

Intentional Collisions at the Intersections of Passion and Possibility: Cultivating Joy in Student Affairs

Joy in student affairs and student-facing careers in higher education is not accidental — it is intentional. Every day, we make choices not only about what we do, but how we show up, how we frame challenges, and how we bring energy into the spaces we influence. Reimagining passion in our daily work begins with recognizing that we have real ownership and agency in shaping our experience — helping people succeed, one student, one meeting, one moment at a time. This is not easy. Fewer resources. Greater demands. Less time to do what we know matters most. While we cannot control every aspect of our structural reality, we can control how we meet it. Together, we will explore what drives us at our core — and why it still matters. Once we name that purpose, how do we channel it into sustainable energy, positive atmosphere, and genuine joy in our careers? Creating meaning in our work is not naïve optimism. It is a deliberate practice. And it is available to each of us, in our own way, every day.

Sustaining Growth in an Era of Change

This session is targeted at the new and mid-level professionals of higher education. We often find ourselves affected by not just pressures going on in the occupation but the climate of our institution, what is going on in the world and in our personal lives. (Talk about Chaos!) We talk to our students about helping build their resumes, self-care, belonging and balance, but as professionals sometimes we stop taking our own advice. Let's have a conversation about continuing to invest in you and your goals!

The Components of Self-Care

Did you know that when the term self-care was coined it was not referring to what we think of as self-care? It was referring to nurturing your community and helping the people around you. In this presentation we'll talk about the importance of both types of self-care and how they are equally important. Attendees will get some tips on how to encourage their staff members and themselves to engage in both types of self-care. After all, the basis of many housing department mission statements and curriculums are about building or fostering community. It is important to make sure our staff is not pouring from an empty cup when they are trying to build community in their buildings or within an office.

Leadership Storytelling – Practicing Essential Skills to Inspire Teams to Act

There is an important element of “theater” in leadership, and effective leaders need to be good storytellers – to clearly articulate a vision, gain buy-in from a variety of stakeholders, and engage members of their organization in dialog that moves them to action. Inspired by design thinking work done through the UWM Lubar Entrepreneurship Center as well as improv techniques, this workshop will include engaged exercises where participants draw a prompt from their own professional context. They will be challenged to consider various stakeholders & value positions, and practice telling a story in a concise short form – including “six-word stories” and “elevator pitches.” The facilitator(s) will create a fun, fast-paced, and supportive environment where participants learn together.

Gratitude and Greatness

The focus of this presentation will be on how professionals of all levels can create communities of gratitude within their departments, supervisory relationships, and student teams. We will explore evidence based practices related to gratitude and what research says about work places which incorporate gratitude into their working culture. Participants will gain an understanding of how gratitude impacts working conditions, relationships, and departments. Participants will also gain practical ideas for how to incorporate gratitude in their professional lives.

Do you want to learn more about WCPA? Interested in joining WCPA? Have questions or suggestions for us?

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Reigniting the Student Spark: Creating the ARC Student Hub and Sensory Space

After listening to the needs of our students, the Accessibility Resource Center at UWM designed and developed a 10 room suite that allows students to engage their sensory systems to de-stress, self-regulate, develop friendships, and improve academic skills. In this presentation, we will walk the audience through our ARC Student Hub and Sensory Space development process: the initial spark of ideas, development stages and rationale, funding resources, external and internal community engagement, and current functionality and use of the space and what the overall student/campus response has been. We hope this presentation will spark creative ideas and conversations about implementing sensory regulating activities and resources in classrooms and campuses, as well as illustrate the importance of spaces like this for student development, sense of community, and success.

Leading With Joy While Doing the Hard Work

Student Affairs work is meaningful and exhausting. Between crisis response, constant change, and chronic understaffing, it's easy for joy and connection to slip to the margins. This session invites participants to reconsider "fun at work" not as fluff, forced activities, or toxic positivity, but as an intentional leadership practice that helps teams reconnect with purpose and possibility. Using the core ideas from *Managing to Have Fun* by Matt Weinstein as a starting point, this session puts a modern Student Affairs spin on what it actually means to create space for fun in serious work. Rather than focusing on big programs or personality-driven approaches, this session emphasizes small, inclusive, and sustainable actions leaders can take to create the conditions where fun, connection, and appreciation can naturally exist. Participants will leave with practical ideas they can actually use and at least one way to help reignite the spark on their team, without adding one more thing to the to-do list.

I have spark but no money! How to save on a Student Affairs Salary

We do our jobs because we love them, not for the money. This session shares practical tips for saving, budgeting, and retirement planning to help you continue doing work you care about, no matter your income. By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to: understand key personal finance concepts and terminology, make informed decisions about saving, spending, and investing, and recognize the importance of long-term financial planning.

Beyond the Paycheck: Maximizing Student Employment for Retention & Success

Many campuses rely on student employees to support the core functions of campus life and learning. However, student employment is often missing from the conversations about student development and high impact practices; when frankly student employment is a student affair- regardless of placement or purview on campus. Additionally, many student affairs professionals supervise students in their role. As there is "no person, procedure, nor guidebook that can impact a student employee's experience more than the supervisor," (Savoca & Creager, 2023, p. 413) it is important to provide support and resources to folks supervising students, especially since that commitment is often tangential to their core responsibilities. From macro level campus employment decision maker, to the individual student supervisor- this workshop invites a broad array of student affairs professionals to investigate their student employment landscape through a student learning and development lens. Takeaway 1: Participants will explain the benefits of engaging in high-impact practices (HIP) in student employment experiences, such as social mobility, retention, and skill development. Takeaway 2: Participants will learn about approaches and outcomes of high-impact student employment at UW-Madison, highlighting GROW- Guided Reflection on Work- a national evidence-based program for identifying transferable skills in employment. Takeaway 3: Participants will leave with a

concrete action plan outlining strategies to elevate their student employment environments through high-impact, student-centered practices.

Coaching the Whole Professional: Leveraging Performance Coaching to Enhance Effectiveness, Well-Being, and Impact in Student Affairs

Performance coaching has emerged as a powerful, evidence-informed approach for supporting growth, resilience, and sustained effectiveness in complex professional environments. In higher education and student affairs—where professionals routinely navigate competing priorities, emotional labor, and increasing demands—coaching offers a practical framework for both personal well-being and professional success. This session introduces performance coaching as a philosophy, skillset, and mindset that can be intentionally applied within student affairs practice. Participants will receive a concise overview of the history and foundational principles of performance coaching, with attention to its roots in adult development, positive psychology, and strengths-based leadership. The session will highlight core coaching skills—including powerful questioning, active listening, goal alignment, accountability, and reflective practice—and demonstrate how these skills differ from advising, supervising, and mentoring while complementing each approach. Drawing on the presenter’s experience as a Certified Performance Coach through the University of Wisconsin–Madison, this session will explore how coaching can be used to support staff development, enhance student interactions, strengthen supervisory relationships, and promote sustainable professional well-being. Attendees will leave with practical strategies for integrating coaching behaviors into daily practice, regardless of role or formal title, and a clearer understanding of how coaching can help student affairs professionals thrive while increasing their impact on students and colleagues.