate experience of instructors engaged in the process of teaching (EAD 315 instructor group discussion, 2001) This information ranges from casual conversations between instructors and course administrators to more formal measures such as brief surveys, classroom visits, questionnaires and other aspects of reflective practice. While this *in situ* inquiry provides an ongoing understanding of the classroom experience of EAD 315 teaching staff, it does not appear that nearly as much is understood about how including this teaching

experience in professional preparation affects and influences graduates once they enter or advance within the field of student affairs. How, if at all, do graduates perceive the impact teaching EAD 315 has had on their post-MA professional lives? How does teaching EAD 315 impact individuals in student affairs professions often characterized by a lack of career mobility and professional insecurity? (Hirt & Creamer, 1998).

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this qualitative study is to answer the research question: How do graduates of Michigan State University's Student Affairs Administration Master's Degree Program perceive the impact teaching EAD 315 has had on their professional preparation? Using phenomenology, I explore the individual stories of 10 graduates of this program who opted to teach EAD 315 in fulfillment of one of the two required practica in the master's program.

There is a lack of explicit references in the literature citing how practicum students perceive their experience and *what* and *how* they actually learn during those experiences. I maintain, however, that there is a need to understand this relationship, made more important by two related observations: (a) among graduates of these programs, there is presumed a consistent and successful completion of the requirements for practica (as referenced in national standards and professional guidelines) and (b) there exists an historic and ongoing popularity of opting to teach EAD 315 in fulfillment of one of the two required practica. The continuing popularity of this teaching option coupled with consistent scheduling of EAD 315 sessions as undergraduate course options create a convenient opportunity to scrutinize these experiences, particularly as higher education

institutions are held increasingly more accountable for the content and efficacy of their graduate programs.

The Fluid Enigma That is Student Affairs Preparation

To better understand how teaching EAD 315 as a practicum fits into the overall professional preparation scheme of student affairs master's candidates it is first helpful to note that the student affairs field is a particularly diverse one. The varied and often unique ways in which student affairs professionals enter the field coupled with an understanding of how the field has changed and continues to change are factors that help hone a more thoughtful and sensitive focus.

The Scope of Current Student Affairs Professions.

The field of student affairs work springs from a rich variety of work on college and university campuses (ACPA, 2003). Student affairs units today include (but are not limited to) admissions, administration, financial aid, residence life, advising, multicultural and lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered student programs, and services ranging from recreation to counseling and academic advising (MSU, 2005). The two predominant professional student affairs associations are the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). While the two organizations are more alike than they are different, NASPA has been traditionally known for the proliferation of senior student affairs administrators and practitioners among its ranks, whereas ACPA has characteristically included significant numbers of faculty in its membership (Upcraft; 1998; *see also* ACPA, 2005; NASPA 2005).

In a time when the structure, purpose, and implementation of higher education programs of all kinds are noting widespread and sweeping transformation, student affairs professional preparation programs are facing the challenge of increasing accountability (Helm, 2004). While fiscal and external economic forces are making for rapidly changing colleges and universities (Rhoades & Slaughter, 2004; State Higher Education Officers Association, 2005), understanding what it means to be a student affairs professional may not be growing at a commensurate rate (Helm, 2004). The very question of whether or not student affairs is a bona-fide profession has been noted historically (Boland, 1992; Fenske, 1989) and reflected today in observations of the "plethora of associations," and their subsequently unclear value (Fischer, 1997). Furthermore, Steffes (2001) found as result of a study of the experiences of woman in leadership in the American College Personnel Association found ACPA has "served as a systemic, multi-dimensional professional and personal network" (p. 284) However, Steffes noted that ACPA is an organization not without a certain *dissonance* (p. 285) between its espoused and realized cultures.

Student affairs professionals occupy a wide variety of positions from academic support to residence life at virtually all types of higher education institutions. While there are numerous job titles and roles in student affairs, no singular job title nor individual role sufficiently captures what it means to be a student affairs professional. Some such as Fenske (1989) have claimed that the lack of a bona fide student affairs "identity" stems from the lack of a central functional focus in student affairs. Additionally, many in the field of student affairs have not been educated in student affairs nor trained by persons in

the profession (Cooper, Saunders, Winston, et al. 2002). Further muddying might indeed result from the difficulty in understanding how the field of student affairs may be changing without a clear, historic understanding of where it has been and how members perceive themselves as participants. For that matter, it may be difficult to describe just how and when individuals in the diverse student affairs field identify themselves as part of any given profession, a problem quite possibly perpetuated by institutions and practitioners of higher education (Forney, 1994). The routes via which individuals have traveled to attain student affairs professions are arguably as diverse as the profession itself. Entry-level positions in student affairs are not necessarily ones that require a graduate degree and positions are often filled with persons of quite varied backgrounds, types of training, and experience (Helm, 2004).

Professional standards, such as those developed and published by the American College Personnel Association's Professional Preparation Commission (ACPA, 2005b) and the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) (CAS, 2006) represent strong efforts to state guidelines and minimum standards for student affairs preparation programs. Nonetheless, there is not overwhelming evidence that all professional preparation programs comply with those guidelines and standards, though directors, administrators, faculty, and others at an increasing number of institutions report being aware of CAS standards and related resources (Arminio & Gochenauer, 2004).

Weidman, Twale, and Stein (2001) noted significant gaps between what might be considered student socialization in graduate programs versus the professional socialization and professional identity that actually exist in the field. Citing various

factors such as student diversity, the impact of distance education, and peer culture, the authors suggest that student socialization within graduate programs may be key influence upon student professional preparation, but one which is not readily understood. If this claim is true, then how reliable a measure is even consistent compliance with CAS and/or ACPA professional standards? That is, while graduation from the master's program carries the implicit assumption that these standards have been met, it would be difficult to draw further conclusions about the practicum. For example, how were these standards met in the case of each individual graduate of the program? What aspects about the program contribute to the meeting of these standards? Are there any aspects of the program that might impede students' meeting of standards? If so, are students able to recognize and/or overcome them? What might students bring into the program on admission that might contribute to their meeting standards as result of being in the program?

How can the impact of professional standards within graduate programs, such as those purveyed by CAS, be fully understood if it is not at always clear how specific components of the preparation program contribute to professional development? A sharper focus upon the fundamental components of student affairs graduate programs could be a foundation on which to begin building a more comprehensive understanding of overall student affairs professional preparation at the master's level. From this foundation, a more comprehensive understanding of such programs' professional preparation might be somewhat more attainable and prove a good resource in a time when virtually all college programs are facing one degree of fiscal challenge or another.

One such focal point is the relationship between teaching EAD 315 as a practicum option and its perceived role in the professional preparation of graduates of MSU's MA program in Student Affairs Administration. Being able to understand, describe, and critique this relationship is essential if substantial contributions are to be made to discussions about how this practicum option may contribute to graduates' professional development. Similarly, in order to be prepared for how the mélange of institutional, economic, and cultural changes may affect present and future graduates of graduate programs, it follows that a fuller, richer understanding of how programs work is part of a strong foundation enabling constructive and healthy response to those challenges. In order to more fully understand the relationship between teaching EAD 315 as a practicum option and the guidelines and standards for professional preparation, it is helpful to look at both the standards and guidelines in their historic context within the field as well as how Michigan State University's Student Affairs master's program meets these minimal guidelines in its options for fulfilling the practicum. In the following section I review the general requirements and the practicum options within the SAA master's degree program.

Options for the Practicum Requirement in MSU's SAA Master's Program

Michigan State University's Student Affairs Administration Master's Program (SAA) is one of two master's level degree programs within the HALE unit of the Educational Administration Department (EAD), the other being the Master's in Higher, Adult and Lifelong Education. As stated in the department's program statement, the SAA master's degree program:

> prepares individuals for a variety of student affairs positions across the spectrum of postsecondary institutions. Emphasizing the theoretical and historical foundations of the field, the SAA program also provides substantial opportunities for students to connect theory to practice through a four-semester Professional Development Seminar, two practicum placements, ongoing reflection, and the opportunity to be involved in professional development activities across the curriculum. (Educational Administration Department, MSU 2005)

Forty credits are required for the degree as follows: Departmental Core Courses (6 credits), Major Area Courses (19 credits, including 1 credit of Professional Development Seminar per semester, 4 total), Supportive Area Courses (6-9 credits) and Supplemental Courses (6-9 credits). Two practicum placements (not taken for credit) and a certifying comprehensive examination are required before completing the program.

During the first-year section of the ongoing Professional Development Seminar (EAD 893), students spend part of the course planning for a practicum as part of a faculty-facilitated transition to graduate study in student affairs. Throughout the first year of the Professional Development Seminar, students in the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 sessions were asked to reflect on what it means to "be (a) professional" (Renn, 2005, 2007). They also use activities to explore various options for professional practice in student affairs and to explore using graduate academic skills, critical reflection and self-analysis and job-searching as part of their further transition from graduate student to professional practitioner. As stated earlier, teaching EAD 315 is one option for fulfilling one of the two practicum requirements of the degree program.

Teaching EAD 315 As A Practicum: Instructor Training Sessions

Though EAD 315 instructors are not paid, they receive ongoing support from the department through an initial training session plus the ongoing support of EAD 315's

faculty and graduate course coordinators. Typically an all-day training session is offered for groups of instructors during the semester prior to teaching their sections. A brief history of EAD 315 along with icebreaker activities are followed by exploring the definition of leadership, a fundamental theme of a course entitled "Student Leadership Training." Sessions also include chapter mapping (for crafting learning goals from readings), components of the syllabus, course administration requirements, potential problem areas, and current university policies on grading, student records and the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Each training session offers an opportunity for instructor evaluation and feedback as well as additional materials as part of an *EAD 315 Training Manual.*

What ACPA and The CAS Standards State Regarding Student Affairs Practica

Michigan State University's SAA Master's Program certainly meets ACPA guidelines for "at least one student personnel practicum/field experience for students" (ACPA, 2005b), in that it requires two such practica as partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation. The more exacting CAS standards state, "A minimum of 300 hours of supervised practice, consisting of at least two distinct experiences, must be required" (CAS, 2006). The CAS standards also address the quality of and theory-to-practice aspects of practica:

> Students must gain exposure to both the breadth and depth of student affairs work. Students must gain experience in developmental work with individual students and groups of students in: program planning, implementation, or evaluation; staff training, advising, or supervision; and administration functions or processes. (Commission on Preparation Programs, CAS, 2006).

Additionally, CAS provides more descriptive information about the nature of and

administration of practica in master's level preparation programs, such as noted in the following excerpts from Part 5c of the *Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education Master's-Level Graduate Program for Student Affairs Professionals Standards and Guidelines* (Commission on Preparation Programs, CAS, 2003).

> Supervision must be provided on-site by competent professionals working in cooperation with qualified program faculty members. On-site supervisors must provide direct regular supervision and evaluation of students' experiences and comply with all ethical principles and standards of the American College Personnel Association, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, and other recognized professional associations.
>
> Site supervisors must be approved in advance by program faculty. Program faculty must offer clear expectations of learning goals and supervision practices to site supervisors.
>
> Because individual supervision of students in practica and internships is labor intensive for faculty with this instructional responsibility, supervision must be limited to a small group to enable close regular supervision. Students must be supervised closely by faculty individually, in groups, or both.
>
> Preparation of students for practica and internships is required. Practica and internship experiences must be reserved for students who have successfully completed a sequence of courses pertaining to basic foundational knowledge of professional practice. This must include basic knowledge and skills in interpersonal communication, consultation, and referral skills. Students must comply with all ethical principles and standards of appropriate professional associations.

CAS and ACPA write standards, but it is important to understand that these organizations do not enforce them (Renn, K.A., personal communication, November 7, 2005). As such, the degree to which specific degree programs meet or even exceed these standards is not clearly understood from a cursory look at the standards themselves.

Individual university adherence to these standards is also not always clear. For

example, while it may be relatively easy to determine whether or not students aspiring to practicum placement have "successfully completed a sequence of courses pertaining to basic foundational knowledge of professional practice," it may not be as easy to determine if these students will have "[complied] with all ethical principles and standards of appropriate professional associations." In demonstrating that a practicum student has "[gained] exposure to both the breadth and depth of student affairs work," it is a much more complex and difficult task to ascertain the degree to which he/she has done so, or to readily determine the quality of those broader, deeper involvements (Commission on Preparation Programs, CAS, 2003).

Aspects of master's level preparatory programs may have features that provide additional opportunities for student reflection on and processing of issues such as those described in the professional standards. For example, Michigan State University's Student Affairs Administration master's program requires a two-year sequence of Professional Development Seminars (MSU, 2005; Renn, 2005). The seminars provide an opportunity for ongoing student-faculty discussion of professional issues, but they do not, in themselves, provide any links between the standards and actual student experience, at least in the sense of consistently and explicitly linking experiences to professional standards.

From Theory To Practice: The Graduate Student-Professional Shift

While CAS standards and ACPA guidelines adherence are but two related factors, another contribution to the scheme of professional preparation is a shift of perspective from that of student affairs graduate student to student affairs professional. The nature of

professional socialization a master's candidate experiences within the university can be different from that of any of the professional arenas he or she may enter upon graduation (Helm, 2004; Knight & Trowler, 2000).

New professional venues to which graduates transition often add additional complications for which current graduate programs may provide neither extensive nor adequate preparation. Amey (1998) described the complex and challenging nature of diverse institutional cultures that new student affairs professionals face as they make the initial transition from "graduate student" to "professional." Amey (1998) advocated self-efficacy in becoming "a more effective organizational analyst" (p. 11) and understanding the unique politics and cultures of institutions that present new student affairs professionals with ideologies, philosophies, rules, and dynamics that may run counter to their own philosophical and ideological schema.

New professionals emerge from graduate student cultures that are fraught with a variety of tensions related to difference, including the unique experiences of women, Persons of Color, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered students (D'Augelli, 1994; Gilligan, 1977, 1993; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996).

New professionals encounter explicitly stated missions and goals of institutions along with building an awareness of what Kuh and Schuh (1991) described as the "living mission" (p. 12), or what an institution's students, staff and administrators believe the organization to be about. Such descriptive statements serve as additional scaffolding of organizational purpose and philosophy that further contribute to new professionals' understanding of the climate and character of their work venues. This awareness of

organizational culture is more a function of conscious processing than it is institutional administration in what Tierney (1991) noted is part of the socialization of the new professional.

Teachers of EAD 315 As A Practicum: Tapping A Resource for Further Understanding.

Understanding the relationship between teaching EAD 315 as a practicum and the program expectations for that practicum is a bit of a conundrum. In one sense, there is little to suggest that teaching EAD 315 does not meet the minimal ACPA guidelines and CAS standards for at least one of the distinct master's level professional practicum experiences. At the same time, doing so does little to explain the quality and depth of that experience, particularly as understood from graduate's experiences in the program. (While students meet regularly to process their experience, understanding how they process these experiences vis-à-vis the professional standards is not readily understood)

Similarly, it is difficult to understand through basic fulfillment of program requirements the depth and richness of that experience and what other benefits might be obtained from teaching EAD 315. For example, are there ways in which teaching EAD 315 enhances other aspects of the CAS standards? In what ways does teaching experience enhance, if at all, various other aspects of the academic program? Do lessons learned in course work take on new meaning as result of teaching experiences? Does teaching a university course enhance student understanding of organizational behavior and learning environments? In what ways does teaching EAD 315 lead to personal growth and discovery in a manner otherwise unexpected? Can negative experiences while teaching EAD 315 lead to increased personal growth and professional knowledge? Do EAD 315

instructors continue to learn from this experience in subsequent settings? These are but a few of the questions fulfillment of program requirements alone cannot answer. The answers may be more explicitly known and understood, however, through investigating and understanding the experiences of the student population that teaches this class.

Experiential Learning Theory As Key To Understanding

Moon (2004) reported that learning through experience can be examined by understanding the reflective process an individual goes through along provided we understand the boundaries and characteristics of what may constitute "experiential learning." In Chapter Two, I discuss experiential learning theory and its practical application and value in this study, but it is important to note that experiential learning theory is helpful in understanding the *theory to practice* transfer of learning (Moon) that may take place as result of teaching EAD 315 as a practicum.

Because CAS standards and ACPA guidelines for professional preparation describe the *practicum experience* as necessary to adequate professional preparation for the master's degree, a link logically needs to be drawn between the standards, as written, and the actual experience of students in the program. That is, if we argue, as I do, that there is value in understanding what actual learning has taken place during this experience. In other words, what can we learn about what the practicum experience actually means, professionally, to those individuals who have completed the degree program.

The Jagged Gap Between Theory And Practice: My Personal Ledge On That Edge

Much of my interest in this study is the result of personal experience planning and co-teaching a section of EAD 315 Fall Semester 2001 during my doctoral program. With

over 10 years experience in various support and research positions at three Michigan universities, I became keenly interested in the relationship between college preparation and professional practice. My own sense that there is a rather jagged gap between student affairs *theory* and student affairs *practice* comes largely through my preparation for teaching EAD 315, along with trying to develop a better understanding of the relationship between student affairs preparation standards and graduate student experience. Initially fascinated with the idea of learning more about leadership training pedagogy, the eight months I spent in discussion with my co-teacher in preparation for teaching EAD 315 resulted in many challenges and questions. I found myself questioning not only how to craft intelligent questions about student leadership, but thinking of ways to describe it and identify it, and how to encourage students to engage in critical thinking about student leadership in and outside of class.

My own biases and assumptions were challenged, but as the semester progressed, I became just as interested, if not more, in how the teaching experience was affecting me in terms of my own professional identity and decision-making. Ultimately, the teaching experience reaffirmed much of my commitment to the study and practice of higher education, but not without months of questions, adjustment of personal ideals and values and a myriad of intra-personal reflections due to an introspective personality challenged by an exciting scholarly enterprise.

As a doctoral student, my experience as instructor of this course was not unique in that many doctoral students teach EAD 315 as part of their own degree program, but it certainly was not quite from the same perspective of those who would ultimately become

subjects in my study, Student Affairs Administration master's degree candidates. Nonetheless, I shared with many of these colleagues a "first time teacher" experience along with a related interest in higher education, in general. That resulting "new teacher" cognitive shift with a changed perspective, from the arguably safer theoretical one to the "in-your-face" practical one has also led me to frequently wonder in what ways my Student Affairs Administration master's degree colleagues viewed teaching this course as part of their professional preparation. If I did not emerge with what would be considered extensive understanding of teaching undergraduates, I at least had an experience that altered my perception of what it meant to be a new teacher, forever. To shift from merely wondering what it is like to teach to have at least a semester of teaching experience is a permanent transition and a watershed point in my professional life.

My personal preparation for co-teaching this course was a somewhat protracted one, complicated somewhat by the inherent difficulties of two busy doctoral students arranging time around personal lives, the graduate assistantship of one partner and the full-time university staff position of another. Beginning in the Spring of 2001, my co-teacher, a female who was fellow doctoral student in the H.A.L.E. doctoral program, and I began to have informal discussions about possibly teaching a section of EAD 315 together the following year. Born out of a mutual interest in student learning, student leadership theory and having had mutually fulfilling experiences working on projects together in at least three doctoral courses, our pairing for EAD 315 was met with great enthusiasm on both our parts. Because my co-instructor and I were both keenly interested in technology and distance education, we toyed with the possibility of proposing to the

course coordinator to do either a section of the class fully online or in a "hybrid" fashion, design a section where students would meet on-site for part of the semester and online for one or more periods. In order to have students participate in course readings, writings, and a student leadership project of their own design, we ultimately proposed a hybrid onsite/online format for the class with the following features:

- Initial weekly meetings of the course, on-site (September)
- Online meetings of the course with online course assignments (October)
- Meeting onsite for a case study analysis project (mid-October)
- Onsite and online sessions alternating (November)
- Students working in groups onsite and online in development of student leadership project presented in online portfolio format at the end of the semester (early December)

Researcher Bias.

Because my own experience as first-time instructor involved considerable thinking on my feet and encountering my own "self" in the classroom, I found myself more than once grappling with the very notion of why I was doing this in the first place. Why had I taken on the responsibility of teaching a class of undergraduates in the first place? In retrospect, I can honestly state that my desire to gain a bit of teaching experience was at the fore, here, along with a definite interest in incorporating technology into the classroom. But had I stopped to consider, at any point prior to teaching this course, in what more specific ways teaching EAD 315 might serve as a part of my overall professional preparation? I do not recall having done so.

Nor did I reflect, at any point, and examine my decision in light of any professional preparation standards, ACPA or otherwise. Granted, my doctoral program had no such practicum requirement and the impetus to teach EAD 315 was quite internally driven. I did not juxtapose any list of personal or career objectives vis-à-vis any set of professional preparation standards criteria with the hope of seeking a fulfilling experience in that respect. Notwithstanding, my doctoral coursework certainly did awaken a desire within me to understand more about what classroom teaching was all about. At the time, I was working in the College of Education's Student Affairs Office as a graduate secretary and encountered organizational theory and administrational behavior in many practical ways throughout the course of my own job, through either the processing of assorted routine paperwork for students in graduate programs, or, albeit from a sideline perspective, as an observer of how students travel through various degree programs, from admission to graduation. Furthermore, my rapport with many faculty and administrators in our college granted me regular exposure to many of the trials and tribulations of teaching and administration.

It was this "inside observer" perspective coupled with rich course experiences throughout my program that gave me considerable impetus to position myself as being on the "other side of the fence." Moving from support staff to instructor was a significant and conscious shifting point in both my perspective and my actual role within the college. In many ways, it was a point at which my equilibrium was disturbed.

Though I experienced a personal mix of "positive" and "negative" imbalances, ultimately, I treated these imbalances as challenges and regained equilibrium each time in

a fuller place. Indeed, it is that very shift in perspective and continual thinking about the experience of teaching EAD 315 that continues on as part of my personal learning perspective as I complete my doctoral program in Educational Administration. There are numerous times when I find myself thinking about how differently I have come to view the role of "instructor" or "teacher" after a single experience of teaching a university-level course to 27 undergraduates. There are also numerous occasions when I am reminded of the time and energy involved in creating a syllabus, lesson planning, thoughtful response to student questions and concerns, understanding and implementing assessments. Each time I am reminded of these teacher activities, I make my work with faculty and graduate assistants a bit more empathetic and responsive. While these gains and insights were not necessarily ones I sought at the outset, they definitely have been parts of my personal professional preparation that would not have been there had I not opted to teach EAD 315 as part of my doctoral program.

Summary

To reiterate the research question: How do graduates of Michigan State University's Student Affairs Administration Master's Degree Program perceive the impact teaching EAD 315 has had on their professional preparation? Teaching EAD 315 (Student Leadership Training) is a popular option among Michigan State University's Student Affairs Administration master's degree candidates for fulfilling one of the programs two practicum requirements. By investigating how some of these graduates describe their experience of teaching EAD 315, I examined how this practicum experience is perceived among these Michigan State University alumni/ae. In what ways does it contribute to

their professional preparation? To explore these questions, I used qualitative methods in a phenomenological study in which individual experiences of teaching EAD 315 as a practicum were analyzed from participant perspectives after they have made the transition from the role of student to the role of student affairs professional.

In the next chapter, I describe the literature which supports the inclusion of field experiences as part of the master's level student affairs professional preparation. Using experiential learning theory as a basis for understanding the personal experiences of teachers of EAD 315, I examine a rationale for using inquiry to add understanding to this aspect of the master's preparation program and to create more substantive connections between student affairs preparation standards and the practicum experiences of Student Affairs Administration master's graduates.

In Chapter 3 I will discuss the methodology chosen for this study, how the study participants were selected and how the data was collected, organized and analyzed. In Chapter 4, I will discuss the initial findings of the study, focusing on the participant responses to the research interview questions. I continue with a summary and analysis of these participant responses in Chapter 5, including a discussion of the major themes found in the data. In Chapter 6, I conclude with a summary of the research findings, a discussion of some of the key conclusions and a look at some recommendations I offer as result of having conducted this study.

Chapter Two

A Critical Review Of The Literature

The literature reviewed for this study falls into two prime categories. In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the historic and conceptual basis for field experiences as part of student affairs professional preparation. In the second section, I focus on how experiential learning theory frames a basis for understanding how Michigan State University's Student Affairs Administration master's graduates may perceive how teaching EAD 315 as a practicum contributes to their professional preparation.

The Practicum Experience As Part of Student Affairs Professional Preparation

As stated in Chapter One, the *CAS Master's Level Student Affairs Graduate Program Standards and Guidelines* and the ACPA standards for student affairs preparation set forth recommendations for master's degree preparation programs for student affairs professionals. These are comprised of three key areas of preparation focus: Foundation Studies (historical and philosophical perspectives on the profession), Professional Studies (student development theory, student characteristics and the effects of college on students, individual and group interventions, organizational and administration of student affairs and assessment, evaluation, and research) and Supervised Practice (professional supervised practica, internships and externships "consisting of supervised work involving at least two distinct experiences " (ACPA, 2003). For full-text citation of the CAS standards, refer to Appendix A.

Development of the CAS Standards and ACPA Professional Preparation Guidelines

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, a consortium

of 20 professional student affairs professional associations, established standards and guidelines for master's-level graduate programs in student affairs administration. Developed during the latter part of the 20th Century, these standards and guidelines (referred to, hereafter, as the "CAS standards") began taking definitive shape with the 1964 Council of Student Personnel Associations in Higher Education (COSPA) draft entitled "A Proposal for Professional Preparation in College Student Personnel Work" (ACPA, 2003). In 1967, COSPA, along with the Inter-divisional Committee of the American Personnel and Guidance Association issued a statement, "Guidelines for Graduate Programs in the Preparation of Student Personnel Workers in Higher Education," in which guidelines became more specific and detailed in terms of graduate program descriptions than in earlier, more philosophical statements issued by COSPA.

In the late 1970s, efforts by counselor educators to establish standards for professional preparation programs resulted in the creation of professional preparation and accreditation standards by the Association of Counselor Educators and Supervisors (ACES) within the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA, presently the American Counseling Association, ACA). Following suit, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) created a Preparation Standards Drafting Committee to focus on developing more substantive standards specific to graduate programs in the field of student affairs administration. "Standards for the Preparation of Counselors and College Student Affairs Specialists at the Master's Degree Level" became, in 1979, the official ACPA preparation standards for such programs. ACPA subsequently defined two prime areas in which to further direct the efforts of creating and refining professional

standards and guidelines for the field. Collaboration with NASPA and addressing accreditation of student affairs administration preparation programs. (Commission on Preparation Programs, CAS, 2006)

Published in 1986 and most recently updated in 2006, the subsequent *CAS Master's Level Student Affairs Graduate Program Standards and Guidelines* represent the current state of criteria through which institutions, professional associations, faculty and students may be used to help measure quality and effectiveness of programs (Commission on Preparation Programs, CAS, 2006).

Underscoring the set of specific standards, however, is the belief that student affairs professional practice requires, minimally, a master's degree. (McEwen & Talbot, 1998).

Furthermore, the ACPA Professional Preparation Committee deems the following criteria as minimal standards for graduate professional preparation programs in student affairs:

1) The program has at least one full-time faculty member to provide leadership for the program.
2) The program has at least four content courses about student services/affairs/development and the college student/environment.
3) The program's curriculum has at least a two-year (or equivalent) curriculum.
4) The program requires at least one student personnel practicum/field experience for students. (Directory of Grad Programs, ACPA, 2005b)

Again, while a successful completion of a required practicum may carry the implicit understanding that the intent of both CAS standards and ACPA guidelines have been met, to draw further conclusions about the student experience of that practicum is difficult without a fuller understanding of what those student experiences actually look like.

Particularly given the complex, heterogeneous character of the diverse student affairs field (Helm, 2004), graduates may not necessarily find graduate school sufficient to address the myriad bureaucracies, organizational cultures, and complex constituencies facing them as they enter the job market. Noting this disconnect between graduate preparation and organizational realities, Amey (1998) noted that "being an effective organizational analyst (understanding the organizational and political realities of the job) may be key to address what faculty do not teach in graduate school " (p. 5). Problems such as role conflict and role ambiguity, the unsure expectations in work environments which do not always provide opportunities for evaluation and feedback all contribute to a professional dissonance for which new professionals are not always prepared, at least through graduate school instruction (Amey, 1998, pp. 5-9).

Amey (1998) pointed to the fact that since there are virtually no undergraduate majors in student affairs, "new professionals enter the field from a wide variety of disciplinary backgrounds" (p. 10). While this diversity adds a rich and varied background within the field it also increases the chance for insecurity among new professionals who may perceive other professionals as more qualified or simply presented with the belief that "'others *must* know more than me' and feelings of being overwhelmed with all there is to know and learn" (p.10).

As noted in Chapter One, such insecurity coupled with limitations in career mobility are among the most frequently cited reason for attrition within the field (Hirt & Creamer, 1998). Another salient factor contributing to the tenuous nature of some student affairs career is that managing a balance between the *personal* and the *professional* aspects is

particularly among student affairs professionals (Amey, 1998; Toma, Clark, & Jacobs, 1998). One dominant factor is that the very nature of the work requires more of a fully integral life-view, perhaps more than many other professions, noting strongly the very personal and individual nature of academic careers. (Debebe, O'Neill, & Quinn, 1996)

Since the CAS standards state that "Students *must* [italics added] gain exposure to both the breadth and depth of student affairs work," (Commission on Preparation Programs, CAS, 2003) are there ways in which the practicum experience, or more specifically, teaching EAD 315, provides opportunities for professional preparation not explicitly understood through earning the master's degree? Can an understanding of how students process the challenges and graduate student-graduate instructor balances during their individual practicum indicate how well this experience may prepare them for professional positions in the field?

Constructing Links Between Experience and Learning In The Preparation Program

Practicum venues, including EAD 315 classrooms, represent sites of experiential education. The CAS standards and ACPA guidelines for professional preparation value the practicum experience as an essential element of master's level professional preparation. Because it is unclear what learning actually takes place during these practica, examining the theoretical basis for drawing links between experience and learning that may occur during the practicum is an important first step to address.

There is a critical gap between the professional standards as set forth by CAS and ACPA and what successful completion of the master's degree program means. While receipt of the master's degree may convey with it the assumption that graduates have

successfully met the requirements for two program practica, there is little known about what learning has actually taken place. What EAD 315 instructors may have actually learned during their teaching practicum is unclear as is how graduates perceive the impact of teaching EAD 315 on their professional preparation once they have assumed professional student affairs positions.

The CAS standards are clear, however, in stating that "A minimum of 300 hours of supervised practice, consisting of at least two distinct *experiences* [italics added], must be required" (CAS, 2003, pp. XX). CAS recommendations that adequate preparation must precede participation in any program practicum, reserving the field experiences for "students who have successfully completed a sequence of courses pertaining to basic foundation knowledge of professional practice." (CAS, 2003) Furthermore, CAS states that "Demonstration of minimum knowledge and skill in each area is required of all program graduates" (CAS, 2003, pp. XX)

Regarding the required field experiences, CAS standards are explicitly stated: "Students *must* [italics added] gain exposure to both the breadth and depth of student affairs work. Students *must gain experience* [italics added] in developmental work with individual students and groups of students in: program planning, implementation, or evaluation; staff training, advising, or supervision; and administration functions or processes" (CAS, 2003).

Muddying the question of what student affairs administration students actually learn during the practicum is the fact that Michigan State University's Student Affairs Administration program does not, within its current curriculum, offer credit for the

practicum. This simply means that an explicit rubric for passing (or failing) the practicum experience is unavailable for additional reference. The criteria for successfully completing the two required practica are cited (CAS, 2003; MSU, 2005; *see also* Appendices A and B), but the connection between these criteria and actual student experience are difficult to identify.

In the following section, I look at several experiential education theorists' descriptions of the learning that may take place in such venues as practica. In doing so I will attempt to strengthen the case for inquiry and exploring the stories of these practicum instructors vis-à-vis the stated professional guidelines and standards for such practica.

Insights from Experiential Learning Theorists.

Anderson, Boud, and Cohen (2000) described the following as "essential criteria" of experiential learning:

1. that the learning that results is personally significant or meaningful to the learner;
2. that it is important that the learner is personally engaged with the learning;
3. that there is a reflective process involved;
4. that there is acknowledgment that there is involvement of the whole person in all her capacities and relationships with the present and related past experiences;
5. that there is recognition of the prior experience of learners;
6. that there is an ethical stance of concern and respect for the learning, validation, trust and openness toward the learning which value and support the 'self-directive potential of the learner.' (pp. 227, 228)

These essential criteria is helpful, particularly in that they provide consistent references with which the experience of learners may more readily be described, reported, discussed, reflected upon and understood.

In the following section, I discuss some of the parameters and characteristics that identify experiential learning.

Moon (2004) described four important "outside boundaries" of what can be defined as experiential learning, the first of which is that "experiential learning takes effort" (p. 112). Mason (2000) emphasized the notion that experiential learning does not simply occur as the result of an experience. Criticos (2000) pointed out that experience must be *processed* in order to gain knowledge and learning from it.

The second so-called "outside boundary" is that "specific experiences [must occur] at the 'right time' and in the 'right place'" in order for learning to take place (Moon, 2004, p.113). The quality and nature of experiences, themselves, are factors upon which learning is contingent. In a study of managerial development, for example, Davies and Easterby-Smith (1984) postulated that challenge and the novelty of situation were important to growth and development. King and Kitchener (1994) studied individuals' assumptions about knowledge and use of reflective judgments about problems in their learning development, citing that educational activities improve reasoning and therefore, help advance learning. For example, in light of the research question, it would be helpful to understand what challenges and educational activities, if any, teachers of EAD 315 found helpful in their learning and professional preparation.

A third "outside boundary" presented by Moon (2004) is the idea that "'unlearning' can be a more important gain from experiential learning than 'learning'" (Moon, 2004, p. 113). The idea that mistakes, the correction of errors in thinking and behavior, and the reconsideration of ingrained beliefs, constitute net gains from experience further qualify the concept of experiential learning.

The fourth "outside boundary" is the idea that experience is subjective. While this

statement is arguably obvious and trite, it is an important consideration that Moon (p. 113) noted Boud, Anderson and others recognize, but do not emphasize. Moon suggests that such subjectivity should be "*explicitly* recognized [italics added]" lest we fail to understand the "'slipperiness' of our processing of experience" (p. 113) resulting in a naive understanding of how and when experiential learning takes place.

The characteristics and boundaries of experiential learning as noted by Moon (2004) et al. provide a basis to begin understanding what learning may have taken place during practicum experiences such as teaching EAD 315. The ability to describe learning through experience is an important aspect in framing questions about the practicum experience and understanding answers about them.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Model

While parameters and boundaries that define experiential learning are helpful, understanding the dynamic processes involved add additional clarity. Kolb (1984) provides one such graphic illustration in his Experiential Learning Model.
Kolb described learning as "[a] process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). Kolb theorized that each of our individual experiential learning styles is made up of a mix of each of four modes (activist, reflector, theorist, and pragmatist) and their respective action behaviors/types of experience as part of an *experiential learning cycle*.

1. Activists feel (concrete experience or "CE")
2. Reflectors watch (reflection and observation, or "RO")
3. Theorists think (formation of abstract concepts and generalizations,

or "AC")

4. Pragmatists do (testing implications of concepts in new situations– active experimentation, or "AE") (Kolb, 1984, 1991)

It is important to note that Kolb's individual learning styles are used primarily as self-assessment tools (Kolb, 1984, 1991) but are offered as additional illustration of the processes and language that can be applied to understanding the learning which may take place during the practicum experience. For example, in a practicum setting, *pragmatists* involved in testing their knowledge of student development theory may find their concepts of students affirmed or changed by actual situational encounters with students during their field experience. EAD 315 instructors *reflecting* on student writing or group discussion may begin to form or challenge existing beliefs about student groups and/or individuals.

A cursory view of the Kolb cycle may lead one to believe that experiential learning is strictly forward-moving with learners progressing through stages in a decidedly one-directional manner. Moon (2004) suggested that while Kolb's learning cycle is helpful in defining and understanding the individualistic nature of experiential learning styles, it has certain limitations, one of which is a failure (by scholars who employ Kolb's cycle as a theoretical framework) to understand the role that *sequence of activities* plays in experiential learning and that "the cycle is used more to underpin a process of the management of learning, than necessarily as a description of the learning process itself" (Moon, 2004, p. 116).

Kolb's model, in other words, is extremely helpful in illustrating the processes that

occur in experiential learning, but the model, itself, cannot explain the specifics of that learning process. That is, it cannot illustrate what actually happens, where, when and why.

The Utility and Weaknesses of Kolb's Experiential Learning Model

While somewhat critical of the experiential learning cycle as laid forth by Kolb, Moon (2004) observed that one of its key weaknesses is not in the experiential learning cycle theory itself, but in the way it is interpreted, especially in light of failure to understand its various strengths and weaknesses. Two of those areas are the limits in treating the experiential learning cycle as a closed system and the failure to understand the different ways and various points at which progression in learning may occur. In Kolb's model, the various points at which learners enter the cycle (in any given context) are not immediately clear nor do they provide the means to readily understand how learning progresses through the cycle from one point to another.

There is also little in the Kolb cycle to indicate whether or not the process of experiential learning is at all iterative. To the contrary, the model would suggest otherwise, that experiential learning is processed in a unidirectional cycle. Dewey (1933) noted that reflection, in learning, is not a simple series of static experiences nor is it necessarily a linear process. Given these limitations, the Kolb model offers a strategic means of *describing* the processes involved in experiential learning (Atherton, 2002; Greenaway, 2005; Moon, 2004).

Moon (2004) suggested that reflection, evaluation, and understanding how experiential learning is transferred from theory (education) to practice (work venues) are

vital considerations in understanding how and when experiential learning occurs. Moon's references to this *theory to practice* transfer of learning along with Kolb's model, despite its limitations, may be rendered more useful by understanding the *slipperiness* of experiential learning, particular when considering one of the essential criteria of experiential learning is "that there is a reflective process involved" (Anderson, Boud, & Cohen, 2000, p. 227). Anderson (1988) noted that while experience is at the core of Kolb's Learning Cycle, it fails to include cultural differences and experiences. These differences, arguably, do occur among groups of learners and to varying degrees. Without understanding how cultural differences may factor into learning, Kolb's model leaves questions related to them difficult to answer. It is also important to note that the professional standards such as those set forth by CAS and ACPA do not account for individual and group difference as factors in learning through experience.

The Role of Reflection in Experiential Learning

As stated earlier, Mason (2000) posits that experiential learning does not occur simply as the result of experience. Anderson, Boud, and Cohen (2000) add that experience must be "personally significant or meaningful" (p. 227) in order for experiential learning to occur. Moon (2004) notes that "Experiential learning is not usually mediated; the material of learning is usually direct experience and *reflection is usually involved* [italics added]" (p. 123).

Pioneering education theorist Dewey (1933) noted that "reflection occurs when one thing signifies or indicates another." (p. 117) and that the following *may* occur, but not necessarily in sequence or in total:

1. Suggestion: the mind leaps forward to a possible solution. If the solution seems feasible, it is applied, and full reflection does not occur. Otherwise, these phases take place:
2. Intellectualization of the perplexity into a specific problem to be solved or question to be answered: i.e. placing the perplexity into a relevant context;
3. Development of a hypothesis to guide observation in collection of empirical data;
4. Elaboration of the hypothesis, or "reasoning";
5. Testing the hypothesis, either by overt action or thought experiment (pp. 107-109)

In describing the conditions during which *reflective* learning occurs, Moon (2004) used the following descriptive headings:

- when there is new material of learning;
- when there is learning from the representation of learning;
- when there is no new material of learning and the learner is attempting to develop her understanding on the basis of what she already knows (p. 129)

Moon (2004) further postulated that "all of the forms of reflective learning may have a role in experiential learning" (p. 129). It is important to bear in mind, however, that the terms *reflective learning* and *experiential learning* are not simply reiterations of analogous concepts. As Moon (2004) observed, a fundamental difference between the two is that reflective learning need not involve external experience. Experiential learning, by definition, usually does. Moon presents a succinct description of these two related constructs:

> experiential learning usually involves reflective learning – except where the material of learning is unchallenging to the learner; reflective learning usually has an important role in experiential learning – however, it has an important separate meaning when there is no new material of learning and we reflect on what we 'know' already. (p. 130)

The idea of a *nonreflective - reflective continuum* in which four different levels of reflection can be described, hierarchically, from the first (lowest level) to fourth (highest level):

> 1.) Habitual Action (learning through ritual, routine, memorization) 2.) Understanding (comprehension without relation to personal experience), 3.) Reflection (learning relative to personal experience, challenging of assumptions), 4.) Intensive Reflection (awareness of why one thinks and acts as one does, often involves a change in personal beliefs). (Peltier, Hay, & Drago, 2005, p. 253)

Malinen (2000) also emphasized the dimension of personal, *individual dimensions* (p. 22) as a critical aspect of identifying research problems associated with adult experiential learning as well as being essential in understanding the context through which understanding of those experiences can be framed. She expressed areas of questioning to keep in mind:

1. What is meant by 'experience'? What is the position and meaning of the learner's experience in the learning process?
2. How do adults learn? What is meant by 'reflection' in the learning process?
3. What kind of role does action play in the learning process?
4. What are the individual consequences of learning? (p. 22)

Schöen (1983, 1988) described, in his study of the reflective practitioner, the processes of rethinking and experimentation as aspects of critical decision-making and noted that our thinking in the midst of experience reshapes what we do in the process of doing it. Having experienced many occasions as an EAD 315 instructor where "thinking on my feet" was essential, as new teacher, I wondered how other student instructors responded to the challenges and demands of teaching a college-level class for the first

time. Would their stories include anecdotes about and references to times when they "changed course" or moved more "solidly ahead" based on in-the-moment reflection, as instructors?

Building A Bridge Between Experiential Learning and Professional Preparation Standards

As postulated earlier in this chapter, because the CAS standards and ACPA guidelines for professional preparation hold the practicum experience as an integral component of the master's degree, studying how graduates perceive their experience may provide clearer understanding of how effectively the professional standards address professional preparation for student affairs work. The standards themselves and the fact that graduates successfully complete the requirements for program practica are two aspects of professional student affairs preparation that are readily and explicitly known. One remaining piece of the puzzle is the learning and knowledge which, in theory, may occur as result of the practicum experience. Because program requirements and expected outcomes are based on CAS standards and ACPA guidelines, that implicit learning and knowledge becomes the capital from which a more clear and substantive understanding of how teaching EAD 315 as a practicum contributes to student affairs professional preparation.

Summary

Experiential learning theory describes the dynamic processes through which individuals use reflection to learn from the information, problems, and challenges during experience. The CAS standards and ACPA guidelines set forth recommendations for

master's level professional preparation including objectives and goals for practica and field experiences. Michigan State University's Student Affairs Administration Master's Degree Program requires two such practica, one popular option being teaching EAD 315. While successful completion of the program carries the implicit understanding that graduates meet or exceed these (and other) program objectives, a critical gap in this understanding remains. The literature addresses the processes involved in experiential learning and the professional standards for student affairs master's level preparation, but little is known about the actual nature and depth of learning that occurs during individual experiences of teaching EAD 315 as a practicum. One source of this knowledge may lie in the post-graduation reflection of Student Affairs Administration students who taught EAD 315. What could be gained through interview questions that invite reflection about the experience of teaching EAD 315? What would such interview questions possibly do to illuminate understanding about the *reflective practitioner* aspect of being a student instructor, particularly in terms of what is actually learned while meeting the requirement of a successful practicum?

In the next chapter, I describe the research methodology chosen for this study and show how inquiry can begin to fill a critical gap in understanding of this practicum experience. By investigating the experience of graduates who have taught EAD 315 as a practicum, understanding what learning takes place as result of this experience begins with the answer to the research question: How do graduates of Michigan State University's Student Affairs Administration Master's Degree Program perceive the impact teaching EAD 315 has had on their

professional preparation?

Chapter Three

The Research Methodology

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how graduates of Michigan State University's Student Affairs Administration Master's Degree Program perceive the impact teaching EAD 315 has had on their professional preparation. Using a phenomenological approach, I explored the individual stories of 10 alumni/ae who opted to teach EAD 315 in fulfillment of one of the two required practica in the master's program. This section describes the methodology, its conceptual rationale and the instruments used to explore and understand these graduates' experiences from their individual perspectives.

The Methodological Approach Used

The goal of this study was to understand the *learning from the experiences* of teaching EAD 315 as a practicum as perceived by master's degree graduates who have done so to fulfill one of two practicum options in their degree program. In doing so, I hoped that data gathered in the course of the study would offer insights into the relationship between teaching EAD 315 as a practicum and professional standards for graduate level student affairs preparation.

Phenomenological studies, such as this, "[describe] the meaning for several individuals of their *lived* experiences of a concept of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). I focused on the *lived experience* of these new professionals as they tell their own individual stories as teachers of EAD 315 (Creswell, 2007). In such a phenomenological

approach, participants were asked to *describe* their experiences. The data collected were used to create a narrative through which the participants' experiences may be known in more depth and in their own voice.

Merely understanding commonly shared experiences is arguably, knowledge to be gained through such a study, but phenomenological approaches are often well suited for informing policy makers and those who may play administrative or other functional roles relative to the experiences of a shared phenomenon. Phenomenology attempts to understand shared human experiences at a deeper level, something that strictly narrative approaches do not necessarily purport to do. (Creswell, 2007)

Data collected in such studies may then be analyzed in terms of highlighting key statements and quotes in an effort to understand how individual participants experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). For example, in the case of individuals who share the experience of teaching EAD 315 as a practicum, key statements in the reflection of participants yield opportunities through which a researcher may develop "clusters of meaning" (Creswell, 1994, p. 61) and emergent themes.

Selection of Participants

The 10 participants in this study were chosen from new professionals who had graduated from the Student Affairs Administration Master's Degree Program between Spring 2003 and Spring 2006. This group of potential participants was chosen based on three factors.

- Graduates should have begun and completed their degree programs since the publication of the most recent CAS standards prior to the start of the

study (2003) since these are the graduates whose programs are most directly associated with the latest available professional standards.

- Because professional preparation for student affairs work is a focus of the research question, graduates should be employed in student affairs positions. For example, residence life, student activities, admissions, and advising.
- Because race, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status were not intrinsically tied to the research question, these aspects of individual demographics were not studied beyond voluntary participant references to these characteristics.
- Of the 19 graduates deemed otherwise eligible were solicited for possible participation in the study, 10 replied in the affirmative.

An EAD faculty member prepared, in early Spring Semester 2006, a list of instructors who taught EAD 315 during the years deemed eligible for the study. I used the initial list in consultation with Dr. Kristen Renn to confirm which instructors met the additional criteria necessary for participation. In February 2006, I prepared a list of approximately 20 individuals, including known email addresses. I next sent, electronically, blind copies of an invitation to participate in the study. (see Appendix E). Initially, 7 individuals expressed interest and 3 individuals indicated they did not qualify because they were either (2) ineligible per participant criteria (one was in a different degree program and one had not taught EAD 315) or (1) not yet a graduate of the program.

I sent a re-invitation, electronically, to all addresses for whom a response was not received. Two additional eligible participants responded expressing an interest, directly after this second mailing and a 10th individual was contacted in February, 2007, responding with interest in participating. After the initial group of 7 was secured, I began to arrange appointments for interviews, either through subsequent email contact or telephone. I began the interviews in April 2006 with all interviews completed by July 2007, including 2 interviews that needed to be rescheduled (one at the request of the participant and one at the request of me). Those persons whose interest in participating was confirmed were sent electronic and/or hard copies of confidential disclosure forms along with additional information about the study shortly before the scheduled interview.

Originally, a focus group was proposed for the 2006 ACPA conference, but when I was unable to attend, this aspect of the study was dropped. I hoped that an opportunity to cull more insight via group discussion would be possible. Given that this plan would not allow all participants to meet, it also may have made analysis of the data a bit more difficult, especially through the possibility of inadvertently emphasizing certain particpants' stories without giving everyone in the study "equal time."

Data Collection Methods

Three of the 10 interviews were conducted, in person, at the participants' present workplace. The seven remaining interviews were conducted via telephone during evening hours. Interviews averaged one hour in length with no individual interview lasting longer than one hour and 15 minutes, nor less than 45 minutes (not including brief pre- and post-interview telephone discussion). All interviews were recorded on audio

cassette and included a verbal request of consent to participate in addition to written consent to participate and be recorded. Each participant was informed of his/her right to withdraw consent at any time as well as his or her right to request that tape recording be stopped at any point in the interview. Additionally, all participants were initially asked if they had any questions (about the study or questions about me) before the interview began.

The Role of the Researcher

Having taught EAD 315, I shared an experience with the particpants in this study and kept a detailed set of notes throughout the project in an effort to attend to issues of bias as well as to take advantage of insights which may be offered through the familiarity of a similar field experience. From the onset, my prior experience in teaching EAD 315 was made known but was not the focus of any individual interview or any individual interview question.

Data Collection: The Individual Interviews

Taped and transcribed one-on-one interviews with particpants were the primary means of data collection. The focus of the initial interviews was to understand the individual phenomenological perspectives of participants who have each taught EAD 315 as a practicum option in their program. Because *understanding learning from the individual experiences* in the program is at the core of this study, the design of an interview protocol (see Appendix B) allowed open-ended, in-depth response to questions.

"Grand tour" questions or those which are the broadest that can be asked (Werner & Schoepfle, 1994) included the opening question: *Tell me about yourself as a professional.*

Because the prime goal of this research project was to study how the individuals' experiences in a professional preparation program influenced their professional life after graduation, it was essential to allow the individual participant to state who he/she is and invite any discussion of professional identity in a manner that did not lead nor attempt to define what "professional" might mean to him/her.

As researcher, my intent was to use *nondirectional wording* (Creswell,1994, p. 71) rather than suggest that "professional" means anything in particular or that it may mean one thing versus another. Because the integrity of the participants' personal identities was of utmost importance, any question about what "professional" means was directed back to the domain of the participant. For example, offering the prompt of "I am interested in learning what 'professional' means to you," rather than suggesting definitions that may have led to or limited the participant's response in any way.

Subsequent *subquestions* (Miles & Huberman, 1984, Creswell, 2007) which were more specific to the intent of the research question included:

- *Why did you choose the SAA master's program at Michigan State?*
- *Describe your experience teaching EAD 315 as a practicum.*
- *What role did teaching EAD 315 play in your professional preparation?*

While these subquestions were more specific in nature, they invited open-ended response without leading or use of directional language.

In addition to taping the interview, data gathering from each participant session was done in the form of note taking, including outlining participants' answers to the

questions. Notes and outlines were reviewed in a timely fashion following each taped interview in order to manage volumes of information in a systematic manner prior to and during data analysis. I also used notes taken during the interview to attend to issues such as interviewer bias and to add clarity to any part of the tapes and/or transcripts which may be unintelligible or otherwise unclear. Notes as part of an "audit trail" help establish trustworthiness by providing a mechanism to trace and document steps taken, things observed (and when), along with any nuanced phenomena that may be otherwise be distorted through the limitations of memory or lost, entirely.

Data Analysis Methods

I employed a phenomenological approach to the analysis of the participant interviews, and followed procedures suggested by Yin (1989) and Creswell (2007) which include searching for patterns and noting recurring themes in the data collected from the individual stories of participants to build explanations for possible links between individual experiences teaching EAD 315, experiential learning theory, and the professional preparation standards as set forth by CAS and ACPA.

Analysis of the initial interview data began with the organization of the materials resulting from identification of participants and the processing of informed consent documentation. Initially, field notes and notes taken during telephone interviews were collected in a notebook, organized by participant name and the time and date of each interview. The transcription of individual interview tapes began shortly after the interview process was completed for each participant in an effort to preserve the continuity of the study and help me become more familiar with the interview content for

each participant.

Once I conducted, recorded and transcribed all 10 participant interviews, I began to reduce the data collected to common themes, categories, and patterns that emerge and organized this in a matrix fashion in order to more clearly indicate the relationships and scope of the interviews, as conducted. (Creswell, 1994, pp. 153-155). Categories and topics based on the research questions and the participants' answers were used to sort and organize data otherwise unstructured (Creswell, 1994, pp. 154-155).

Initial multi-page grids were made for each interview analysis with blocks for notes and observations relative to the main interview questions as well as any sub-questions that were asked (see Appendix D). These grids were used to record key phrases and words which emerged in both initial and subsequent readings of the transcripts based on participant responses to the interview questions. For example, in answering the question, "Why did you choose the SAA master's program at Michigan State?" specific reasons were recorded on the grid with key words highlighted (*faculty recommendation, reputation of program,* etc.). These grids were also used in subsequent readings and line-by-line study of interview transcripts to further determine the primary themes that emerged directly from questions but also as they were reiterated by participants who either voluntarily returned to a previous question or were asked, by me, for additional clarity and follow-up. Ultimately, summaries of each interview question were produced for each participant and these summaries were subsequently used to prepare a list of the three primary themes found in the data that I discuss in depth in Chapter Five.

Limits of The Methodology

Because only 10 graduates of this program were interviewed and because I chose participants purposefully and not randomly, generalizing to similar master's programs at other institutions or to other practicum experiences at Michigan State was not a goal, so any attempt to do so is not advised. This does not preclude use of the interview protocols in similar subsequent studies, but while commonly experienced phenomena is essential to a phenomenological study, such studies do not, in themselves, invite generalization. The intent of phenomenology is to "elucidate the particular, the specific" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2006,).

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined trustworthiness in qualitative research as the means through which researchers persuade the reader to pay attention to the findings. How reliable and valid the study is and appears to the reader are aspects of qualitative research that must be considered from the outset and made clear to anyone scrutinizing this study (Creswell, 2007).

There are several interrelated concepts which fall within the collective efforts and means to producing a study that is trustworthy. While each concept is intrinsically important to quality research, the *trustworthiness* of any given study can only be the result of these concepts addressed collectively.

The validity of this qualitative study is a two-pronged concept. This study's internal validity addresses how *accurate* the information it contains is and how grounded in reality it appears to be. The reliability of this study refers to the limits of and extent to

which it may be duplicated or the degree to which I use its findings to generalize to other applications and contexts (Creswell, 2007).

Accuracy of information is an issue which was addressed in the study's conceptual stages and addressed throughout. In order to assure the accuracy of data and findings, I used both taped, transcribed interviews along with researcher notes taken during the interview. Using two methods of collecting data, I had the opportunity to find convergence, or points of similarity between data sources (Creswell, 1994, 2007). Conversely, comparisons between interview data and notes that resulted in occasional discrepancies prompted necessary checks of transcript and/or tape clarity as well as integrity and accuracy of my research notes.

I further addressed credibility issues by allowing my dissertation director to observe and advise my actions and decisions throughout the research process, affirming the appropriateness of my actions, behaviors and similarly, alerting me to problems or issues that threaten the integrity of my research.

Earlier in this chapter, I briefly addressed the issue of this study's limitations. How reliable this study is depends, in part, how applicable it is to similar settings (Creswell, 1994, 2007). While this study's ability to be replicated is limited, understanding the context of the study as well as the open-ended nature and limited number of interview questions suggest that, under certain circumstances, the methods and interview protocol might readily be adapted for other research projects. For example, a study of similar groups of new professionals who taught EAD 315 in their master's program might be conducted.

Ethical Issues

The integrity of this research project is another aspect of trustworthiness and is contingent, in part, upon clear communication between myself as researcher and the participants. Researcher accessibility prior to, during, and following individual and group sessions was an important aspect of informed consent in this study (Creswell, 1994, 2007).

This is a study of personal stories. Participants at all times were informed of not only how findings will be used, but of their option to limit their participation in or withdraw from the study at any time. Since the data will be published as a dissertation, I provided assurance of anonymity and the opportunity to deliver feedback freely and without consequence. Because my ability to conduct this research was contingent upon the permission to do so from the Michigan State University Institutional Review Boards (IRB), participants and readers of this dissertation will have assurance that this research falls within the guidelines and limitations of such projects (MSU-IRB, 2007). Furthermore, informed consent is evidence that participation is voluntary, that terms and conditions of participation in the study is mutually and fully understood by both the researcher and subjects of the study. Furthermore, informed consent documentation provides the assurance that subjects have the full representative protection of appropriate third parties such the aforementioned IRB at Michigan State University.

Additional measures to assure reliability and integrity of this study included the ongoing scrutiny of all work by Kristen Renn, Ph.D.., dissertation director, accessible by other members of the dissertation committee. Participants were given the option to

contact Dr. Renn, when needed, as part of informed consent to participate in this research.

Summary

The phenomenological approach used in this study employed a limited number of open-ended questions to help construct a narrative presentation of findings from ten individual interviews. Participants were selected among new student affairs professionals who graduated from Michigan State University's Student Affairs Administration Master's Degree Program between 2003 and 2006. Stories of their individual experiences teaching EAD 315 as a practicum as described in interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed, with the subsequent data analysis designed to answer the research question: How do graduates of Michigan State University's Student Affairs Administration Master's Degree Program perceive the impact teaching EAD 315 has had on their professional preparation?

Chapter Four

Findings I: The Study and Its Participant Voices

Introduction

The 10 participants in this study were chosen from new professionals who have graduated from the Student Affairs Administration Master's Degree Program between Spring 2003 and Spring 2006. Nine of the ten particpants taught EAD 315 as one of the two required practica for the Master's program; the tenth participant taught EAD 315 while meeting practicum requirements through two other means. Each of the participants completed his or her master's program before the age of 25. It should also be clearly stated that while the practica for the Master's Degree Program are required components, it is not required that either of these practica be teaching, specifically.

All particpants were currently or recently working in student affairs professional settings (including relevant doctoral assistantships) at the time of the interviews, which were conducted between February 2006 and April 2007. Three of the interviews were conducted in person, on-site, seven were conducted by telephone. Appointments for interviews were arranged via email with all of the participants with subsequent email, surface mail, and telephone contact prior to the actual interviews.

I assigned pseudonyms to all participants and professional venues have been given fictitious names with every attempt to describe institutions in a manner comparable to the participants' actual professional settings.

The Ten Study Participants' Stories

The following section introduces each of the ten study participants with brief descriptions of their background, professional goals, and reasons for applying to graduate school at Michigan State University and, in their own voices, what the experience of teaching EAD 315 was like for them, particularly in view of their current professional and/or doctoral student roles. Brief comments on course-specific issues such as logistics, classroom support, and any significant problems or positive scenarios that arose during the teaching of their section of the course are summarized at the end of each study participant's section in this chapter. The participants are presented strictly in the order they were interviewed.

1. Jennifer Elias: "There's a definite teaching aspect to advising."

Chicago area native Jennifer Elias is an academic advisor in the College of Social Science at Midwestern University, a large public university with over 35,000 students. As the sole advisor of the department's approximately 800 undergraduate students, Jennifer also created and teaches a Freshman seminar entitled "So, You Want To Go To Law School?" geared toward the 60% to 65% of students in the college who are considering law school as a post-baccalaureate option. Jennifer's creation of the seminar came from her noting a pattern of under prepared students at the Junior and Senior level whose limited knowledge about the process of matriculating to law school consisted of being aware ". . .there is a test [I] have to take" and little else.

Jennifer became aware of the Master's program in Student Affairs Administration while pursuing her undergraduate degree at Michigan State and

working as a resident advisor at the university. Her supervisor, then a student in that program, encouraged her to investigate the program as did the director of MSU's academic orientation program where Jennifer worked after her sophomore year.

Jennifer's Residence Advisor supervisor also encouraged her to look at possibly teaching EAD 315 as a possible practicum which appealed to Jennifer's desire to investigate teaching experience as part of her professional preparation. Curious to learn more about the class, Jennifer enrolled in EAD 315 as a student during the spring semester of her Senior year. Jennifer stated:

> [For the] the spring of my senior year, I decided to sign-up for EAD 315 so I could see what it was all about if I did ever decide to teach it. I actually took the class and tying in my MSU undergrad into what I did into my Master's and I enjoyed the class. . .there were obviously things about it that I thought "oh, I would probably do that a little differently if I was teaching," . . .but it was interesting. When I started my Master's program I [wanted to complete] the specialization or the concentration in leadership and so teaching EAD was a part of that. The experience overall was a really good learning experience.

Jennifer co-taught a section of EAD 315 with a male MA colleague from Florida whom she described as having "a very different background" from her own, but with a similar strong desire to have teaching experience.

Jennifer described teaching EAD 315 as a "real hands-on. . practicum," and valued highly an opportunity to have direct contact with 25 students, two hours, twice a week. She related her experience as "really eye-opening in terms of what teachers go through" and considered herself having a "perspective from both sides," significantly changing her

feelings about communicating with students as a teacher. "Teachers don't know if you care if you're doing poorly unless you talk to them about it."

Jennifer elaborated on what she calls understanding "the other side of the coin" and noted that interactions with students are "frequently difficult." Among a number of examples of teaching EAD 315 as having been a "good experience" for her, Jennifer cited understanding and communicating about student perceptions about assignment requirements and "delivering news that you might not want to deliver" among the more important. Teaching what she described as "a fairly eclectic" group of students, demographically, Jennifer found an equally eclectic initial student perspective on "leadership" and what it meant to "be a leader."

> Some students who. . .would out-and-out declare themselves, "I'm a leader on campus". . .[or as] "a captain of my team" and some students who would barely say "boo" and say, "I hate talking to people. I don't consider myself a leader, but I thought the class would be good to .. .learn about what that looks like. . ."

Describing what she learned most about herself while teaching EAD 315, Jennifer noted she has "high expectations," adding that she found she does not like "cutting a lot of slack" unless a student demonstrates good effort and a willingness to work hard. "I learned that I really do like teaching and trying to help people understand something or find value."

Frustrated by a sense that a lot of students take EAD 315 as a "blow-off" class, Jennifer stated

> I did believe there was value in a lot of stuff and we were trying to teach them and a lot of students take the class as a blow-off. And

> so, it's hard to overcome that and have them see that there is value in the stuff that we're talking about and is not just an easy 3 credits.

Overall, Jennifer found that the opportunity to teach a student leadership training class informs her position as advisor to pre-law students in a way that she "[wishes] every student would have to have some kind of opportunity like that [experienced in EAD 315]." In terms of *involvement* and in *learning about the value of volunteering*, Jennifer finds leadership opportunities "making a difference" with students applying to different programs or looking for jobs. Working as an academic advisor, the development of a leadership philosophy and an awareness are other aspects of student leadership training which Jennifer believes prepare students to approach application to college programs and jobs with more enthusiasm and confidence. She stated

> I think there's a definite teaching aspect to advising. I do not want to operate as simply an information vault for them to come and pull stuff and go away. I want to give them the information or resources to find it and have them go continue to use that. Trying to give people tools and say "Now, go and use them."

Jennifer appreciated the "good amount of autonomy" in how she and her co-instructor were able to structure the class, particularly in being allowed to choose the books they wanted to use and tailor their syllabus and how they were able to grade students. While she enjoyed teaching her section and was satisfied with how the experience went, overall, the things she would have wanted to say to the "Jennifer" just about to teach is "it's gonna be tougher than you think it'll be and I would say the students are gonna try to get away with a lot of crap!"

Teaching student leadership or taking a class in leadership training is something Jennifer wishes "was some sort of requirement at MSU." She expanded on this as she reflected on her current position advising a large number of pre-law students at the university.

> The kinds of things that we talk about in EAD 315 *would be so valuable for them.* Getting those other experiences, even if it's not specifically from a *leadership* perspective, but just in terms of involvement and in learning. Followership, or learning about the value in volunteering and things. I see it making a difference with the students that are applying to different kinds of programs or looking for jobs and the ones that don't have it are having a harder time.

Jennifer talked about her attempt to show students that "leadership really can look very different in different situations" and while she noted none of her students had very measurable "Eureka!" moments about leadership, they definitely did about the concept of followership. She stated

> The week or so we spent on the importance of [followership] and what it really means to follow, [we talked about] how there is a skill to following and there is a way to do that well. I know that we had a lot of students that *never* had considered that. You are a leader or that your one of the masses and that you didn't have a role then, you just had to. . .*exist,* kind of. We had a number of students come back or say in their papers at the end that they had never thought of following in that way.

Tying student personal experience to leadership theory was another area in which Jennifer and her co-instructor attempted to direct student thinking, despite what appeared to be a strong mindset among the students as to what leadership looked like.

> We saw that more in students who hadn't had as much direct

> experience, themselves, with leading. I think that's primarily because the students that had it were convinced they already knew and it was tougher to get them to think about it in a different way. And the ones who didn't have as much of a pre-baked concept about it kinda went, "OK, I never thought of it that way." A couple of them, through the assignment where they had to visit a student organization actually picked one they wanted to join and they told us that they were looking to be, potentially, in the next year or so a leader in that group. That was neat to see.

Jennifer felt the practicum was "structured" very well and appreciated the opportunity to get together as a group (with other EAD 315 instructors) to "swap ideas about how we were doing or what we did 2 or 3 times throughout the semester." She also valued the opportunity for the course coordinator to add faculty perspective to these discussions. "The support while we were in it was pretty good."

Several times during the interview, Jennifer referred to her appreciation of being able to learn from other instructors' experiences, noting that those experiences were often markedly different than hers.

> I'd be interested to know. . .even in just the semester that we were teaching–I mean, everybody had such a different experience with their classes and some said, "Oh, our class is great and they're so involved" and ours was usually kind of. . .I had to poke one of them because they were sleeping and they just stared at us when we asked a question. They had all [students with] different backgrounds and it was cool to hear everybody's different experiences.

EAD 315 as a numerically-graded course (versus Pass/No-Pass) is something Jennifer would like to see happen. "[I think that] students don't think as seriously when they know there's a minimum bar to get a 'P.'" Jennifer added

> And they're not going to do 4.0 level work if they know that 2.0 level

> work gets them the same thing. So, I really think that there are students that would–you can see them doing some really neat stuff through the class if they were to get a grade in it.

Despite the occasional frustration in not being able to effectively communicate with some students, Jennifer described the student evaluations of her teaching as an opportunity to learn that student experience is not always easy to predict nor necessarily evident throughout the semester. Feeling "almost blown-away by what they did take away from it and how much the class *did* affect them" was something Jennifer found surprising as a first-time teacher.

> It was encouraging, in a way, but also at the same time knowing that you could continue teaching and continue it having be that same way, you're not getting that [sense that students are thinking] "I feel like this matters" until the end or until somebody decides to tell you, "Yeah that was good!"

2. Justin Taylor: Slowing Down To Reflect, Holistic Views of Students

In the Office of Student Activities on the campus of Big State University, Michigan native Justin Taylor's two primary functions are as Concert Advisor and coordinator of the Late Night Big State program. In the former role, Justin advises students and spends approximately 70% of his time working with student groups wishing to plan concerts including comedians, music groups or any of a number of similar large-scale entertainment events. The remaining 30% of Justin's time is as one of the coordinators of Late Night Big State, providing non-alcoholic alternatives on Friday and Saturday nights for students from 10 p.m. until 2 a.m.

Currently in an entry-level position, Justin did similar work while a grad

student at Michigan State University, pursuing the Master's degree in Student Affairs Administration which he completed in 2004.

A graduate of Southwestern State University, Justin received bachelor's degrees in Criminal Justice and Psychology and worked briefly at a state juvenile detention center for about a year prior to beginning his MA program. Describing himself as "Mr. Do-It-All" while an undergrad, he was a Resident Advisor and on the Steering Committee for volunteering at his alma mater. Looking for a similar RA position at Michigan State, Justin ultimately wound up with an assistantship through the Division of Housing and Food Services.

Citing that Michigan State had been "last on his list [of graduate school programs]" Justin stated he wanted to "get out and experience new and different things." Once he was accepted into the MA program at Michigan State, however, Justin decided that the quality of the education outweighed the desire to relocate elsewhere and remains solidly pleased with having chosen MSU for his graduate education.

Essentially describing himself as a "non-educator" Justin nonetheless thought it important to get teaching experience as part of his Master's degree preparation for future student affairs work. Choosing teaching EAD 315 as one of his required practica, Justin stated

> What really drew me to [getting teaching experience] was the fact it was a class in leadership in working with undergrads–that was also a bonus. As far as doing it as a practicum, I thought it would be a really good experience to us it as not just an experience where I can share my leadership experiences but to shape young people, [using it] as a beneficial experience for me, also.

Not thinking of himself as a very reflective person, Justin stated the practicum forced him to "take a step back and remove myself from a situation, to evaluate what it is that I'm doing and where I'm going with it."

When I asked Justin what about the teaching of EAD 315 most helped his current position, if anything, Justin reiterated the idea of critical reflection of his own interaction with students.

> The teaching aspect really forced me to slow down in a way that I process. To see that light go on in somebody else. . .I think in that sense it helped me to just to take a step back and realize that not everybody has the same background as I do–not everybody processes the world and looks through the same lens as I do.

Justin stated that he believed he learned during all aspects of the practicum, from teaching the course, in the course structure, and "on [his] own." When asked to expand on these areas, Justin shared his feelings about how communicating with his own students helped focus his own self-reflection as a learner.

> When the other instructors and I would get together with [the course coordinator] the conversations when we would share [our] experiences. . . "Well, this is how our class is conducted" and "This is how *our* class is conducted." That was kind of a learning experience. But I would say a big bulk of my learning. . what really forced a lot of that reflection was in the actual dialogues that I had with the students and the dialogues that the students had with each other. Sometimes I think I forgot that they are college students and there is a difference between an undergrad and a grad student. A lot of the students were in the same location as me, but they have a different background. I would say a big bulk of it happened in those dialogues, in the classroom and maybe a little bit outside of the classroom.

Justin noted that his students' varied major perspectives offered equally

varied student perspectives on leadership.

> A lot of the business major folks were, for the lack of a better term, "bottom-dollar," how this is going to affect. . .whatever. And I think that when people start talking about leadership and reflecting it can be kinda high and lofty and a lot of times can lose its focus. I think that they were really good at keeping others grounded as in "Well, you know, this is very nice. This is very good theory, but how is this going to translate in your day-to-day functioning?"

Justin would appreciate a bit more structure to the teaching support of the program but would not like to see the opportunity for teaching experience "taken away from people" if it were to be taught by regular, paid graduate assistantships. He saw value in extending the opportunity to first-time teachers as an opportunity to get the experience, but not at all in a manner detrimental to students, particularly if EAD 315 instructors are open about their lack of teaching experience or structured instruction in teaching methods. Justin summed up his perspective on approaching teaching for the first time.

> There were those of us who pretty much, flat-out came out and said, "Look. This is my first teaching experience. It is gonna be as much a learning experience for me as it is for you." And I think that kind of knowing that there's a partnership (slight chuckle). . .between the student and the instructor, I think there's a little bit better of an experience. I think [my students] kinda respected me for front-loading like that and I think it helped to create a different dynamic. It was more of a dialogue or a discussion than a class.

Among the study participants, Justin seemed to have fewer practical connections between teaching EAD 315 during his practicum and his current day-to-day position, but rather seemed to find a more esoteric connection between himself, today, and having

taught in the practicum. When I asked him to reflect upon what he learned most about himself during the experience, he answered

> That's a good question. Um. . .I would say that probably one thing that I learned about myself through teaching is. . .that I'm not necessarily much of a reflective individual and that its' important. . .um, to, every once in a while, just to take a stop, um, and just to take stock and to see where you're at–to see where others are at. . .to see where you're leading. . uh, to see who's following you, to see who's not following you. . .to have ongoing and flowing conversations. . .or to see the importance of that.

3. Margie Lennon: "Leadership Development and Career Development Go Hand-in-Hand."

Margie Lennon is a career counselor at Southwestern University, a large private institution on the Pacific coast. In the position a little over one year at the time of the interview, Margie completed the Master's degree program in Student Affairs Administration in May 2004. Comparing Southwestern University with Michigan State, Margie laughs slightly when explaining that the institutions, while both large, are very different though students present similar issues at both. Having worked in a student health insurance agency prior to coming to Michigan State, Margie "stumbled into" career counseling while working closely with university administrators through the insurance agency and advising the students who utilized her agency's services.

> So, I looked into how do I get their job (laughs) and talked with them. And all of them pretty much had either a master's degree or lots of experience and so they encouraged me to take a look at graduate programs.

Connections through an MSU assistant professor at the 2001 ACPA conference in

Long Beach further convinced Margie that Michigan State would be a "good fit" for her in terms of the types of students in the program, the faculty and type of support that would be extended to her. Obtaining an assistantship through an additional contact with a counselor at Michigan State's Office of Career Planning and Placement proved to be a "serendipitous encounter" and one that Margie felt would work well with her background in business.

Margie found that Michigan State's degree program provided an opportunity to become more aware of student development theories which, on exposure, added to her sense of "intuitively and inherently" understanding a lot about student development with applications and analysis that helped ground theory into practice, namely that found in a large institution of higher education. In addition, the practica, seminar discussions and opportunity to become involved in professional organizations such as NASPA and ACPA were additional opportunities Margie felt were very helpful.

> What I really liked was just the opportunity that you had as a student. To participate in research, to participate in panel discussions. . .I was part of the Student Affairs Advisory Committee. . .I liked the interactions between the students and faculty–the faculty were very accessible and that wasn't the case in other programs that I looked at.

Margie chose to teach EAD 315 as one of her two practicum requirements as she both wanted and had gotten good feedback from others who had taught the course. She particularly was interested in an opportunity to teach the class with a focus on diversity and on career development, "fusing the work that [she did] in Career Services into the classroom, as well."

> I think leadership development and career development go hand-in-hand. To be a great leader you need to understand people, just like in the workplace you have to understand people. How do you work with people who are different than you? How do you work with people who you don't agree with, personally or professionally? How do you translate all of the skills that you've developed as a leader into the workplace. . .that you bring into the team wherever you go in your career?

Co-teaching EAD 315 with another graduate instructor who also worked at the Career Center, Margie incorporated public speaking, interviewing techniques, communication skills, writing resumes and helping students be sure they knew how to utilize Career Center resources into the class. Prior to teaching her section of EAD 315, Margie had the opportunity to visit other sections of the course on behalf of the Career Center. One difference Margie notes in these section visits versus her own teaching of the course was student involvement and engagement in the career development exercises.

> The first time I went into a class, I didn't know exactly what was expected of me. . .and I don't think there was much engagement because it was more me, talking. Then, when I co-taught the class, we did a lot of peer critiquing. We tried to get students more involved in the process and then had them do exercises and talk about it in terms of "What did you think?" "Do you think it's important that we do something like this?" "What do you think are the implications when we think about teamwork or navigating across some boundaries?" So a lot more engaging.

Having discussions around race, diversity and tolerance and the frequently "intense" discussions that ensued was something Margie found "very eye-opening."

> Everybody [was] involved. Just hearing some of the stereotypes and the thoughts that students would have made what we read and what we talked about more real. [At one point in the semester] each of the students had to come up with a poem or song or something that they liked and just orate it. To practice public speaking and it was supposed to be someone that they would consider a leader. One student stuttered a lot and it was nice to see

> that the class was very supportive of him and tried to help him through the process, like "It's all right."

Margie and her co-instructor further incorporated career development theory into the structure of her section of EAD 315 with the development of the final course project, a career-related Personal Leadership Plan, requiring students to conduct informational interviews in the field and develop a resume along with reflection papers, many of which were career-related.

The issue of EAD 315 as a graded versus "Pass/No-Pass" course is something Margie struggled with and reflected on, at length during the interview.

> I think there's a lot of flexibility with the Pass/No-Pass ,but there's also a lot of gray area. And so, OK, do you quantify it by points, do you. . .how do you do it with attendance and the assignments that you give. A lot of times it's just OK if they came to class and they turned in their assignments; that would equate to a "Pass." We didn't fail anyone because no one [missed class] or missed assignments. All of that we worked out, if they were in trouble, we said, "OK. If you write an additional paper on this topic or do something extra" that would help them with whatever was deficient.

> I think it is difficult to have a grade on a class on leadership. . in terms of papers, a lot of that is subjective. I think because it's *not* a graded class, I don't think that a lot of students may have taken it that seriously.

> On the other hand, the discussion we had, in terms of their growth, in terms of their ideas of what is a leader and how do you be an effective and good leader. I think that was really important, but at the same time, like I mentioned, I think being able to articulate yourself in the written form is just as important as communicating what it is that you think is a great leader and what it means to be a leader. So that's what I struggle with.

More structure is something Margie also talked about toward the end of the interview. Having the opportunity to reflect in a more structured environment was something in particular, that Margie touched upon, when reflecting on her limited post-teaching conversations, de-briefing about the class with her co-instructor.

> You know, when you leave a job, you usually have that exit interview. I think it would be nice to have a debrief with all the instructors in terms of . . .you know, these are the things that are great. These are lessons learned as new instructors for the class. These are the take-aways that some of the students have articulated or some of the challenges. Or, some of the things that were negative.

> Maybe taking a look at the evaluations as a group, in terms of the feedback that students have given. "Given these responses, what can we do as professionals in the field? "How does this experience help us?" Or, "What do we say on interviews or how do we articulate this into different areas, whether it's teaching other classes, doing group presentations, training and development, on issues of leadership and diversity.

4. Lauren Phillipsen: Cultural Competencies, Critical Thinking, and Listening

An academic advisor 60% of the time in Mid-Central University's large College of Communication Arts, Lauren Phillipsen also spends 40% of her time developing student recruitment initiatives for that college's Dean's office. With an undergraduate degree in English and prior work experience in Public Relations (including 3 pre-professional internships), Lauren also works with alumni and helps plan special events for the college. Also currently serving as advisor for an organization for students with pre-professional majors, Lauren "absolutely loves" what she is doing.

> I love students; I think they, for the most part have so much energy and are so excited about the future and have so much, in many cases, untapped potential, that in just a short amount of time [I've been able] to see so many students go out and really do well. So, I love where I am and feel like my degree prepared me for where I am now.

Another Michigan native, Lauren plans on pursuing the Ph.D. in higher education and envisions herself eventually as an assistant provost or a dean and hopes to incorporate her love of public relations with a love of higher ed "as much as those two can come together. I think you do PR in everything you do."

It is her experience in the Master's program that Lauren feels contributed most strongly to her overall professional preparation. In her words,

> [The MA program contributed to my professional preparation] very, very strongly. I feel like a completely different person, intellectually, than I was before I started the program. In [my undergraduate program] it is not that I couldn't read or think deeply, but I just don't think I really learned as a student to doubt things and to question things and to really, really discuss things until I did my Master's. And so, in that way, it just kind of opened so many topics and subjects for me and I think it also gave me this very, very deep quest for knowledge.

> I feel like the degree really–it made me realize that I'm much more of a thinker or I'm an analytical person [more] than I thought I was. And in terms of professionally, it is just one of those things where I'm meeting with a student and I think, "Oh, you're in Chickering's third vector." Could I do my job without my Master's degree? Yes. Could I do it as effectively as I'm doing it now? No.

When asked about her reasons for choosing to teach EAD 315 as one of her required program practica, Lauren described a lifelong interest in the *teacher-student relationship*

though not ever having a strong desire to become a teacher, per se.

> When I was little, I was one of those kids that had the white board. My parents bought me a white board for Christmas one year so that I could sit in the basement and teach my stuffed animals all different things. Even though I didn't want to be a teacher, I have always wanted. . . just the general relationship that you have as a teacher to students. That I always really liked and when I heard other people talk about doing it–you know, the class that had gone before me in terms of EAD 315, it just seemed like the perfect way to figure out what I really wanted. Do I want to be in administration? Do I want to teach?

Lauren also attributed the role model of her co-teacher as a good example to follow, ultimately leading to a shift in her thinking about students and student issues in her classroom.

> [My teaching partner] was good for me because she was much better at listening that I was and so I sort of would watch her with the students and realize if she threw out a question, I wasn't going to answer. So, in waiting for her questions to be answered, so much more happens and they cultivate so much more learning when its thrown out and they're talking about it and they're bouncing ideas as opposed to. . ."Oh, let me tell you." I think it was good that I was one of the talkers and [my teaching partner] was one of the quiet ones. It helped us think "OK, what's gonna make you talk more? What's gonna make me talk less" and we were able to use that with our students.

In her current position, Lauren believes that her teaching experience affects what she does on a daily basis.

> I think it does, kind of indirectly when teaching for me really helped me think, in a different way, about patience. And I think that is something that has carried over a lot in advising. You know it is very easy to say "Of course, I understand that every student is different" and this student over here might really need some more explanation. Well, that's exactly how advising is. And so, being

> patient, I think, is a big thing that has carried over and then, also, just listening.

Lauren found some problem with the level of support she felt was given during the practicum, with no major complaints but rather finding it "very average."

> I didn't feel like I was very supported through the semester, at all. Neither of us did. But the actual training, I got to admit, I don't remember all that much from it. I even hate talking about this because honestly, I have very little recollection about it. I think they did hand out syllabi from other classes, but I think it would've been helpful to even have a couple people come in and actually teach you. In other words, you're the students and this is how they taught a section of EAD 315. Because, yeah, it would've been great to shadow and go to a class, but I didn't do that and I don't think many people did.

Lauren tempered this with a suggestion, however, that her expectations are "way too high" and that "typically it's almost *impossible* for anything to actually meet my expectations because they're unreasonably high." Overall, it is interesting to note that teaching EAD 315 "actually did meet [her] expectations" and cites this as evidence of how much she enjoyed the experience. When asked what, specifically made a difference for her, Lauren suggested

> I don't think it has much to do with me. I think my expectations were high because they always are, but I think teaching with the person I taught with and I think the actual combination of people in the class made a huge difference. I think had I taught it with somebody else and we had, you know, a very different class, it could've been a different experience. I don't think it was necessarily me saying, "Well, this is supposed to be great, so I'm gonna make it great." I think it was just a matter of things falling into place pretty well.

Lauren also thought entering the experience of teaching EAD 315 as a first-time teacher is "a good thing and not a negative at all." When I asked Lauren to explain, more specifically, in which ways being a non-teacher helped, she continued

> You don't have this formulaic approach to teaching. At least I didn't. You don't have this, "OK, I've done these studies. I've read these things and I know you're gonna learn this and if I teach you this way you're gonna like it. I mean, the whole point of EAD 315–the title, I mean–is quite misleading. Yes, it's about leadership, but it's about leadership in so many capacities and it's much more about *cultural competencies* and that's how we taught it, with leadership in mind. You know, you've lived this way for so long, but what about this person? What about these persons or how will you react when this happens with this person?

Returning to the subject of support for teaching the course, Lauren thought a weekly seminar or similar structure might be very beneficial to instructors of EAD 315. "As much as it was nice to be on your own I think we both could've used more support." In addition to discussing the "housekeeping" issues of paperwork and procedure, Lauren felt she and others would benefit from more exposure to the experiences and ideas of other EAD 315 instructors.

5. Deanna Gregg: Teaching Experience in Student Affairs Professions

Assistant Director of Student Activities Deanna Gregg has returned to her baccalaureate alma mater, Buckley College, a small private women's liberal arts institution on the east coast where she graduated with a double major in Sociology and African-American Studies. Her long-term goal is to be a dean of students or vice-president of student affairs in the Washington, DC area and, at the time of the study she

was looking at pursing a Ph.D. at the University of Maryland.

When asked why she chose MSU for her Master's program, Deanna stated

> I would say Michigan State chose me. I was in a program called the Institute of Recruitment of Teachers, a program for students of color getting their Master's or Ph.D. and I was required to apply to 10 schools and Michigan State [was one of them.] Not really having any intention of going to Michigan, they asked me to come visit. That was a weekend program for students of color and I did and really loved it. I loved the program, I loved [an EAD faculty member]. . I had that women's college connection with her and so, I got an assistantship and I thought, "Why not?"

Deanna felt her experience at Michigan State was "very important" to her professional program. "I didn't realize how important my assistantship was in Res Life before I got to the job I'm at now."

Choosing to teach EAD 315 fulfilled one of Deanna's three prime goals for a master's program, which consisted of doing a research project, presenting at a professional conference, and having an opportunity to teach in a classroom, something Deanna had not done before. Deanna actually taught two semesters of EAD 315 and did two additional practica, one in judicial affairs and another working with MSU Vice President for Student Affairs, Dr. Lee June, attending meetings and sitting on a committee he chaired.

Teaching EAD 315 two times, Deanna stated she "learned equally [each semester] but different things."

> I think my first semester, I learned I could definitely get in front of a classroom and I could take what I learned from researching or teach it to a group of students and I really had to get out of my comfort zone because I had to approach the students differently. A

> lot of them were just extroverts, but you really had to push them and in small groups they were able to interact well with each other, but try to have a large discussion and now [that was not] my experience.

Deanna felt she needed to stick more closely to "what other EAD 315 instructors did" during her first semester of teaching the class, but found the initial teaching experience an opportunity to learn that she could not only get in front of a classroom, but "take what I've learned and teach it to a group of students" albeit while "getting out of [her] comfort zone."

Despite the need to adhere to an approach to teaching here section which conformed more to her understanding of what instructor expectations were, Deanna noted a strong sense of autonomy developing by her third or fourth class session. She described the reflection with which she processed some of the initial problems she faced teaching her section.

> I'm pretty sure other people sensed that a lot of the class, because of a "Pass-Fail" wanted an "easy grade" and they weren't necessarily committed to doing anything extra. They just wanted to do just enough to get by. So, I realized I might have an idea how this class will go and these students are just not interacting the way that I thought they should. And so [by] the third or fourth class, me and my co-instructor [said], "OK, we have to approach this differently because us as instructors and them as students, we have two different ideas of how this class is gonna be, clearly. We're the instructors so we need to kind of rework it."

Deanna found she was able to integrate much of her own Master's curriculum content into her own teaching during the second semester of EAD 315. "It was really great because I think it enhanced what I was able to offer my students. My second

semester, I was able to draw from a class I was taking at the same time."

In her current position, Deanna attributed having taught EAD 315 at Michigan State as a big factor in her ability to "really get a sense of what college students like and what they don't like."

Deanna stated that being able to understand that "development can be on different levels" goes a long way in understanding why some students interact differently than she may expect them to. Teaching first-year students at Buckley College, she stated she is sensitive to the idea that, developmentally, their differences are important things to keep in mind.

Deanna's work at Buckley College is administered through the college's Office of Student Leadership and Activities, so she plays "a very close part in all the leadership training." She noted that "a lot of the elements that I used in EAD 315 I incorporate into the training that we offered this year."

There were a number of personal and classroom "aha" moments that Deanna described when talking about both sections of EAD 315 that she taught in her program.

> Well, when we talked about values and ethics, we had a section on presidential leadership and so that tied-in perfectly. There were a lot of "aha" moments there and my second semester, the [student] rioting and other things were going on, like hot topics unscripted, you know, in the [campus newspaper].

When I asked what she learned "about Deanna" while teaching EAD 315, she again alluded to the reflection on student differences in light of her expanding understanding of student development theory.

> I really love engaging students in discussion and I really love hearing other students' point of view. I feel like I was undeveloped and all those things. I had a very narrow life experience and being at Michigan State was just so hugely. . .I mean, 45,000 compared to 1200. Co-ed versus a women's [college], I just was able to learn how students from other parts of the country, other people think and so it forced me to re-evaluate what I believe and what I think. Or reinforce the ideas and values that I have. Ultimately, I just learned that I really love being in front of a classroom.

As per support for teaching, Deanna "definitely had moments of feeling isolated." Coming from the East Coast to East Lansing and feeling "like the only Black woman in [her] cohort," she noted her initial experiences at Michigan State were "just really difficult." By her second semester in the program, however, she found other students of color who were both the support she needed and persons whose experiences were similar to hers.

Deanna stated that the required meetings for EAD 315 instructors were a form of structure, but could have been more helpful if more structure were built into them. "I think it would've been helpful for me to do a daily reflection or weekly reflection." Regarding the meeting discussions, Deanna said, "I felt we showed up because we had to, but I didn't really see how we learned from each other." When asked what she might consider as possible modifications of that support, she offered

> The one day training didn't adequately prepare me to face the classroom. I know the training was not to teach me how to teach, but I left thinking, "OK, so now what?" Maybe if each meeting between instructors had a specific theme to it, or even if we had to do a weekly reflection or something, looking back at it even now, probably, [it] would be more interesting for me, at least personally.

Not quite suggesting teaching EAD 315 should be a requirement for the Master's program, Deanna described herself as a strong advocate for the opportunity that teaching provides, regardless of whether or not one wishes to pursue teaching.

> I loved it and did it again, but I just feel like perhaps this would be a requirement. I don't know if that's too much of an expectation, but I just think having that experience teaching and, well, really applying what we're learning as a master's student in the classroom to *your* students. . .I just think this is a great opportunity. I just feel strongly that it's just a really good experience.

Deanna pointed to the large extent to which teaching EAD 315 was discussed during the "probably like 20 different institutions" at which she interviewed.

> So, I think having that experience on your resume looks really good as a candidate. Or even if they don't teach, well, frankly, you'll be doing training, or you'll be leading a workshop, so obviously, you'll be interacting with students. Having EAD 315, I think every interview that I went on, I kinda talked about that experience quite a bit, 'cause I was *asked* many questions about it and the fact that I taught.

6. Ramon Elizondo: Learning Classroom Management Skills En Route To The Professorate

Ramon Elizondo is a Northern California native currently pursuing a doctorate in higher education at a large Midwestern state university. With a bachelor's degree in Marketing, Ramon worked for a health insurance company for a few years before making a decision to go to graduate school for the MA in Student Affairs Administration, a decision he refers to as "quite a professional shift." In addition, Ramon worked for two years as a residence hall director while an undergraduate at Southern Pacific University.

With a research assistantship, Ramon has not eliminated the possibility of pursuing a career path in administration, but leans strongly toward faculty positions which he feels would be a good fit, along with continuing work in the community, particularly with students of color or of a low socio-economic status. As he stated, "Sort of a faculty, by-day, community organizer by night, I guess."

Ramon's undergraduate experience advising Greek student organizations at Southern Pacific University sparked his earliest interest in what he eventually came to understand as the spectrum of student affairs positions. That, along with a summer fellowship through the Julian Samora Research Institute directed Ramon to the Student Affairs MA program at Michigan State.

Through California's Western Regional Careers in Student Affairs Day in Long Beach, Ramon made connections with MSU Student Affairs faculty who told him about assistantships and other funding opportunities, helping solidify his decision to apply to MSU for graduate school.

> I'm really happy that I went to Michigan State because it just gave me a different perspective of different populations. . .of the dichotomy that's in the Midwest between black and white. [The Julian Samora Research Institute] is how I got to Michigan State and sort of stayed there and just really enjoyed my time there, taking the course work and also really working with the faculty and the mentoring that occurs there, as well.

Ramon stated that the MA program helped provide him a "foundation to what the [student affairs] profession is" and a strong background in student development theory as well as an idea of "what was in store for me after I received my degree at Michigan State."

Ramon also felt the opportunity to present at national-level professional conferences was but one aspect of the program which allowed him to excel beyond simply completing the minimum program requirements.

> My research was on the perceptions and knowledge of different students. . .of different degrees, or advanced degrees as well. I guessed [the students] were making connections with faculty and a lot of them were first-generation Mexican-American. So, I found they did not have the faculty connection quite yet established, so it brings the question as far as, OK, when you're applying for a graduate program, who's gonna write your letters of recommendation, analyze your writing skills, that kind of stuff? So, I think I was seeing where their knowledge was.

The formal teaching experience that doing EAD 315 as one of his required practica was one which Ramon felt "gives us sort of an introduction of what teaching undergraduate students would be like," though he suggested that as he pursues a Ph.D. higher education, he will more likely teach graduate students. Ramon added:

> . . .maybe if teaching is what I want to do, it sort of just scratched the surface on what classroom management would be. How to produce a syllabus. What lesson plans [are], what are you going to talk about the next class. So, it definitely kept us on our toes as far as what we're gonna need the following classroom session.

> I really enjoyed being in front of the classroom and having conversations with students. It wasn't really more of like, "Well, I'm gonna teach you this and this is what I expect from the class." [It was] more like engaging in conversations about issues of leadership and also issues of diversity in some sense we touched on as well.

In his current role as doctoral student/assistant, Ramon reflected on how he translates his experience teaching EAD 315 within his new venue:

> Working with the course development [class] that we're producing, I think. . .just looking at how we can change and even though it's more on the leadership side, the course development I'm involved with now is more of the critical pedagogy and really working with critical issues in higher education. How to maintain trying to be part of that process. So, it's a bit different, but just trying to see how we can manage that, I guess I see how students would respond because I also helped teach and facilitate [EAD 315].

When asked what he learned about himself during the teaching of EAD 315, Ramon was quick to note a couple of things:

> I think I learned more about my style of delivering. Just like discussion topics, I think I developed a lot more knowledge of how I can develop a course, a curriculum and I think I also learned how to work with other people in regards to facilitating, since it was co-facilitated. Just seeing what I think what my strengths were and what [my co-teacher's] strengths were and how we're gonna put that together to really manage a discussion in the classroom.

Ramon was largely satisfied with his experience teaching EAD 315 and would have welcomed an opportunity to teach it again but notes that he would have appreciated an increased opportunity to interact with other instructors of the course. "It would be really interesting to see how different one [section of EAD 315] is from the another."

While most of his closer colleagues, like him, focused on leadership development, Ramon was interested in different ways instructors may have approached teaching their sections. "If people really delve into harder issues in the curriculum, that would be an interesting thing to analyze."

In pursuit of the Ph.D. and a possible faculty position on his career horizon, Ramon found the fit between teaching EAD 315 and future teaching a potentially good one.

> It gave me some clear classroom management skills that if I do end up pursuing the faculty position that I have some knowledge–not necessarily the full expert knowledge of what working in the classroom is like, but EAD 315 did give me that–the option to really look at. . ."OK, what is it like to be in front of a classroom?"

7. Rob Cartwright: EAD 315 as a Learning Laboratory

As Coordinator for Student Involvement and Programming Leadership at Mid-Central University, a medium-sized private institution in a Midwestern state, Rob Cartwright works with a number of his school's social programming groups and advises various class councils. In addition, Rob works with the three main leadership programs at Mid-Central: a fall leadership summit geared toward making connections with campus leaders, a January "leadership-defining community experience" that focuses on diversity and multi-cultural leadership issues, and an in-house leadership institute with 60 annual attendees. With a background in psychology and English, Rob was actively involved in Greek life at his undergraduate alma mater, Middle Great Lakes University, did orientation programs and worked "almost full-time" as a student athletic trainer.

Taking a year off to consult for his fraternity and do some traveling, Rob began his MA in Student Affairs Administration in 2004 with a graduate assistantship in the Department of Student Life, working with fraternities and sororities as well as working as a graduate intern in the University Activities Office.

Fulfilling his two formal practica in other venues (academic advising in a residential college and a summer orientation internship at a North Carolina university), Rob's teaching EAD 315 did not, technically, count as required practicum, but was Master's level pre-professional experience that he wanted to build into his program.

Considering his entry into the student affairs field "by coincidence and falling into it," Rob weighed a desire to teach along with a preference for working with college students versus high school or elementary students in choosing the MA program at Michigan State. He described his previous experience working with other students while an undergraduate as a big factor in what spurred him into student affairs.

Rob considered his MA degree "extremely helpful, informally as much as formally" in his overall career preparation and in preparation for his current position.

> I think that one of the things that our program does really well is prepare students and prepare graduates to look at theory and aspects of student development, but [integrating these] into your practice very seamlessly. You don't have to necessarily talk about theory to be practicing it or discussing it and if you do discuss it, you don't have to use the technical terms, but use layman's [sic] terms that both students and other staff with a different background might understand.
>
> So, it's been really helpful for me as far as how I think about different situations that have come up. What things I need to be thinking about, with the students and their development and how all those pieces combined can result in some things, successful for both the students and the institution.

When asked how having taught EAD 315 has helped him professionally, Rob stated

> Oh, I think it's been *extraordinarily* helpful! The section that I taught was an all-freshman section. So, it really helped me think about first-year students and their transition. How to get them involved. My office goes by the name of the Office of Student Activities. We really focus on involvement and leadership. So, one of the things we talk about in my office is how do we get students involved and involved in a healthy way that they're able to maintain their balance and without over-committing themselves and overdoing themselves.

> So I think having that experience in 315 has helped me sort of understand some of the concerns that students come in with. How they got involved, or how they were involved in high school and how that affects them getting involved in college.

I asked Rob to elaborate a bit about how having taught EAD 315 in the practicum related to his current work. He continued

> I think another aspect of it is. . . I became more comfortable in different aspects of leadership, having taught 315 and . .it helps me as I work with my–the student groups that I advise as I think about, sort of, the bigger leadership picture here at [Mid-Central University], it helped me to be a little bit more articulate about those areas and helped me think about and reflect about those areas a little bit more.
>
> I understand where I fit in and I feel with those different things whereas. . I think if I hadn't had that experience I don't know that I would be quite as refined. It would be more–I would be learning how I felt about these different aspects of leadership on the fly, here, rather than at–and then using the classroom. . .the 315 classroom was sort of my learning laboratory, as well. So, I think that's a big way in which, that's helped me a lot.

Rob's exuberance about teaching EAD 315 was noted in his having wanted to teach additional sections, had it been possible, versus the assistantship he had at Michigan State.

> Yeah, I would've loved to do it. If I could've devoted myself to it rather than having to do an assistantship on the side, I would've taught it and . . I would've taught four sections of it. If I could've been paid to do it.

Despite this, he did not think EAD 315 would lack instructors if it continued to be staffed on a volunteer and/or practicum experience basis, but he did feel that support issues for instructors is something that might be revisited.

> There could be more structure put into the experience. As the semester got

on and people got busier, people put less effort into their planning into 315. I know there was just some weeks where I was just swamped and as much as I wanted to devote myself to putting together a great lesson plan, there were some lesson plans that we just didn't spend as much time on. And I think if there was payment or some sort of compensation, there can be increased expectation, as well. If it was a teaching assistantship, that would be one of the most competitive assistantships on campus.

Rob rated his experience teaching EAD 315 very highly, overall. " The section that we taught together was really great. I mean we–I, I loved it. So it far and away exceeded my expectations."

8. Mary Jo Bensen: "I see myself as always teaching"

Mary Jo Bensen is a coordinator for two living-learning programs at Central State University, a large, mid-western public research institution where she also is an instructor in that school's College of Agriculture. Having developed a 3-credit, graded leadership course partly based on her experiences teaching EAD 315, she was, at the time of the interview, in the middle of her seventh semester teaching. Mary Jo coordinates the Career and Major Exploration and Leadership-in-Service programs, both based in the university's residence halls.

A graduate of one of Michigan State University's residential colleges, Mary Jo's undergraduate degree is in international relations. Prior to starting her master's degree at Michigan State, Mary Jo worked for three years at nearby Beta College, a small private liberal-arts school where she was Assistant Dean of Students as well as a residence hall director.

With an eye toward pursuing a Ph.D. in higher education, Mary Jo presently views

her long-range career path as somewhat divergent, with interests in both career development/career advising as well as leadership development. Leaning more toward taking the leadership development path, Mary Jo stated she would like to get a job where she would be "exclusively designing and implementing leadership development programs." She considers the Ph.D. or an Ed.D. a "big priority," wishing to focus more intensely and deeply on the academic exposure she has already received in leadership theory, finding "a little more meat" to add to her knowledge repertoire.

Initially declined admission to the Student Affairs Master's program, Mary Jo's three years at Beta College was a big factor in a subsequent acceptance into the Educational Administration Department's H.A.L.E. (Higher, Adult and Lifelong Education) master's program, but ultimately she transferred into the Student Affairs Administration program. The time at Beta College was also something that strongly influenced Mary Jo's process of deciding what she wanted to do with her life, professionally. Mary Jo stated

> I had predominantly just done my RA thing and had been in a sorority but really hadn't explored it any further. For me it was really the job at [Beta College]. And realizing that, yes, this is what I want. I decided pretty late in my college career this is what I wanted to do.
>
> So, I kind of came through a side door, basically, but it really was my experience at [Beta College] and realizing that the work I was doing every day, I really loved and was passionate about much more so than my undergrad. And [I] knew that I wanted to go and learn but I also knew it was a bit of a haul. That, in order to do it and move up and to do the kinds of jobs I wanted, I was gonna need to have the degree behind it.

> I'm still very involved in committees and chairing things and putting bids in for conferences and things like that. So, when I first started in the field, it was predominantly with GLACUHO[1], but part of my job at [Beta College] was also to work with student activities and I became really involved in NACA, which is the National Association of Campus Activities folks. And on my own campus serving administrative committees and also on our kind of own administrative senate, I served as an office on that at [Beta College] and that was really pretty helpful for me.

> I [currently] work for a department where they put a lot of money into our professional development, so I go to a lot of conferences and I present a lot. So, if I'm going to stay residential, I'm going to stay here on this campus where I know I have a lot of resources. Otherwise, I think I would go to a job that was pretty much exclusively leadership development. In its own center, I would be the one specialist within the college or whatever it might be.

When I asked Mary Jo to what extent she saw continued teaching or a more traditional faculty role as a part of that scenario, she stated

> I don't know if I see myself in a more traditional faculty role as much as I see myself always teaching. I think, if anything, I'm interested in course development. Which enables me to do some of the role that I have right now, but again, it gets more on the faculty side, so I dunno. I don't envision myself as a traditional faculty where I'm–that's my primary purpose. I always probably foresee myself teaching, but not necessarily in that *role.*

Mary Jo described having experienced "an epiphany of 'Oh, wow!'" during her Master's program which she was "excited to be in a program where I was connecting with the material." She expanded

> For me, I had a really strong connection to the courses where we talked a lot about retention issues and also about issues of identity and social justice. Those were areas that I really just didn't know anything about [and] ended up writing most of my papers and

[1] Great Lakes Association of College and University Housing Offices

> doing most of my research on them. Also, some of the more complicated stuff. . .I took a creating a learning organization course my first semester which I wouldn't recommend as somebody's first course when you're learning Senge and mental models and strategic thinking and all this stuff the very first time, but it was so far out of what I learned in my undergrad, that I really thought it was interesting.

She considered the two practica experiences "really great and not great" but teaching EAD 315 as "phenomenal and probably the best thing I did in my entire program." Her second practicum, in an advising office in the College of Business "wasn't really as tangible for me or as meaningful." Mary Jo taught a section of EAD 315 at the end of her program, after taking classes part-time for four years. She described the process of deciding to teach EAD 315 as one of her two required practica.

> I knew the minute that I wanted to join the program that I wanted [teaching EAD 315] to be one of my practicum experiences. I admired and knew [the course coordinator] and really thought she was great. She spoke so highly of the program. The one area of my portfolio that was missing was some teaching experience. I knew that I had enjoyed small classroom settings and meaningful conversation when I was at James Madison as an undergrad; I was really fortunate to be part of that and have that kind of small class setting.

> I also had a friend in the sister program, H.A.L.E., that wanted to teach with me. So, I knew for years that I was going to, hopefully, teach EAD 315 and was just waiting until I went full-time again, to be able to do it. And that's what we did. We got accepted and all that kind of stuff. (Laughs) We prepped for months! We were the biggest dorks! We read books and you know, we planned our syllabus for months; we were really into it.

Mary Jo considered teaching EAD 315 "a major turning point" when asked how it relates to her current position and/or her long-term career goals. Discussing the interview

for her current position, Mary Jo stated

> When I explained to them what it meant to teach EAD 315 and that it wasn't a set curriculum. . .that we really did it ourselves. . .they became very interested, very quickly and part of my first task was to work with a faculty member in the Human Community Development/Agricultural Education. . .to create a course here.
>
> Every day, you know, the work that I did in EAD 315 and the thoughtfulness I had to put into it has helped me in my current work, tremendously. It made me much more marketable to this institution.

When asked about how, if at all, teaching EAD 315 helped Mary Jo learn about herself, she laughed

> I think I learned that *teaching is hard!* That consistency is so important, that I'm a huge role model to students. That if you set high expectations, good things come of that. High expectations, high achieving results. I think that I learned that you have a responsibility to students to make it interesting.
>
> I learned how to put together a syllabus and I learned how to create learning outcomes and to really have to be responsible to the students to give a good experience that they're actually gonna take something out of it. I also learned how to learn critically about how students respond to material and make changes.
>
> I think the last thing I learned was, definitely, humility and be able to admit in front of a class of 30 students that you did something wrong or that you didn't get that graded. Lots of things, I guess!

9. Dennis Mott: Classroom Teaching as Part of Personal Transition from Student to Professional

A residence life coordinator at Great Lakes State University, Dennis Mott spent the first two years following receipt of his Master's Degree as Director of Leadership

Development and Service Learning and serving as a residence hall director at Bridge College, a small liberal arts school in the upper mid-west. The two year gap between completing his master's degree and the position he had been in a couple of months at the time of the interview involved "adjusting back to a big school where the decision-making processes take longer."

He attributes the academic reputation of Michigan State University as part of his decision to apply to the Master's degree program in Student Affairs Administration, but ultimately that it "came down to fit" and "feeling at home at Michigan State."

A bit unsure of his long-range career goals, Dennis seriously considered law school when he left Ridge College, though his wife was "adamantly opposed to [his] going to law school," due to the hours, the perceptions about being an attorney. He eventually did apply as did, ironically, his wife, who was accepted, whereas he was not. Despite the turn of events and rejected law school admission, Dennis had "no regrets, so I'm comfortable moving on, now." Dennis said that his wife's admission to law school, his current position at Great Lakes State and the community they happened upon have all worked out to their advantage.

> Now, with my salary, and then, we still get a free apartment. You know, it makes sense–she's right on campus whereas other law schools have to–law school students have to commute. We're not paying for housing, a cheaper state school, so financially, it should make sense right now. And so, I feel like it's fallen into place. I'm not thinking law school's the direction for me.

Dennis is one who feels his Master's program, in general, and teaching EAD

315 was "very important" to his professional preparation. He stated

> I can think of it from a lot of different angles. One, I would say, it was really a time for me to mature. So, that's kind of as a young professional–somebody who went straight out of college to grad school and went on, I think that I matured a lot in those two years and developed some sort of professional identity. I think that it was just a time to mature. [I had] a kind of closer connection than I had had with undergrad with kind of administrative student affairs roles. And really kind of seeing that from that perspective, or point of view. Which, again, led into kind of a transition between "student-professional" or, you know, student to administrator, however you define it. Connections, I would say, it was important just to get there and make those connections. I feel like I've built a pretty big network, both of my cohort and just Michigan State, in general.

> I think that Michigan State, compared to other schools provided a lot of opportunities for, like, the practicum, uh, practica or assistantships that a lot of schools [don't make] available, but they can't because of the size of program and because of the people that are involved and the different possibilities available.

Dennis cited one of those on-campus connections in making the decision to teach EAD 315 as one of his required program practica.

> I remember being presented. . .[EAD faculty member]. . .she was the Practicum coordinator, I believe, at the time I was there, so she would run our professional development meetings. I think it was like a 1-credit class where we came together maybe once every other week or maybe once a month to kind of talk about places for professional development and also, I think where we explored different [practica]. So she was [closely] involved with the EAD 315 program. She would talk about that, you know, with some frequency and I also just talked to other current students that had done the EAD 315. So it was kind of how I heard about it and then, what interested me was that it was just kind of a non-traditional approach to the practicum. Or, at least as non-traditional as I thought. I didn't necessarily associate formal teaching in the classroom with the kind of work that I was doing.

And so, that seemed a really neat opportunity.

Dennis did not have formal teaching experience, per se, prior to teaching EAD 315, but came into the Master's program with considerable related experience during his years working as a residence hall advisor while in his undergraduate program.

> No formal teaching experience. I would say I went into it with a lot of workshop experience when I was an RA as an undergraduate. I was an orientation leader and after that I moved into an orientation director role and so in that we did a lot of workshops in diversity training as we were training the orientation leaders. So, I think I had some sense of doing workshops, putting together agendas, outlines, those sort of things. So, I think I approached it from a "prepared" position, but not formal teaching.

While teaching EAD 315, Dennis and his co-teacher "defined places that we thought leadership was important," citing a number of diversity-related leadership activities done in their section of the course, appreciating the opportunity to work with students in relationships different then in his assistantship with Residence Life.

> We let them do presentations, so the ability to design my own curriculum was really appealing. I was working in residence life at the time, and I didn't really get a lot of one-on-one time with [the residents]. So, this was a time when I really got to know a group of 25 students much better than I would otherwise. It was nice to interact with students outside of the normal setting; I wasn't an assistant hall director, you know? Or, I wasn't assigned to that–I was just the course instructor. So, they didn't connect me with residence life which was kind of a neat thing.

When I asked about what he learned about himself while teaching EAD 315, Dennis talked about both his need to "loosen up" and a developing understanding how he was starting to view student development as a developing professional versus how he observed students as an undergraduate, albeit it in even a semi-professional capacity as

residence hall advisor.

> I think that [teaching EAD 315] amplified some of the things that I already knew and made it stand out. The impatience came out, particularly when kind of wanting students to achieve a certain learning outcome that we were doing based on an activity and then, like, not getting there.
>
> That kind of impatience and wanting people to be where I thought they should be at as opposed to kind of letting them be wherever they are and just moving people forward, individually. I think in that sense, also the flexibility came in and that it probably got me to loosen up. I would say I am. . .tend to be more loose now when I do these types of workshops or when I do any formal kind of training, which I would with the classes. You know, each class was a kind of formal session of some sort. But I think I learned some flexibility. I think that I discovered I didn't like formal settings, as far as teaching, although I like the experience.

Dennis also related a specific teaching experience while at Ridge College where he felt having taught EAD 315 made a significant difference.

> At [Ridge College], I taught sort of a "College Success 101" which they let faculty and staff teach from around the institution and so I taught that and I think my experience in EAD 315 better prepared me for that because I already had kind of sense of what it meant to pull things together–what to expect in a classroom.

Regarding some more ways the actual teaching of EAD 315 contributed to Dennis' professional preparation, he was eager to elaborate, noting the transition from a residence life perspective to a more comprehensive student affairs view.

> Right. Um. . .a couple of different things. . .I . . one of which I kind of said before. One was, I think, a . . .I think I had a sense of kind of like putting together workshops, but I think it pulled me together and made that more systematic–like. . .you know–what's the outline? What do I want them to accomplish by the end of this activity? How are we gonna get 'em there? So, I think as I've

> been in other roles that require kind of. . .formal workshops or me coming up with agendas and outlines–I think I'm better able to organize that and focus on kind of a goal.
>
> So, I think it helps with that. I would think it helps in how I interact with students–I think, often times, um .. .especially at *bigger* institutions. . .at [Ridge College], I knew students more personally because it was so small. . .but at bigger institutions and again, here at [Great Lakes State University] . .I find myself so. . .administrative, but I really don't get to know students, personally. . .so, the interactions that I often have with students are through, like, conduct. . .you know, here is the case where their conduct–aside from me, be like some student leader meetings that I might attend. . .and so often, I'm meeting these students through conduct and so, I think that that's a positive experience for me.
>
> I can make that positive, but nonetheless, I think that I come to define most students by those experiences. So, I think because this was out of the realm of residence life, it kind of made me realize that students exist in different capacities around campus and so, not to kind of plug them into any one of those.

Though Dennis felt his experience teaching EAD 315 was beneficial personally as well as professionally, he would not have taught another section of the course.

> I think no. (laughs). I'm trying to figure out what it is about. . .I don' t think I'd be a teacher, either. So, I think it's the formality, maybe the formal hours. Maybe the feeling that I have to be there–can't escape. I think I defined it differently and still do. I'm not sure what that is. I classify it as a really great experience but I don't think it was one that I wanted to look at.

10. Peter Reed: Understanding Student Experience in University Settings

Peter Reed is the Senior Director of a non-residential learning community program at Midwestern State University, a large public land-grant institution in the central United States. Serving in this capacity approximately five months at the time of the interview,

Peter served as Interim Co-Director in that office for approximately nine months before his current appointment. With 38 students in the program, five graduate fellows and 15 tenure-track faculty members associated with it, Peter "assures that everything runs smoothly" among his various management activities with the program.

As a multi-disciplinary program, it draws its faculty from all over campus, but is administratively housed in Midwestern State's College of Natural Resources. Students in the program receive an academic specialization in a program environment which allows them to explore their academic interest in a planned and very individualized program of study. Peter stated that three types of students take advantage of the program: students who are interested in a certain topic of study but cannot find a course that would fit, students that don't have the time to take a traditional block of courses the university may offer and students who have taken a course in a certain subject and wish to investigate it more in-depth.

In tandem with administrators, faculty and graduate fellows, students plan an experience that the program assists the student to achieve while still within a traditional degree-granting program at the University. Included are 12 credits "not associated with the program but ones which are very intentional" and dedicated discussions aimed toward "making connections happen outside of the program." As Peter specified, "We're learning through community, but we're very focused on the individual."

Peter described a "natural fit" between the non-residential program and his student affairs background, which allows him to utilize much of the student affairs administrative and student development literature in his current practice. Peter is an undergraduate

alumnus of Midwestern State University as well as a former student in his non-residential program. He noted with bemused irony that one of his undergraduate professors is someone he currently supervises.

Like many of his Master's cohort, Peter was an undergraduate resident advisor, a position which led to his discovering the Student Affairs Master's Degree Program at Michigan State via ACPA's Next Generation Conference, a pre-conference experience for undergraduates who may be considering graduate work and careers in student affairs.

> I met [an EAD faculty member] at that conference. She said, "Come and talk to me when it's time to apply for grad school." I did and when she explained the program at Michigan State, I didn't apply anywhere else. This was it! [Michigan State] was the only place I really wanted to go. What really drew me in was the theory-base. Knowing that we'd be getting a lot of exposure to amazing theory, but also a large amount of faculty members that really [knew about] student affairs.

A mid-Michigan native, Peter considered secondary education but by his junior year in college knew "it just wasn't my place" and that higher education was the professional venue he would seek out.

> My experiences with Res Life really gave me the experience to know that. And the reason I chose my Student Affairs master's is that I know that I want to go on to the professorate. Specifically, I want to study sociology and I know that's where I wanted to go, but before [doing so] I wanted to have a good place where I knew how students work.

> I feel there are times that faculty members enter into the professorate, they are told they have to teach these classes, even though they want to do research. Especially as you're coming up as an Assistant Professor in a department and that kind of stuff. But they don't really have teaching experience. They don't really know how to teach. *They don't know*. They don't understand what

> a college student is thinking. Their background, what they're going through. That's what I wanted. I wanted to make sure that I knew about college students before I entered into the field of higher education.

Peter "very intentionally sought out EAD 315" as a practicum option, though he did not know much about the class when he first came into the program.

> I knew there was the option to teach and I had convened courses– and [was] instructor for courses, here, at the [non-residential program], too, before I even taught this class. Our forms of and methods of teaching are very different. I wanted academic experience in a different kind of atmosphere. So I wanted to make sure that I. . .I very intentionally sought out EAD 315. It was also required for my leadership cognate[2], so I knew that I needed to do that at some point in time. This is something that I've been very interested in a for a while–leadership, specifically, because I came up to Michigan State in the [Student Affairs Administration] program and so, because of that, I was very involved in leadership.

Peter's description of the experience of teaching EAD 315 was both analytical and thoughtful, particularly in detailing the processes of designing the curriculum for his section of the course and how he has translated this process while administrating and teaching in his current position.

> I think the biggest thing for me was having my own curriculum time. I had never had a class that I was able to design with someone else. And that was probably the most beneficial piece because have to potentially think about what you hope the students will get out of this. How do you reach the university outcomes that you are handed? Or, for the class that you have as an instructor, as well.
>
> In our classes, here, the entire class was. . .curriculum. And it's messy and it's frustrating, but it's also very beneficial. [Teaching

[2] A curriculum option that involves shaping elective courses around leadership and teaching EAD 315 as a practicum (Renn, 2007)

> EAD 315], I thought I don't have the opportunity to sit down and develop how to intentionally teach students about this subject and I'd never done that before. . .and this was my way of doing it.

Per the curriculum design process, Peter waxed a bit more philosophical about his approach with student outcomes in mind. The following exchange between us illustrates Peter's growing understanding of where he is situated in the process of curriculum design, from an instructor's perspective.

> [PR] The only disadvantage was. . the power–that part of the struggle. I'm an instructor, therefore I have all the knowledge. . I'm going to fill my students like empty vessels and that's not how I approach my life, so when I have students, it takes students time to get used to my approach that we all co-create knowledge in our classrooms, together. And there are certainly things that I'm doing as the instructor of record for the class. But there are also other things. So, that's very much the approach that I take. With the curriculum design. . .by having to. . .have a set of outcomes, you feel bounded by the instructor to say you *have to learn these things.* Don't get me wrong, those are definitely valuable things for the students to learn, but you definitely get involved!
>
> [PK] And the alternative is that you're open to serendipity and those things that you don't expect from your content or curriculum to–
>
> [PR] Those are the scariest things! (laughs). Right now, I took a very different approach to the curriculum and I allowed them the opportunity to have them put on what they wanted to get out of the class through individual surveys. But also, we got to choose. I chose the books for them, but they got to choose when they wanted, how much they wanted to spend [time] on them. And so, in the class, they had to design a process on *how to design.* So, they designed a process that they built by consensus and from that process they made a decision.

Peter cited the coordinator of and faculty-on-record for EAD 315 as "one of the best

supports" in his program, being very helpful in his professional development and instrumental in helping secure his assistantship. Overall, Peter called teaching EAD 315 as "one of the most rewarding experiences" in his two years in graduate school at Michigan State.

> And I say that not because of what I did but because of the students. They were a great group. And I think because they were my first group, I'll always remember them. I'm still in contact with a few of them. They've asked me for letters of recommendation, so it's good to catch up with them. It's knowing that you had a positive impact on those students even though you don't know it at the time.

Peter felt that more structured support, such as weekly seminars might be a good thing to consider for future instructors of EAD 315.

> Very similar to what I do with my graduate fellows, here. I got feedback that how we work our graduate fellow programs, they felt like they were very disjointed, that they never got to see each other. And because of that [feedback], this semester we're meeting on a monthly basis and we're talking about the paradigms that are associated with this program. We're talking about some of the work they're doing. So, I think those kinds of systems in place can really help a group of individuals build an identity. It makes it easier for them in the work that they do.

Summary

Ten participants were interviewed between January 2006 and April 2007 for this study. Each participant was a graduate of Michigan State University's Student Affairs Master's Degree Program and at the time of the interview was working in a professional student affairs position and/or had recently been so employed prior to admission to a doctoral program.

The individual stories describe the participants' prior academic and professional background, their reason for applying to Michigan State for graduate school, and their individual experiences teaching EAD 315 as one of the two required practicum in their graduate program. One exception is a participant who taught EAD 315 in addition to fulfilling the two practicum requirements in other venues. Deeper understanding of the experiences, learning and meaning-making of these ten individuals provide, through this phenomenological study an opportunity to answer the research question: *How do graduates of Michigan State University's Student Affairs Administration Master's Degree Program perceive the impact teaching EAD 315 has had on their professional preparation*?

In the following chapter, I will summarize the common themes and issues that were reported among the study participants. Understanding how teaching EAD 315 contributed to their professional preparation and how this experience might be viewed vis-à-vis the professional standards for master's level practicum experience as well as through the lens of the study's experiential learning framework.

Chapter Five

Findings II: Summary and Analysis of Participant Experiences

Introduction

This study focused on the learning experiences of ten student affairs professionals who taught EAD 315 as part of professional preparation in the Student Affairs Master's Degree Program at Michigan State University. In Chapter Four, I gave highlights of the in-depth interviews with these individuals relative to their reports of how and what they learned during this experience.

In this chapter, I summarize the key findings of the study, specifically those themes, issues, and examples noted in transcripts and interview notes which most strongly characterize each of the participants' stories, particularly in terms of the *experiential learning* that occurred while teaching EAD 315. With attention to the voices of the participants, I will summarize the parts of responses which most strongly relate to the research question raised in Chapter One. Namely, how do graduates of Michigan State University's Student Affairs Administration Master's Degree Program perceive the impact teaching EAD 315 has had on their professional preparation?

Chapter Five concludes with an analysis of the significance of these findings in light of the experiential learning framework of this study. What have these individuals learned during their experience of teaching EAD 315? In answering this question I give several examples of what this learning looked like and point to examples where the characteristics of *experiential learning* are evident.

The Three Primary Themes Found In The Data

While a number of issues were raised by the study participants during their individual interviews, I noted three major themes that characterized the experiences of the study participants:

- The Value In Teaching EAD 315 During the M.A. Program
- The Learning Transfer From The Practicum To Day-to-Day Professional Life
- The Impact Of Teaching EAD 315 on Short-Term and Long-Term Career Goals

The Value In Teaching EAD 315 During the M.A. Program

One of the strongest themes throughout each of the participant interviews is that teaching EAD 315 as a practicum played a significant role in the student lives of each of the participants while a student at Michigan State University. Teaching EAD 315 provided an opportunity for participants to integrate course work (such as student development theory) into their teaching.

Margie Lennon, Rob Cartwright, and Peter Reed are perhaps the strongest examples of this connection, noting several times their tendency to translate "theory" to "practice" in the crucible that was their individual classrooms.

Margie Lennon's "intuitive understanding" reinforced and strengthened by the study of theory in her master's course work was further reinforced by her background in career development which she incorporated into much of her course instruction, including a

final career-related Personal Leadership Plan. The link between her graduate degree program and her present position was, in Margie's view was rather clear. Once again, she described the link as follows:

> I think leadership development and career development go hand-in-hand. To be a great leader you need to understand people, just like in the workplace you have to understand people. How do you work with people who are different than you? How do you work with people who you don't agree with, personally or professionally? How do you translate all of the skills that you've developed as a leader into the workplace. . .that you bring into the team wherever you go in your career?

Rob Cartwright's interest in first-year students and their transition to college was an opportunity for him to use theory in the construction of more thoughtful and knowledgeable views of the students in his class and in the work he currently is involved in at Mid-Central University with various student involvement programs. Teaching EAD 315 helped him understand, better, "some of the concerns that students come in with" helping him make better sense of the student development theory and other graduate course work he experienced in other parts of his graduate program. He viewed his teaching EAD 315 as a "learning laboratory" of sorts, both in terms of understanding student differences as well as preparing him for advising student groups.

> I understand where I–where I fit in and I feel with those different things. Whereas I think if I hadn't had that experience I don't know that I would be quite as refined. The 315 classroom was sort of my learning laboratory as well, so I think that's a big way in which that's helped me a lot.
>
> I think another aspect of it is, I became more comfortable in different aspects of leadership, having taught 315 and it helps me as I work with my student groups that I advise. As I think about the bigger leadership picture here at [Mid-Central University], it helped me a little bit more to articulate about those areas and

helped me think about and reflect about those areas a bit more.

Others in the study indicated the role EAD 315 played in their own developmental transitions as graduate students, often in tandem with other practicum experiences, or assistantships.

Dennis Mott described learning about his need to "loosen up" and develop a better understanding of student development as a professional versus how he viewed students as an undergraduate residence hall advisor. "I think that [teaching EAD 315] amplified some of the things that I already knew and made it stand out."

Justin Taylor, a Concert Advisor and Coordinator of the Late Night Big State non-alcoholic alternative entertainment program at Big State University found the EAD 315 classroom he taught in to be an opportunity to understand, while still in graduate school, his need to "slow down" and "take a step back to evaluate what it is that I'm doing and where I'm going with it."

Deanna Gregg found teaching two consecutive sections of EAD 315 an opportunity to develop a stronger sense of personal autonomy and understand student experience from diverse backgrounds different from her own experience as a woman of color from the East Coast. Deanna was adamant about the utility and value of connections between what she learned in her own graduate program and the students she taught in EAD 315:

> I will say. . .and I just came into this thing knowing that I wanted to have [the teaching experience] and so I made myself do it and I loved it and did it again, um, but I just, I feel like perhaps this would be a requirement–I don' t know if that's too much of an expectation, but I just think having that experience teaching, um, and really applying what we learned in the classroom. . .well, really applying what you're learning as a master's student in the classroom to your students. . I just think this is a great

> opportunity to do so. I mean, I recognize not everybody wants to go into teaching, so maybe not, but I just feel strongly that it's just a really good experience

The value in teaching EAD 315 while in the M.A. program is one of the three primary themes to emerge through an analytical look at the data in this study. The ability to make "theory-to-practice" connections in the EAD 315 classroom was, for many of the study participants, a unique opportunity to reflect on the learning they did in their graduate coursework or simply to encounter avenues of needed understanding in light of their often diverse classroom populations. In addition, several participants reported that teaching in the practicum afforded an opportunity to witness and attend to their own student development as they reflected on student scenarios they encountered either in the EAD 315 classroom or in other student venues, including additional practicum experiences and interacting with various units in the university.

The "Learning Transfer" From The Practicum To Day-to-Day Professional Life

Most of the study participants reported a carry-over of learning during the practicum experience to their present positions, though not always in teaching roles. Jennifer Elias, Justin Taylor, Lauren Phillipsen, Mary Jo Bensen, Dennis Mott, and Peter Reed all reported strong connections between what they learned while teaching EAD 315 and their current positions.

Though an advisor in the College of Social Science at Midwestern University, Jennifer Elias saw teaching as "part of advising" and valued teaching EAD 315 as very much a "hands-on practicum." Student involvement and volunteerism are leadership opportunities Jennifer felt "make a difference" when students apply to various academic

programs or when they are looking for jobs, with "enthusiasm and confidence." Teaching EAD 315 provided Jennifer with an early opportunity to learn how to "provide the tools" to students versus simply serve as "information vault" to students in search of information or resources. She also spoke of teaching EAD 315 as an opportunity to fine tune her perspective on the students she advises in her current position.

> A lot of the things that you can do through your practica are a little big or a little more behind-the-scenes, a little. . you know, you don't really have that direct contact and having 25 students to deal with. . .two hours, twice a week. You know and trying to get assignments and get them to. [Teaching EAD 315] was really eye-opening in terms of what teachers go through. I have much more of a. . .um, of a perspective from both sides, now. Obviously, having been a student, myself, but now, having been on the other side of it so when I talk to students I can say. . .you know . . .teachers don't know if you *care* if you're doing poorly unless you *talk to them* about it.

Justin Taylor felt himself to be, essentially, a "non-educator" but believes teaching experience is essential to his current and future work in student affairs. Not considering himself a very reflective person, Justin felt the practicum "forced him" to learn how to reflect and evaluate both different situations and his role in them as well as reflect on his own personal values.

> I got to have some–some really good interactions and some good ties with some of the students, there. Um, I was able to–to challenge them, a lot of times and they were able to challenge me a lot of times. . .and force me to question what some of my values are.

Lauren Phillipsen, similarly, found teaching EAD 315 helped her ability to be patient and more reflective with students, things she believes have carried-over in her advising students at Mid-Central University's College of Communication

Arts. The idea of "cultural competencies" as a real focus of Student Leadership Training is something Lauren believes is integral to the teaching of leadership and integrating leadership theory with an understanding of how students are different, developmentally. Understanding that "every student is different" and how one's needs as a learner may be different from another is something Lauren learned during her practicum, along with her need to "just listen" to students she taught or is now advising.

> You know, it's very easy to say, "Of course, I understand that every student is different" and this student over here might get it like that (snaps fingers) and this student over here might. . . .really, really need some more explanation. Well, that's exactly how advising is. You know, everybody's different. . .you know. . .some. . .and there's certain things about the way that [Mid-Central University] is set up in terms of credits and things like that . . .that are confusing. And so. . .being patient, I think, is a big thing that has. carried over. and then, also, just, um, listening.
>
> I think, again, something that I–it's not one of my best traits and it is very important with students because, you know, teachers. Often they're just up there and you're just. . . "Oh my gosh, please stop talking" and if they let things go to the class, very often, they come up with the answer that you were gonna say anyway.
>
> And I think that is a huge thing with advising. Because it's so easy to give them the answer, but so often, it doesn't take them much for them to get there. And it's much more gratifying for them and for me when they do get there. . .so, I think that's again, another connection to teaching because it was. . . at first, my teaching style was. . .much more, "And this is the answer!" and . . ."Da, da, dahhh.. . . " and it became much more, "OK, so what do you guys think?"

Lauren's observation that teaching EAD 315 resulted in her continuing understanding, as an academic advisor, that "everybody's different" is coupled with her strong sense that her ability to listen to students has significantly changed.

Mary Jo Bensen currently is an instructor of a course similar to EAD 315 as well as a coordinator of two resident learning programs at Central State University. Seeing herself less of a traditional teacher than she did simply "always teaching," learning classroom management skills, developing a syllabus, writing lesson plans and outlining student outcome objectives are all things she first touched upon teaching EAD 315 and continues to learn about as an instructor. Mary Jo described her experience teaching EAD 315 as somewhat of a paradigm shift:

> I had to learn how to teach. . .which was very different than anything else I had done before, but I think my experience in housing and in student activities had kind of prepared me for, you know, being able to speak to students on their level and understanding kind of where they were at–we had a great group of students and for me it was really a turning point that I was teaching while I was doing a job search and I knew at that moment after I was, you know, 5 or 6 weeks into teaching that I absolutely had to have teaching as part of my next staff–my next role. Um, and that helped frame my job search. So it not only was really important at the time, but it also kind of helped me frame that, later on, as to what my next step was gonna be.

In Mary Jo's case, her experience teaching EAD 315 helped frame her earliest job search following graduation from the Student Affairs Master's Degree Program and continues to inform her current position as instructor of a similar course.

Immediately after obtaining his master's degree, Dennis Mott, Residence Life Coordinator at Great Lakes State University, taught a first-year class at Bridge College where he felt teaching EAD 315 helped prepare him for understanding the variety of perspectives students bring into the classroom.

> Oh, I think it's been extraordinarily helpful. Uh.. .the section that I taught was an all freshman section. All first-year section at Michigan State, so, it really helped me, you know, thinking about first-year students and their

> transition as well as, you know, how to get them involved and my office really–though my office goes by the name of the Office of Student Activities, we really focus on involvement and leadership.
>
> One of the things we talk about in my office is how do we get students get involved and involved in a healthy way that they–they're able to maintain their balance and. . .without over-committing themselves and overdoing themselves and so I think having that experience in 315 has helped me to sort of understand some of the concerns that students come in with. How they got involved, or now they were involved in high school and how that actually affects them, um, getting involved in college as well as some of the concerns and why a student might not be as eager to get involved. So, from that end, just working with the students, it was great

Peter Reed also found a valuable connection between teaching experience in the master's degree program and his current teaching responsibilities.

> Right now. . so, it's been very beneficial. . it's something I very much believe in. . and because of that, I've stuck with it even in my professional life because that's something that. . when I was talking to my department chair and when I was hired on that was one of my conditions–that I was to teach .. .in the leadership section
>
> But. . the difference [between the two teaching experiences] is that its different being the only person there to lead the class but, much of it is much is the same. It's very relational, very activity-based, very discussion-focused. I never lecture. I will definitely lead discussions but I will never stand up at the lecture and simply do lecture and have them take notes. That is not how I operate–that is not how I teach. That is not how I will ever teach. Um. just from what I've learned here in this program. . .students already are heavy–pleasantly surprised with the class because they came in expecting a lecture class.

As I illustrated in these examples, several of the participants reported aspects of teaching EAD 315 as a practicum that have informed and shaped their present roles as instructors and administrators.

The Impact Of Teaching EAD 315 on Short-Term and Long-Term Career Goals

Six of the participants were, at the time of the interviews, in program coordinator or director positions at various institutions across the country. Four of the participants (including one program director) were in formal full-time or part-time advising or professional counseling positions. One was currently a doctoral student and research assistant. Also at the time of the interview, four of the participants were either current or recent teachers of college-level courses with each of the coordinators involved in some level of workshop facilitation or professional development activities. At least five of the study participants reported a plan to apply to a Ph.D. program at some point or were, in the case of one participant are in course work pursuant to the doctoral degree.

Teaching EAD 315 had a significant impact on several of the study participant's short- and long-term career goals. Among these are those who reported notable, if at times, even profound influence of this specific practicum experience on one or more professional goals. Lauren Phillipsen, Deanna Gregg, Ramon Elizondo, Mary Jo Bensen, Peter Reed reported plans to obtain a doctoral degree pursuant to higher level administrative and/or faculty work. Jennifer Elias and Deanna Gregg discussed the value of having teaching experience when they were a candidate for student affairs positions of all kinds.

Those seeking to apply to, or who were already enrolled in doctoral-level programs all reported the value of having taught EAD 315 during their Master's program at Michigan State, both in terms of being able to understand student development theory (as observed in their classrooms) and learning at least the rudiments of classroom

management techniques.

Academic advisor Lauren Phillipsen attributed the opportunity to learn *cultural competencies* while teaching EAD 315 and the value of her new understanding of student difference in both her current position and as she considers future administrative work in higher education.

> I think the format of [EAD 315] is so great because it allows you to find out about the people in there. What we have in common is that we're all learning the same subject. So, a total mix of people but the neat thing about all of them is that from the beginning of the class until the end, they grew so much in the sense of their interests in what everybody else has to offer.

Assistant Director of Student Activities Deanna Gregg found teaching EAD 315 twice an extended opportunity to expand on what she felt was a "limited" background to an understanding that student difference within a classroom is, in part, due to development occurring at different levels. Developing " a sense of what college students like and what they don't like" was important to her current position in Student Activities at Buckley College. She also believed it important to carry these experiences into her future doctoral program and continued work in student affairs, particularly as she reflects on the possibility of additional teaching.

> I think a lot of the elements in the class that I used in EAD 315. . .I also used . .I incorporate into the training that we offered this year. But to answer your question about . . .teaching. In the interview–any interview I had while looking for jobs, I definitely said I enjoy teaching, I like teaching, I wanted to teach and I asked if that was an opportunity. And so, that was very important.

Ramon Elizondo, a research assistant at Central US University cited his experience

teaching EAD 315 as a helpful factor in the course development he is currently involved in. Learning about classroom management while teaching EAD 315, albeit only "scratching the surface" was knowledge that Ramon felt is important as he considers a Ph.D. in higher education and a possible faculty role, if not an administrative one, in the future.

> Well, I think it gave me some clear classroom management skills that if I do end up pursuing the faculty position that I sort of have some knowledge–not necessarily the full expert knowledge of what working in the classroom is like, so it just touches on that, but nothing, you know. . really major, per se, but I think . .EAD 315 did give me that–that option, to really look at. . .OK, what is it like to be in front of a classroom?

Mary Jo Bensen did not necessarily see herself in a "traditional" faculty role, but as someone who will always be teaching, hoping to be doing more work in leadership development programs. Currently an instructor of a similar course to EAD 315, Mary Jo stated that having taught EAD 315 at Michigan State made her "marketable" and better equipped to develop the course she is now teaching. Considering EAD 315 a "major turning point" in her academic career, to date, Mary Jo found much value in learning how to both manage a class and develop a syllabus, lesson plans, and assignments. Mary Jo described how her experience teaching EAD 315 may have contributed to her obtaining her present position.

> As I started my job search, really looking for teaching opportunities, the ability to get back in the classroom, I came to interview here and one of the major stakeholders in my leadership living-learning community is our campus leadership center which was brand new–it was only a year-old when I came to campus. And they were in the process of developing this 3-hour Introduction to Leadership Theory course.
>
> I think I'm a great candidate, but I think one of the major reasons I became

> a really strong candidate was when I explained to them what it meant to teach EAD 315 and that it wasn't a set curriculum, that we really did it ourselves. And, you know, what had worked for me, what hadn't worked for me. They became very interested, very quickly and part of my first task was to work with a faculty member in [a department in our college] to create a course here, which has now become the entry point to our interdisciplinary minor.

In his role as Senior Director of a non-residential community learning program at Midwestern State University, Peter Reed also valued the teaching experience he obtained in EAD 315, especially as a necessary set of tools to bring into a doctoral program in Sociology which he ultimately hopes will lead to the professorate. Already somewhat experienced in teaching in the non-residential program, Peter very much wanted broader teaching experience and particularly valued EAD 315's opportunity to learn more about student difference and student development from an instructional point of view.

Peter's experience with EAD 315 was "intentionally sought out" with an eye toward understanding student experience in different academic environments than those he already experienced as instructor and administrator in his role as Senior Director of a non-residential learning community program at Midwestern State University. Concerned, as well, about a need to understand student experience as he contemplates a professorate in Sociology, Peter notes that new assistant professors often do not have teaching experience.

> I feel. .. there are times that faculty members enter into the professorate, they are told that they have to teach these classes, even though they want to do research. Especially as you're coming up as an Assistant Professor in a department and that kind of stuff. But they don't really have teaching experience–they don't really know how to teach. They don't know. . they don't understand–what the–you know, what a college student is thinking–their background, what they're going through. That's what I wanted. I

> wanted to make sure that I knew about college students before I entered into the field of higher education.

He reflected on the value of the relationships had with students in his section of EAD 315, underscoring the meaning and depth of some of these student-teacher relationships.

> I would say the only thing I would have to say about [teaching EAD 315] was [that it was] one of the most rewarding experiences. And I say that not because of what I did but because of the students. They were a great group. And I think because they were my first group, I'll always remember them. I still see them around campus. I still am in contact with a few of them. They've asked me for letters of recommendation, so it's good to catch up with them. It's knowing that you had a positive impact on those students even though you don't know it at the time.

Though not currently considering a doctoral degree, Academic Advisor Jennifer Elias describes the "hands-on value" of the practicum in this context and how it provided her with an opportunity to view students from other than a "fellow student" point of view:

> A lot of the things that you can do through your practica are [things that are] big or a little more behind-the-scenes. You don't really have that direct contact and having 25 students to deal with [as with teaching EAD 315]. I mean, it was really eye-opening in terms of what teachers go through. I have much more of a perspective from both sides now. Obviously, having been a student, myself, but now, having been on the other side of it so when I talk to students I can say I can.

Other participants pointed to seeking advanced degrees, and/or future academic roles. The following examples are some in which future roles in academia were anticipated, often in reflection upon having taught EAD 315.

Ramon Elizondo, a research assistant at Central US University cited his experience teaching EAD 315 as a helpful factor in the course development he is currently involved in. Learning about classroom management while teaching EAD 315, albeit only

"scratching the surface" was knowledge that Ramon feels is important as he considers a Ph.D. in Higher Education and a future role as a teacher. Ramon described what he learned while teaching EAD 315 as he reflected on the experience vis-à-vis future professional goals:

> Well, I think what led me to do that was getting more of the formal teaching experience. . .you know, although there [were] guidelines as far as you know, what should be the outcomes of EAD 315 or what books have been suggested, I really enjoyed being in front of the classroom and having conversations with students. It wasn't really more of, like, well, I'm gonna teach you this and this is what I expect from the class is more like engaging in conversations about issues of leadership, uh, mostly and also you know, issues of like, diversity in some sense we touched on as well, so–from what I remember.
>
> But I think it really provided an outlet and just an opportunity to, like, oh, well, maybe if I do, you know. . proceed on to a doctoral degree and maybe if teaching is what I want to do, it sort of maybe just scratched the surface on, like, what classroom management would be, um .. .how, you know, how to produce a syllabus.
>
> You know, what lesson plans, you know, what are you gonna talk about the next class. So, it definitely kept us on our toes as far as, you know, what we're gonna need the following classroom session. So, um, I think that it gives us sort of an introduction of what teaching, you know, undergraduate students would be like even though if you probably get a PhD in Higher Ed, you're probably gonna be teaching graduate students.

Deanna Gregg commented on the impact of having teaching experience on her job search after graduation. Deanna noted that most institutions seem to be leading toward teaching of some kind as a requirement for many positions.

> Oh, absolutely. I mean. . .I think every job interview and between ACPA and NASPA and afterwards. Probably like 20 different institutions. . .I want to state. . .the majority, if not all, had some sort of teaching requirement or opportunity. Whether it was in Res Life or not, where they have this experience course, a leadership course–whatever the institution calls it, they have it. And so I really feel like, you know, institutions are really moving toward having these supplements, you know, for students to

take and a lot of them are moving towards them at being mandatory.

> So, I think having that experience on, you know, your resume, I think is–it looks really good as a candidate. As a, you know, a job candidate. Or even if they don't teach–well, frankly, you'll be doing training, or you'll be leading a workshop, so obviously, you'll be interacting with students, so. . .having that EAD 315, I think every interview that I went on, I kinda talked about that experience quite a bit, 'cause I was asked many questions about that experience. And the fact that I taught. Well, this past year, it really made a big difference.

The Participant Experiences As Viewed Through The Lens of Experiential Learning Theory

In order to reframe a conceptual understanding of the data culled from the participant interviews, a brief review of some of the more relevant points of experiential learning theory is in order.

As I discussed in Chapter 2 (p. 28) Anderson, Boud, and Cohen (2000) described the following as "essential criteria" of experiential learning:

that the learning that results if personally significant or meaningful to the learner;

1. that it is important that the learner is personally engaged with the learning;
2. that there is a reflective process involved;
3. that there is acknowledgment that there is involvement of the whole person in all her capacities and relationships with the present and related past experiences;
4. that there is recognition of the prior experience of learners;
5. that there is an ethical stance of concern and respect for the learning, validation, trust and openness toward the learning which value and support the 'self-directive potential of the learner.' (pp. 227, 228)

Moon (2004) described four important "outside boundaries" of what can be defined as experiential learning:

1. experiential learning takes effort
2. "specific experiences [must occur] at the 'right time' and in the 'right place'" in order for learning to take place
3. the idea that "'unlearning' can be a more important gain from experiential learning than 'learning'"
4. the idea that experience is subjective.

With these points in mind, it becomes more clear that learning has occurred in each of the participant's experience teaching EAD 315 as a practicum. Anderson, Boud, and Cohen's essential criteria are succinct parameters which can help us understand if teaching EAD 315 as a practicum meets the conditions in which experiential learning can take place.

In considering Anderson, Boud, and Cohen's (2000) essential criteria vis-à-vis the practicum environment as described by both the program description and the participant stories, it is clear that (a) each participant was, indeed, *personally engaged in the learning experience* and that (b) *a reflective process was involved* either at the time of the experience or as prompted by the questions raised by the researcher in this study. For example, each of the participants (except one who taught EAD 315 in addition to two practica) was an active participant in a required practicum experience which required interaction and personal involvement as instructor in various sections of EAD 315. Futhermore, each participant reflected during the course of the study on their teaching experience with several (such as Jennifer Elias, Lauren Phillipsen, Mary Jo Bensen, and Rob Cartwright) noting shifts in how they perceived students while teaching, or thinking of EAD 315 as a personal "learning laboratory."

The extent to which (c) *there is acknowledgment that there is involvement of the*

whole person in all her capacities and relationships with the present and related past experiences is arguable, but as several participants reported, their reasons for teaching EAD 315 were deliberate and largely based on an active desire to obtain teaching experience to enhance their professional skill set or build their resume for graduate school or future student affairs administrative positions.

Similarly, the *recognition of prior experience of the learners* (d) is somewhat arguable, but minimally, an application to the Master's program and consideration for being selected as an instructor of EAD 315 requires an understanding on the part of EAD faculty and administrators of the students' academic and personal histories and preparedness for teaching at the college level. That is, certain knowledge of student instructors is known through the admissions process as well as through acceptance and matriculation to the program.

Since the practicum experience is both moderated by supervising faculty and designed to give student instructors a reasonable amount of autonomy, it can be then stated with reasonable conviction that (e) *there is an ethical stance of concern and respect for the learning, validation, trust and openness toward the learning which value and support the 'self-directive potential of the learner.*

Moon's (2004) *outside boundaries* are additional criteria that can be used to solidify an understanding that the practicum provides an opportunity for learning from the experience of teaching EAD 315.

Teaching EAD 315, as reported by the participants is an experience that clearly *takes effort* (a). The "rightness" of *time and place* (b) in the participants' teaching of EAD 315

is suggested in the notion that it was done as a practicum experience, an arranged, moderated and supervised program requirement. (While one participant taught EAD 315 in addition to two regular practica, it was done as part of overall master's level preparation and otherwise met all the requirements expected of others in this study). The *idea that "'unlearning' can be a more important gain from experiential learning than 'learning'"* (c) is evident in that several of the participants reported, essentially, an "unlearning" of past perspectives and beliefs, particularly about student development and cultural differences. Finally, the *idea that experience* is subjective (d) is clear in that the first-person accounts of these teaching experiences are introspective and reflective. It is the very personal, individualized nature of a phenomenological approach which allows insights, through reflection into the subjective experience of the student participants and allows us to understand, more clearly, the relationship between subjective, personal experiences of a commonly shared phenomenon.

The Participant Experiences Vis-à-vis CAS and ACPA Professional Standards

In Chapter Two, I described the "critical gap" that exists between the professional standards as set forth by CAS and ACPA and what "successful completion" of the master's degree program means. What EAD 315 instructors may have actually learned during their teaching practicum has been unclear as is how graduates perceive the impact of teaching EAD 315 on their professional preparation.

The CAS standards state that "A minimum of 300 hours of supervised practice, consisting of at least two distinct *experiences* [italics added], must be required" (CAS, 2003). CAS recommendations that adequate preparation must precede participation in

any program practicum, reserving the field experiences for students who have completed a sequence of coursework related to the profession with a minimum knowledge demonstrated in all program areas. (CAS, 2006)

Regarding the required field experiences, CAS standards are explicitly stated: "Students *must* [italics added] gain exposure to both the breadth and depth of student affairs work. Students *must gain experience* [italics added] in developmental work with individual students and groups of students in: program planning, implementation, or evaluation; staff training, advising, or supervision; and administration functions or processes" (CAS, 2006).

Prior to this study, it was at best, only anecdotally understood that many, if not the majority, of students who taught EAD 315 as part of their professional preparation for the Student Affairs Master's Degree, learned *something.* But how deep, how frequent, and how meaningful were these individual learning experiences? Were they tied to the practicum experience, itself, or simply the result of the unique set of characters individual students brought to their preparatory program? Did they translate, consistently (if at all) to the various professional venues graduates found themselves in after receipt of the Master's Degree?

This study suggests that *significant learning has occurred* among the ten individuals interviewed. Furthermore, the richness and depth of the accounts of these alumni(ae) suggest that the learning that has occurred has involved considerable *personal engagement, reflection,* and criteria that acknowledge and guide the *self-directive potential of the learner.*

What is notable is not only that these conditions are evident in each of the participant stories, but that they are consistent, in many ways paralleling one another, and readily tied to present and future student affairs practice.

I also observed that all participants responded to questions with considerable ease, often exuberance, and in many cases, in anticipation of many of the sub-questions, with my needing to use very few of the question "prompts" (see Appendix A).

To reiterate the research question: *How do graduates of Michigan State University's Student Affairs Administration Master's Degree Program perceive the impact teaching EAD 315 has had on their professional preparation*? Among the ten individuals in this study, the answers are as rich and numerous as they are free-flowing. In summary, these graduates, themselves, answer the question best:

- "a real hands-on practicum,"
- "really eye-opening in terms of what teachers go through"
- "[a chance to] take a step back and remove myself from a situation, to evaluate what it is that I'm doing and where I'm going with it."
- "the experience of teaching undergraduates"
- "the whole point of EAD 315 is. . .cultural competencies"
- "gives us sort of an introduction of what teaching undergraduate students would be like"
- "315 has helped me sort of understand some of the concerns that students come in with. How they got involved, or how they were involved in high

school and how that affects them getting involved in college."

- "The 315 classroom was sort of my learning laboratory as well, so I think that's a big way in which that's helped me a lot."
- "phenomenal and probably the best thing I did in my entire program."
- "a major turning point"
- "[teaching EAD 315] amplified some of the things that I already knew and made it stand out."
- "I wanted academic experience in a different kind of atmosphere. So I wanted to make sure that I. . .I very intentionally sought out EAD 315."

In the final chapter, I will summarize the purpose, scope and findings of this study, including a review of the three primary themes to emerge through an analysis of the data. I will conclude with some observations and recommendations for future research based on these findings.

Chapter Six

Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations

This study attempted to answer the question: How do graduates of Michigan State University's Student Affairs Administration Master's Degree Program perceive the impact teaching EAD 315 has had on their professional preparation? To accomplish this, I interviewed ten graduates of the Student Affairs Master's Program who received their degrees between 2003 and 2006, inclusive, who taught EAD 315 as one of two required practica in their program, or in the case of one participant, who taught it in addition to meeting the practica requirement with two other assigned field experiences. Each of these graduates is currently in a student affairs professional position and/or a doctoral program in higher education at various institutions in the United States.

Analysis of the interview data yielded considerable information in the form of personal stories and anecdotes about the study participants' individual experiences teaching EAD 315 as a practicum. Within these data, three primary themes emerged:

- The Value In Teaching EAD 315 During the M.A. Program
- The "Learning Transfer" From The Practicum To Day-to-Day Professional Life
- The Impact Of Teaching EAD 315 on Short-Term and Long-Term Career Goals

Subjecting these themes to the framework of the study, namely, the characteristics

of *experiential learning,* as well as the essential tenets of the CAS and ACPA professional guidelines which suggest such an experience is necessary for meeting minimal standards of preparation for student affairs professions, it is evident that teaching EAD 315 was very much a meaningful, professionally relevant experience and one of immediate and lasting practical value. From the opportunity to make meaningful connections between course knowledge and classroom teaching during the Master's program to practical, day-to-day connections between theory and practice in present positions, to serving as crucible for future decisions about further graduate study and/or professional advancement, the study shows that both the short-term and long-term impact of teaching EAD 315 on master's level student affairs professional preparation is both clear and compelling.

Limitations of the study

The ten individuals are but a small fraction of the numbers of students, staff and faculty who have taught EAD 315 and represent, at best, the cross-cohort group of graduates in the program since 2003, inclusive. With that said, however, the group studied is representative of those who graduated since the latest issue and publication of CAS professional standards (2003) and whose programs are reflective of the current state of student affairs master's level professional training.

The study does not purport to draw any conclusions about the teaching of EAD 315 during the course of other graduate programs, by individuals who may be staff or faculty members. Furthermore the study does not attempt to describe the experience of the hundreds of individuals who have taught EAD 315 over years.

Any attempt to draw connections between the focus of this study and comparable teaching practica in other programs is ill-advised as the specific content of Michigan State University's EAD 315 is conspicuously within the focal realm of this research. Student Leadership Training and an understanding of its content vis-à-vis the subjects' teaching of undergraduates is a strong association that must be understood to fully appreciate and draw conclusions from the data culled from the interviews.

Implications of The Research

One of the primary goals of the research was to provide a more systematic, theoretically-grounded understanding of what it means to teach EAD 315 as part of professional preparation in Michigan State's Student Affairs Master's Degree Program. Does learning occur during the experience? If so, what specific things are learned? Does the experience fulfill the intent of CAS and ACPA professional recommendations for practica? Can it be readily understood what these graduates bring into their professional positions that can be attributed to having taught EAD 315 as a practicum? As these questions have been already answered, what are the implications for the many parties at the table, so to speak?

Certainly, in light of the data, it can be strongly argued that teaching EAD 315 is a rewarding experience for those who teach it as a practicum. The study participants universally reported far more positive aspects to their experience than negative ones with several noting that the experience was pivotal and a significant opportunity to learn about themselves, about student development, about their university, and about their professions. Furthermore, several in the study reported the singular aspect of *teaching*

experience as valuable when applying for jobs, graduate school, or subsequent teaching experiences.

Also significant, in my opinion, is the caliber of student instructor, at least as evident throughout the study group. Student Affairs is a diverse and often identity-muddied professional arena into which persons from a variety of backgrounds enter and continue on similarly diverse professional paths. The individuals in this study may or may not necessarily represent the "typical" young student affairs professional but they certainly do seem to exemplify the thoughtful, reflective, and conscientious young professional. Their stories of teaching EAD 315 are not only examples of their own worthwhile teaching experiences but equally worthwhile opportunities for the profession to learn more about the character, insights, and scope of its newest members.

While problems regarding the logistics, structure, support and mechanics of EAD 315 did emerge in the study, they are relatively few in number. Virtually all of the participants report the experience of teaching EAD 315 as a "positive" experience and most regarded the support and supervision provided as adequate or more-than-adequate. If anything, some reported the idea that more support of the same variety (e.g., in the form of weekly seminars, reflective papers and journals, etc.) would be welcomed.

The feasibility of increased support for EAD 315 instructors notwithstanding, I would strongly advocate a more structured opportunity for instructors to interact with one another, if only to provide further learning opportunities during the course of teaching EAD 315. It is not at all evident that increased *levels of supervision* are in order as much as increased facilitation of communication between instructors, between instructors and

faculty, and for the sharing of ideas, practical knowledge, and more systematic study of teaching methodology. Cross-section seminar opportunities for whole sections to interact in the context of topical or interesting subjects would be another opportunity for EAD 315 instructors *and* their students to interact and share ideas and knowledge.

Probably the greatest variety in participant response came in regard to support for the instructors who teach EAD 315. While nobody in the study felt that the quality and caliber of available support was inferior, participants sometimes noted they might have preferred *more* support or thought that more structured support was in order. Ramon Elizondo commented:

> It would've–it could've probably been better. I don't think we really met too often. I think we had the introduction, like, the introductory, just sort of–uh, like this is the course . .this is the syllabus that you should probably follow. Uh, here's the guidelines or like. . what we want, to–um, students to have after they're done with the program. . .but you know there was not really too much follow-up in regards to, hey, it sort of .. .mid-semester, you know how everything

> It would be cool to have it, like, something more informal–not necessarily like anything formal, like. . I guess just scrutinizing what everybody was teaching or anything like that, but more of like, "Ok, where can we be of support?" I guess just more checking progress and if there's any research that's needed form the facilitator or the instructor would've probably been a better experience.

Dennis Mott noted similar thoughts, but did acknowledge one drawback to more rigid support for instructors.

> Um, I mean, I think. . there could be more. . like a little bit more structure put into the experience. I mean, I think if it. . .if you could–if it was a teaching assistantship, you know, there were two or three of them. . .for the. . the. . .however many blocks, I mean, that would be one of the most competitive assistantships, probably, on campus. Um, and you would be

able to recruit, sort of the cream of the crop–I would assume.

> But. . .to make it overly structured, like a. . .an established curriculum and an established reading list, I think, would really defeat some of the creativity and really, some of the meaningful dialogue that takes place in 315.

Peter Reed, who, at the time of the interview was teaching in a non-residential learning community program, had some ideas about the value of more structured support when his comments about his current teaching prompted me to ask if he felt teaching EAD 315 as an assistantship or at least with a more regular seminar-format support system in place was worth considering.

> You know, I think it would be great. Very similar to what I do with my graduate fellows, here–I've just designed the process. Uh, I got feedback that how we work our graduate fellow programs here that they had the opportunity to do research, they have the opportunity to work on special projects, they have the opportunity to convene courses and they felt like they were very disjointed, they never got to see each other.

> You know, they never could go the "identity route" being graduate fellows in the [program here]. And because of that, I got that feedback, so this year–this semester, rather, we're meeting on a monthly basis and we're talking about the paradigms that are associated with this program. We're talking about some of the work that they're doing.

> Just making sure that we can build an identity around–and give them the opportunity to meet each other, because sometimes we don't even meet. So, I think those kinds of systems in place can really help a group of individuals build an identity. It makes it easier for them in the work that they do.

Rob Cartwright, as another example reflected on the possible advantage in a more structured approach to instructor support.

> I think there could be more [support for instructors]. . like a little bit more structure put into the experience. I mean, I think if it. . .if you could–if it was a teaching assistantship, you know, there were two or three of them, however many blocks, I mean, that would be one of the most competitive assistantships, probably, on campus. Um, and you would be able to recruit, sort of the cream of the crop–I would assume. I think there's something to be said for. . .you know, structure, but. . .you know, one of the things that. . .my co-instructor and I really. . .enjoyed was the freedom to. . .to be very broad and how we approached leadership because, you know, leadership is a very difficult thing in that if, you know, you promote a particular curriculum, you're promoting one way of looking at leadership.

While the discussion of what "works" and is helpful in the support for teaching EAD 315 may be the impetus for subsequent inquiry, some of the ideas presented by the participants in this study may merit closer look.

Long-range Views of EAD 315 In Light Of The Study Findings

One of the potentially interesting aspects of this and continued study of teaching EAD 315 as a practicum (as well as other aspects of teaching the course) involves future direction for the course. If this study, which shows a definite positive reported impact on professional preparation is any indication, the value of teaching EAD 315 in the Master's degree program is widely appreciated by former instructors. With the disclaimer that the following section is quite subjective and the product of considerable personal reflection on this study and the impact of teaching EAD 315 in my own professional life, my sense is that there are a number of aspects of teaching EAD 315 that might be used to optimize both the experience of its student instructors as well as the students who, as undergraduates, enroll in the course. While my observations may indeed raise a number of questions, in the final section of this chapter, I will discuss possible future research

which may provide some of those answers, if not simply frame the questions in a manner which can be addressed in a more scholarly and objective manner.

Theory-to-Practice Cues From EAD 315 Instructors

As has been noted previously, several of the instructors interviewed in this study referred either directly (as in the case of Rob Cartwright) to the "learning laboratory" aspect of teaching EAD 315, or allude to it in their references to understanding student development and difference while teaching EAD 315. It seems that discussions about how to best take advantage of this relationship are worthwhile discussions to promote and become involved in. While this is not to suggest that the practicum seminar does not provide an opportunity for ad hoc discussion of student development theory, identifying this relationship and orienting course support for instructors to this relationship in a more structured fashion might provide for less serendipitous and more dedicated theory-to-practice learning opportunities for graduate students who teach the course.

Identifying teacher methodology resources and practices that utilize student development theory at the college level would be certainly in order. Also useful may be the use of exercises, discussions and writing opportunities connecting student development theory with issues, problems and questions raised during the semester.

One important caveat is that no manipulation of current supports for EAD 315 instructors should in any way minimize, diminish nor jeopardize the learning and cultural experiences of the undergraduate students who enroll in the course. However, with that said, it is equally compelling to consider the advantages potentially afforded students who take EAD 315 by incorporating these potential theory-to-practice connections in the

course pedagogy.

A related potential discussion would be to examine what opportunities there may be for enhancing the EAD 315 experience with a facilitated "leadership laboratory" experience for students in the form of either additional, specific-focus sections (such as those which already exist for Freshman students) or opportunities for students to expand on learning in EAD 315 with additional course experiences in the form of semester-long community outreach opportunities that might tie leadership study with practical applications.

Increased Support As A Means To Consistent Experience.

While virtually all of the participants in this study report quite positive learning experiences as instructors of EAD 315, one of the reasons this study was proposed is that these experiences are often in isolation and/or are reported only anecdotally. What remains to be seen is how consistent positive learning experiences may be across a number of cohorts, not to mention the cohorts of various programs whose students volunteer to teach EAD 315 each year. While the implementing of more structured support for instructors does not, in itself, guarantee any consistency of these positive experiences, it certainly might provide additional opportunities to assess and be attuned to these experiences on a more regular basis.

Suggestions for future research

To me, this study has been the proverbial tip of the iceberg and further research into similar groups of instructors would seem worthwhile, if only to expand on the breadth of student experience regarding teaching EAD 315 as a practicum. Ten individuals have

provided rich and deep stories of their experiences, but the numbers of stories continues to grow each year as EAD 315 remains a popular option for completing one of the two required practica.

Furthermore, the connections many of the study participants made between learning student development theory in their course work and understanding it more clearly through their own developing lenses as they interact with their students are additional evidence that EAD 315 is a valuable learning experience. Repeating this study, therefore, would add to the body of knowledge about the experience. Understanding these experiences across cohorts, over time and in greater number and detail can provide much deeper and richer information, thus weaving a more complex but more identifiable tapestry. Certainly, the questions answered in this study are but the early foundation to this understanding. Many more questions remain. Some of them include:

- In what ways can the best aspects of teaching EAD 315 be identified and utilized more fully? In particular, can the "learning laboratory" aspect of teaching EAD 315 while learning student development theory be optimized for both EAD 315 instructors and their students?
- What changes can be made to EAD 315 to make it an even more rewarding experience for student instructors and enrolled students, alike?
- What aspects of EAD 315 (teaching, supervision, materials, venues, etc.) can be enhanced to enrich instructors' opportunity to reflect and understanding the learning that may occur during the experience?
- Are there any current aspects to the experience that might be revisited with

an eye toward modification or elimination?

- How can MSU's Educational Administration Department or the student affairs profession, in general, benefit from a more comprehensive knowledge and understanding of these individual learning experiences?

Studying student affairs professionals' continuing professional pathways might also lend insight into the durability of the teaching experience over longer periods of time. What, for example, is retained and lost (or discarded) as graduates proceed through career advancement, doctoral education, and changes of professional venue?

The findings of this study have, in my opinion, even more far-reaching implications such as to help inform similar institutions about what insights might be gained through additional inquiry into the value of teaching as a part of professional preparation for student affairs positions. Because the participants in this study as well as the majority of graduates who have taught EAD 315 now populate the professional workforce at a variety of institutions, the long-term impact of teaching during a graduate program is potentially a very fruitful area of future and continuing inquiry. Similarly, programs across the country with similar graduate level teaching opportunities may glean insights from this study that may serve as a means to modify teaching and administrative practice to best serve and best prepare future student affairs professionals for the field.

Most of all, I believe that this study provides strong impetus to encourage continuing discussions about additional inquiry into the instructor population of

Michigan State University's EAD 315. As new generations of instructors join the ranks of the hundreds that have gone before them, the insights gained in this study make what I feel is a strong case for additional research.

APPENDICES

Appendix A -- The Interview Questions

Questions for Individual Participants

The following questions will be used with individual participants during the initial one-on-one interviews in this study. Primary questions (in bold) will be asked of all participants. Secondary questions will be asked at the discretion of the interview to prompt, provide clarification, probe for depth and/or follow-up.

Participant Background

Tell me about yourself as a professional

- Personal information
- Educational background (prior to the master's program)
- Current position/title
- How long in current position
- Long-range career plans

Why did you choose the SAA master's program at Michigan State?

- What about the program appealed to you?
- Did you consider other degree programs? If so, what factors affected to your decision to choose Michigan State?
- How important was this degree, overall, to your professional preparation?
- What parts of the master's degree program did you enjoy? Dislike?

- How long has it been since you received your master's degree?

Describe your experience teaching EAD 315 as a practicum.

- How did you come to choose teaching EAD 315 as one of the two required practica?
- Did you teach the course alone or with a colleague?
- How did teaching EAD 315 help prepare you for your current position?
- What did you learn about yourself during this experience?
- How would you describe the way you learned what you did during this practicum?
- What did you learn about your profession during this experience?
- What did you like and/or dislike about teaching EAD 315?
- How did the actual experience of teaching EAD 315 compare with your initial expectations for the practicum?

What role did teaching EAD 315 play in your professional preparation?

- Reflecting on your current position and long-range professional goals, how did teaching EAD 315 contribute to your professional preparation?
- How did teaching EAD 315 compare with your other practicum experience?
- How did teaching an undergraduate Student Leadership Training course inform your current practice?

- As you reflect on your own experience in the program and in the field, are there any aspects of teaching EAD 315 as a practicum you would change?

Is there anything else you think I should know about you and/or your experience teaching EAD 315?

Is there anything else you think I should know about your current job/professional position?

Appendix B – Initiation Email Invitation To Participate in Study

Teaching EAD 315 As Part of Professional Preparation for the Student Affairs Administration Master's Degree at Michigan State University

Invitation to Participate In Research Study

Dear MSU Alumni/Alumnae:

I am soliciting your interest in participating in a study about graduates of the Student Affairs Administration Master's Degree Program who have taught EAD 315 (Student Leadership Training) as a practicum. I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education program at Michigan State University and am conducting this research project as my dissertation project. Graduates of the SAA program are employed in a diverse field that is often as enigmatic as it is exciting and challenging. It is my hope that your experience of the learning that took place during your teaching of EAD 315 will add insight to how this practicum option impacts overall professional preparation for the field.

If you agree to participate in this study, I will contact you to arrange a time and location at your convenience for a one-hour interview that will focus on your experience as an EAD 315 instructor during one of your two practica. You will also have the option of participating in a focus group interview at the 2006 American College Personnel Association (ACPA) in Indianapolis, Indiana, in March 2006. Please know that your agreement to participate in the initial individual interview is voluntary and in no way obligates you to participate in the focus group session. The group session will focus on shared discussion of individual experiences teaching EAD 315. My hope is that if you choose to participate in the focus group session, you will enjoy the added opportunity to reflect on your experience with your peers.

Your participation in this study will be held in the strictest confidence. As part of your consent to be interviewed, you will be given the right to chose whether or not the interview is to be recorded. Regardless of your choice, your identity will always be obscured. Data and data analysis documents will be retained under locked and/or password protected storage without any identifying information that may link any research subject with participant names, addresses, or professional venues. (i.e., names of colleges and universities will be also obscured to protect participant identity).

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and agreement to participation may be withdrawn at any time without fear of reprisal or repercussions. As researcher, I will maintain every effort to retain the privacy of your information. Participants in the focus group session will also be asked to maintain the confidentiality of the group discussion. It is my sincere hope that you will wish to participate in what I hope will be a very interesting and exciting study. I would be honored to work with you and learn

from your experience. Please contact me at any time if you have questions about any aspect of this study.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Kurf
1122 N Ball St
Owosso, MI 48824
989-725-8545
kurf@msu.edu

Appendix C– Informed Consent Form

Teaching EAD 315 As Part of Professional Preparation for the Student Affairs Administration Master's Degree at Michigan State University: Interview Consent Form

As a graduate of Michigan State University's Student Affairs Administration Master's Degree Program who has taught EAD 315 as a practicum, we are inviting you to participate in this interview. The interview will last approximately one hour and consists of a short list of questions that are open-ended and focus upon your experience teaching EAD 315 as a practicum during your graduate professional preparation program.

We ask your consent to audio-record this interview and to transfer the digital recording to a CD that will be kept in a locked file cabinet. Your interview will be transcribed and the transcript will be used for data analysis and reporting of findings.

A summary of findings from the analysis of data from the initial interviews will serve as the basis of a focus group session at the 2006 American College Personnel Association (ACPA) Annual Meeting in Indianapolis, in March, 2006. By agreeing to participate in the initial interviews, you are, in no way, obligated to participate in the focus group. Focus group participants will be asked to sign an additional consent form prior to the group session and asked to agree to maintain the confidentiality of the group.

You may ask for clarification of any question at any point or to refuse to answer any of the interview questions at any point, without consequence. You may end the interview at any time and you may request to withdraw from the study at any point before, during or after the interview has been conducted. If at any point during the interview, you wish not to be recorded, you will be given the right to request the tape recorder be turned off for any portion or remainder of the interview.

While we anticipate your risk in participation to be minimal, every effort will be made to assure the confidentiality of your participation and the protection of your identity. All participants in this study will be assigned a pseudonym and no transcript, tape recording, electronic or hard-copy documentation will be connected to you, personally. Subsequent reporting of any findings (including publication of the researcher's dissertation) will not identify you in any way.

The researchers for this study are Paul John Kurf (doctoral candidate in the Higher, Adult & Lifelong Education program at Michigan State University) and Dr. Kristen Renn (dissertation director, project supervisor, and faculty member, Educational Administration Department, Michigan State University). You may contact us at any time regarding any questions or concerns you may have regarding your participation in this study. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please feel free to contact Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Director of the Human Subject

Protection Programs at Michigan State University: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, email: irb@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Interview Consent:
By signing this document, you agree that you voluntarily participate in this research interview. Please select "Yes" or "No" to indicate your consent to have the interview audio-recorded as described above.

(continued on reverse)

Do you agree to have this interview audio-recorded? (Please circle) YES NO

_____ _____

Signature Date

Please return one signed copy of this form to us and keep one copy of the form for yourself.

If you have any questions of, or need to contact the investigators of this project for any reason:

Paul John Kurf, Doctoral Candidate
1122 N Ball St.
Owosso, MI 48867
989.725.8545 (H)
517.355.1726 (W)
kurf@msu.edu

Dr. Kristin Renn, Ph.D.
Dissertation Director
428 Erickson Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824
517.353.5979 (W)
renn@msu.edu

REFERENCES

ACPA.(2005a). Directory of Grad Programs in Student Affairs--Michigan State University. *Directory of Grad Programs in Student Affairs* Retrieved August 7, 2005, from http://www.myacpa.org/c12/MichState.htm

ACPA. (2005b). Professional Preparation Commission Standards. Retrieved August 7, 2005 from http://www.myacpa.org/c12/PPC_standards.htm

Amey, M. J. (1998) Unwritten rules: organizational and political realities of the job. In M..J. Amey and L. M. Ressor (Eds.) *Beginning your journey: a guide for new professionals in student affairs* (pp. 5-20). Washington, D.C.: National Association of Student Personnel Administration.

Anderson, L., Boud, D. and Cohen, R (2000) "Experience-based learning" in *Understanding Adult Education and Training*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, pp. 225-339.

Atherton, J. S. (2002) Learning and Teaching: Learning from experience [On-line]. Retrieved November 22, 2005, from http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/experien.htm

Boland, P. (1992). *The Professionalization of Student Affairs Staff* (No. EDO-CG-92-29). Ann Arbor, MI: ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Personnel Services

Boyd, R. D. (1989) Facilitating Personal Transformations In Small Groups: Part I. Small Group Behavior 20, no. 4, pp. 459-474.

CAS (2003). Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education Master's-Level Graduate Program for Student Affairs Professionals Standards and Guidelines. *Commission on Preparation Programs.* Retrieved August 7, 2005, from http://www.myacpa.org/comm/profprep/facressub/cas.htm

Cooper, Saunders, Winston, Hirt, Creamer & Janosik, (2002). *Learning through supervised practice in student affairs.* New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Creswell, J (1994). Research design: qualitative & quantitative approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc..

Creswell, J (2007). Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc..

Criticos, C. (2000) Experiential learning and social transformation for a post-apartheid

larning future. In D. Boud, R. Cohen and D. Walker (Eds.) *Using Experience for Learning*, Milton Keynes: SRHE.

D'Augelli, A.R. (1994). Identity development and sexual orientation: Toward a model of lesbian, gay, and bisexual development. In E.J. Trickett, R.J. Watts, & D. Birman (Eds.), Human diversity: Perspectives on people in context (pp. 312-333). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Dewey, J., How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process (revised edition), Boston: D C Heath, 1933.

EAD 315 Instructor Group (2001). EAD 315 Planning Session, April 10, 2001.

Educational Administration Department (2005). HALE program website. http://ed-web3.educ.msu.edu/ead/HALE/halema/mamain.htm.

Enos, P. B. (2001). EAD 315 Training Manual (Fall Semester 2001). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University.

Fenske, R. H. (1989). *Studying the impact of student aid on institutions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fischer, W. (1997). The Value of Professional Associations. *Library Trends, 46*(2), 320-331.

Friere, P. (1971). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York: Seabury Press.

Gilligan, C. (1977). In a different voice: Women's conceptions of self and morality. *Harvard Educational Review, 47,* 481-517.

Gilligan, C. (1993). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Greenaway, R. (2005) Experiential learning articles and critiques of David Kolb's theory [on-line]. Retrieved first on November 22, 2005 from http://reviewing.co.uk/research/experiential.learning.htm.

Helm, M.P. (2004). *Professional identity, sense-making, and the market effect: Perspectives from new student affairs professionals*: The University of Arizona.

Hirt, J. B. & Creamer, D. G. (1998). Issues Facing Student Affairs Professionals. In N. J. Evans and C.E. Phelps Tobin (Eds). *The State of the Art of Preparation and Practice in Student Affairs: Another Look.* American College Professional

Association.

King, P.M., & Kitchener, K.S. (1994). *Developing reflective judgement: Understanding and promoting intellectual growth and critical thinking in adolescents and adults.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Knight, P.T., & Trowler, P.R. (2000). Department-level cultures and the improvement of learning and teaching. Studies in Higher Education. 25 (1): 69-83.

Kuh, G. & Schuh, J. (1991). *The role and contribution of student affairs in involving colleges.* Washington, DC: National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.

Mason, J. (2000) "Learning from experience in mathematics," in D. Boud, R. Cohen and D. Walker (eds) Using Experience for Learning, Milton Keynes: SRHE

Mezirow, J. (1990). Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: A Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Moon, J (2004) *A Handbook of Reflective and Experiential Learning.* London: Routledge Falmer.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

MSU. (2005). Educational Administration Department: MA in Student Affairs Administration (website). Retrieved August 7, 2005, from http://ed-web3.educ.msu.edu/ead/HALE/saama/MASAD.html

MSU-IRB (2007). Participants-Human Research Protection Program (website). Retrieved October 2, 2007, from http://www.humanresearch.msu.edu/participants.html.

NASPA (2005). Of visions, values, and voices: consolidating ACPA and NASPA [online]. PDF document retrieved November 23, 2005 from http://www.naspa.org/resources/Merger.pdf

Nieswiadomy, R.M. (1993). *Foundations of nursing research* (2nd ed.). Norwalk CT: Appleton & Lange.

Peltier, J.W., Hay, A., & Drago, W. (2005). The reflective learning continuum: reflecting on reflection. *Journal of Marketing Education*, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 250-263.

Pinnegar, S. & Daynes, J.G. (2006). Locating narrative inquiry historically: Thematics in the turn to narrative. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Quinn, R.E., O'Neill, R.M., Debebe, G. (1996), "Confronting the tensions in an academic career", Rhythms of Academic Life: Personal Accounts of Careers in Academia, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Renn, K.A. (2005). EAD 893 , *Professional Development Seminar Syllabus*, Fall 2005.

Thoma, Clark & Jacobs (1998). Reconciling the professional and the personal for the new student affairs professional. In M..J. Amey and L. M. Ressor (Eds.) *Beginning your journey: a guide for new professionals in student affairs* (pp. 5-20). Washington, D.C.: National Association of Student Personnel Administration.

Tierney, W.G. (1991). Organizational culture in higher education: Defining the 339*governance in higher education* (pp. 126-139). Lexingon, MA: Ginn Press.

Tierney W.G., & Bensimon, E. (1996). *Promotion and tenure community and socialization in the academe.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Upcraft, M. L. (1998). Do graduate preparation programs really prepare practioners? In N.J. Evans & C.E. Phelps Tobin (Eds.) The State of the art of preparation and practice in student affairs: Another look. (pp. 225-237). Lanham, MA: University Press of America.

Werner, O., & Schoepfle, G. (1987). *Systematic fieldwork: Vol 1, Foundations of ethnography and interviewing.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Yin, R.K. (1989). *Case study research: Design and methods.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.