

TACUSPA TIMES

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Message from the President...

I recently finished a book entitled *Longitude* by Dava Sobel. This compelling book describes the historic quest to solve the “problem of longitude” faced by early explorers of the 17th and 18th centuries. Ships were run aground, voyages lost, and sailors suffered peril due to the fact that an effective method of measuring longitude could not be created, even by the likes of Galileo, Sir Isaac Newton or some of the best captains of Her Majesty’s Navy. Sobel uses brief histories of astronomy, global exploration, and clockmaking to explain how an unlikely character, John Harrison, eventually invented “H4” which served as the solution to this problem. This chronometer (or nautical timepiece) provided the dependable technology needed to make accurate navigational assessments, thus opening an entire new world of successful exploration.

As you prepare for your summer reading, I encourage you to add this short book to your list. But what does this have to do with TACUSPA? Those of us in higher education have our own “problem of longitude” to address – student retention! Ever since Vincent Tinto created his model of student departure in the 1970’s, we have continued to explore this somewhat elusive issue. Though we know a great deal more some thirty years later about why college students stay versus leave, I don’t know of any college or university that doesn’t want to increase its retention rate.

TACUSPA will provide you an opportunity to explore this crucial issue first hand. *New Perspectives for Innovation and Diversity in Student Retention* is the title of the conference planned for June 10-13. Hosted by the University of St. Thomas located in the museum district of Houston, this institute will feature two well known national speakers, Dr. Vasti Torres and Dr. Scott Swail, as we address this topic, particularly from a multicultural perspective. Using an institute format, the group will be limited to 40 participants in order to maximize the learning opportunities through an intimate and informal setting.

I encourage you to take a look at the conference web site for more details by accessing www.tacuspa.net and clicking on “Conference.” I hope to see you in Houston!

Sincerely,
Dr. Stephen C. Sutton
TACUSPA President



Dr. Stephen C. Sutton
Vice President of Student Affairs
University of St. Thomas

TACUSPA Summer Institute
June 10-13, 2008
University of St. Thomas, Houston, TX

Across the nation students are preparing for that walk across the stage with diploma in hand. It is an exciting time for graduates and families. This rite of passage serves as affirmation for a job well done. For practitioners in higher education it is confirmation that we have contributed to the successful academic achievement of this group.

Conversely, it is also a time for us to reflect on the students who are absent from this process. On campuses across the nation, we contemplate a range of services both academic and support services. As we explore student engagement, persistence and student departure, student retention becomes a focal point in these deliberations.

TACUSPA is offering you the opportunity to engage with colleagues and national speakers around the issues of retention. Featured speakers are internationally renowned experts in the fields of academic persistence. Dr. Vasti Torres is Associate Professor of Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration at Indiana University and served as President of ACPA, 2007-08. She has the distinction of being the first Latina to serve in that capacity in a national student affairs association. Dr. Torres' research has contributed significant insight into the Latina/o ethnic identity. Her presentation, "Understanding the Influences That Help Retain Latino/a Students" will benefit our understanding of the developmental process of the largest underrepresented group on our Texas campuses. With better understanding, we can create better

learning environments, success and persistence.

Dr. Watson Scott Swail is the President and Chief Officer of The Educational Policy Institute (EPI). With EPI offices in Virginia Beach, VA, Toronto, Ontario, and Melbourne, Australia, Dr. Swail's policy-based research, analysis and publications are renowned internationally. As evidenced by his recent work in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and workshops held in Australia, Amsterdam, Ottawa, Vancouver, Puerto Rico and nine cities across the U.S., Scott Swail's expertise and experience is broad and highly sought by educators. He will share his expertise in student success and retention and provide strategies that are essential for providing educational and college opportunity for all students, particularly students from low income, first generation and under-represented students. Dr. Swail's recent publications speak to the Latino/a experience in "Latino Students and the Educational Pipeline," "The Affordability of Higher Education," and "Higher Education and the New Demographics."

You will not want to miss this year's TACUSPA Summer Institute, June 10-13, 2008, hosted by the University of St. Thomas in Houston, TX. In an effort to facilitate an informal learning experience, participation is limited to 40 participants. Register soon to reserve your spot. For the latest information, please look at:

<http://www.uhcl.edu/ISS/tacuspasummerinstitute>.

Sincerely,

Linda Contreras Bullock, Conference Chair

The all inclusive conference fee of \$475 covers your registration, room & board, meals and an Astros vs. the Milwaukee Brewers game at Minute Maid Park!

New information is posted on the conference link as it becomes available.

Please take a look at the link at: <http://www.uhcl.edu/ISS/tacuspasummerinstitute>

(NPI) New Professionals Institute

The New Professionals Institute (NPI) is taking place June 16-June 20 at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana. NPI is a five day intensive workshop that allows new professionals to network, share and learn from each other as well as from more experienced faculty members. Participants were nominated by their supervisor and then selected after completing an application.

Jana Kennelly, a previous NPI participant shares her experience with NPI and encourages others to apply for next year's conference:

Transformative leadership: an act in which leaders take the time to realign structures, relationships and paradigms in order to achieve genuine and sustainable change. When I think of my experience at New Professional Institute, I realize the definition of transformation came to life. Everywhere you turned, someone was in a different stage of their career; a few were just graduating from college, others had a long career but had just made the leap to Student Affairs. Yet the most inspiring were those that had a successful career in the field and had chosen to volunteer their time to be examples of transformative leaders.

At least once a week, I think of something that I learned at NPI. Sure we all go to conferences and then come home to a pile of e-mails but I believe that NPI was different. It allowed me to meet Student Affairs professionals that had an interest in taking the industry farther than we know it to be today. The future of Student Affairs is at NPI. I am proud that these conferences made busy individuals take the time to set goals and establish priorities in their careers. The opportunity to dialogue with others who were like us, or with leaders who took time to mentor was invaluable.

The best lessons I learned while I was at NPI:

- Sometimes your life will be out of balance but it is ok, you will reach an optimal point at some time in your year.
- At some point in your career, you will end up working for a boss you disagree with and have to work through it professionally.
- There is not one formula for becoming Vice President and to be successful in Student Affairs does not mean that you have to aspire to be a Vice President.
- Viewpoints from all divisions of student affairs are valuable.

A fellow NPI colleague and I were positively affected by New Professionals Institute and appreciated getting to know our Vice President of Student Affairs on a different level. We were inspired to create the New Professionals Network –Brown Bag Lunch Series for our campus. Dr. Gage E. Paine leads our discussions and speakers are brought in to educate Student Affairs staff on local graduate schools, new initiatives on campus and to promote cross-collaborations.

The effect of New Professionals Institute has served as a launching pad to transform my career. Through the participation in workshops, small group discussions, and an adventurous canoe trip, I am thankful for the bonding and learning experience. To those that are accepted to attend, it is an amazing experience and I wish you the best!

Sincerely,
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