

GUEST EDITORIAL

Special Guest IASAS Edition: Issues and Challenges in Student Affairs and Services Around the World

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The mission of the International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS) is to serve “as a global advocate for students in higher education, student affairs and services practitioners, and the profession itself” (IASAS, 2017). It seems appropriate that the special edition of *JSAA* focuses on issues and challenges in student affairs and services around the world. IASAS was formed from the awareness of and need for a global network for student affairs and services. It was in the mid-90s that the leadership in professional associations and institutions, along with key individuals, began to recognise a need for growth. It was the leadership within IASAS, specifically Roger Ludeman and his colleagues, who pushed for dialogue, connection, and networking around the world. Since its establishment and the recognition of the internationalisation of higher education, we have seen an increase in literature, meetings, presentations, and a general interest in global issues within the field of student affairs and services.

Global professional organisations such as IASAS are providing a space for professionals to engage with one another, to share common issues and concerns, and to dialogue with colleagues around the world. Events such as the Global Summits that have taken place over the past few years and other national, regional, and international professional conferences are allowing the sharing of knowledge, ideas, and best practices. Moreover, with journals such as *JSAA*, the field of student affairs and services is starting to hear more voices of professionals, and learn of both common and new issues and challenges within the field around the world.

Due to this growing shift in perspective, this issue highlights a few of those challenges as well as providing reviews of resources available to better our own understandings of student affairs and services around the world, and how we support our students. Authors in this issue as well as scholars are discussing the topic of professionalisation, training of student affairs staff, and the continual emphasis on students. We received submissions from South Africa, Botswana, China, and the USA with a total of five articles and three reviews of seminal works.

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These articles not only bring thought-provoking and original viewpoints to discourse on the practice of student affairs, they promote and stimulate new dialogue around these topics, especially in developing contexts. In their paper ‘Professionalisation of Student Affairs Educators in China: History, Challenges, and Solutions’, Yongshan Li and Yuanyuan Fang address issues of the apparent lack of a consensus on the required professional training/background of student advisors in universities and its effect on the profession; the roles of government and institutions, and applicability of North American theories and practices in China and other countries with different socio-political realities. The second article ‘Advocating for Standards in Student Affairs Departments in African Institutions: University of Botswana Experience’, by Barbra Pansiri and Refilwe P. Sinkamba of the University of Botswana, underscores the benefits of having standards and functioning professional associations. The authors argue that ‘quality assurance’ should not be left to academic programmes but should be required of other units in institutions. According to them, the absence of professional associations responsible for accreditation and regulation of practice has been identified as a key challenge in Botswana, thus requiring student affairs practitioners in tertiary institutions to constantly have to defend their role and importance in the student success cycle.

From the USA, Maria Martinez and Kevin Colaner submitted a paper which has broader applications for institutions with different psychosocial and socio-political realities. Their article which explores themes around the experiences of East Asian international students in English-speaking countries suggests that the increasing diversity of student population in tertiary institutions has made meeting students’ needs more complex and complicated. They identify factors (psycho-social, institutional, socio-economic and linguistic) that affect students’. The case of East Asian students as a case in point reaffirms the importance of role clarification, standards, and professionalism in serving international students well. Another submission with equally global applicability is that submitted by Munita Dunn-Coetzee and Magda Fourie-Malherbe. Titled ‘Promoting social change amongst students in higher education: A reflection on the Listen, Live, and Learn senior student housing initiative at Stellenbosch University’, this submission shares an innovative initiative at the Stellenbosch University, which demonstrates one of the institution’s more tangible efforts at addressing the struggle around access, success, and transformation. The Listen, Live and Learn (LLL) initiative is one way of becoming more relevant and participating more actively in graduating empowered citizens ready to contribute to building South Africa. The final article comes from University of the Witwatersrand. Written by Danie de Klerk, Linda Spark, Andrew Jones and Tshepiso Maleswena, the paper ‘Paving the road to success: Reflecting critically on year one of an undergraduate student support programme at a large South African university’ is a reflective piece on the creation, execution, and results of a holistic student success intervention programme. Like the others, the authors have very interesting and relevant content that add value to the discourse.

The first review comes from an important contribution to the literature from editors Roberts and Komives entitled *Enhancing Student Learning and Development in Cross-border Higher Education*. The second review is the second edition of *Supporting Students Globally in*

Higher Education from editors Osfield, Perozzi, Bardill Moscaritolo, and Shea. This follows the first edition published 10 years ago in one of the first books published on the topic of internationalisation of student affairs and services. Next, a review of the first volume of the *Asia-Pacific Journal for Student Affairs: The Official Journal of the Philippine Association of Administrators of Student Affairs (PAASA)*. And finally, this issue includes a reflection on the third Global Summit of Student Affairs and Services that took place in South Africa in 2016.

We truly want to thank *JSAA* for allowing this guest edition and providing a wonderful publication that allows scholars and practitioners from around the world to contribute in meaningful work. And the authors for submitting thoughtful research and reflections that can contribute to a gap in the literature in many topical areas within student affairs and higher education.

References

IASAS (International Association of Student Affairs and Services). (2017). *About IASAS*. Retrieved from <http://iasas.global/aboutiasas/>