

The Voice of the Journal

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Hello Reader!

This time, I am writing to you from a new institution and positional perspective than the last issue. As I adjust to a new context, I find myself reflecting on my values and how to articulate my voice at a new institution for the maximum benefit of students. This period of reflection also coincides with the conclusion of this issue for publication. So, I ask all of you, how are you using your voice?

We have all heard the adage, “Institutions retain, students persist.” I am sure many of us identify more with student persistence, the individual’s success, versus satisfaction with a two percent institutional metric increase. Yet our own association uses the term “retention” in its title. I point this out not to be critical of the name we call ourselves but to acknowledge the necessity of the use. Our association made a strategic decision to get the attention of our institutions toward the connected nature of what we may value as a profession to the institutional metric imperatives our institutions are obliged to meet. The orientation and transition of our students cannot be ignored components in our institution’s retention strategy. But this is an oversimplification.

Our institutions have a multitude of motivations; scientific, return on investment, state-based initiatives, reputation, and many others. We have to learn these languages and understand what they mean to our institutional context. We have to align our departmental and institutional mission statements in ways that make sense to us. However, we also need to respectfully and professionally push back on aspects that we believe are short-sighted, too surface-level, or potentially rabbit holes that take us away from our original purpose: educating students. Writing for your professional journal about what you value is a powerful way to do this.

I did not ask, but I can imagine there may have been a narrative that motivated each of our authors to choose the topics covered in their articles. The nascence of their decision to write could draw a line toward connecting their narratives to an

institutional one. Perhaps it was a proposed new policy, a reduction in funds, or as an advocacy tool for a fledgling but unfunded pilot. These articles give voice to spaces where there was none. I ask you to consider this as you approach this issue.

This edition of the JCOTR features original research in the transition and retention space. Collins-Warfield, Niewoehner-Green, and Whittington¹ conducted a qualitative case study of students who participated in both a first-year and second-year academic success program. The linkage between students' experiences in these two programs offered potential implications for institutions seeking to develop similar intentional constellations of programs.

Tabvuma, Carter-Rogers, Brophy, Smith, Sutherland, and Kay used an experimental design to examine the impact of a co-curricular first-year experience on student attitude, skill, and behaviors. The authors distinguished this study from previous curricular studies of first-year seminars in their analysis and design by delineating the co-curricular nature of the initiative.

Gaal, Fuller, and Szaal Haynes provided a qualitative look into the experiences of first-year students during Covid with the intention of seeking a better understanding for university professionals about the impact university regulations had on their academic and social health. The authors uncovered many expected impacts on the students, but they were surprised to discover a resiliency to succeed despite these impacts.

The remaining two articles look at academic outcomes. Morris, Castro-Faix, Hengtgen, Rapp, Winkler, and Xu examined data from a national database to examine the impacts of major change on degree completion. Contrary to opinions on many of our campuses, this study provides support toward institutional goals of degree completion for encouraging active exploration of students who are considering changing majors. Shields conducted a study on the utilization of a pre-matriculation survey to determine student grade point average success in the first term. The survey examined aspects of the students' pre-collegiate academic motivations, self-efficacy for learning, learner autonomy, and social support. Shields finds support for the possibility that pre-collegiate surveys may be used as tools to proactively outreach to students during their first term.

¹ APA 7 rules regarding the shortening of in-text citations with three or more authors to "et al." have been intentionally foregone in this Editor's Note to honor every author who has contributed to this practitioner-focused journal.

Next, we have two emerging research articles. Ford and Krechel problematize first-year seminars as potentially oppressive spaces for first-generation Black students. This article, structured as a literature review juxtaposition, asks practitioners to consider the efficacy and intentionality of the implementation of these programs.

Our second article in this category by Manuel, Ceballos, and Gordon takes a different perspective on the involvement of parents' involvement in their students' higher education experience. This initial study supports the authors' assertion that an asset-based approach to partnering with parents may support overall student success by taking into account an institutional understanding of the student-parent context.

Lastly, we have a campus note and a book review to round out this issue. Mixson-Brookshire, Goldfine, and Brookshire provide a campus glimpse into how a four-year public institution is considering the student recreation center as a tool for student success and retention. They offer potential engagement strategies for encouraging new students to discover their center.

Henning rounds us out with a review Hamid's (2014) *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* as a common read title. On the tenth anniversary of its publication, Henning argues the continued relevance of the book because of its universal themes and distinct non-identification of a specific location or character names.

I want to thank all our authors for their contributions to this issue. I also want to thank our team of associate editors and peer reviewers, which now includes four new members; Libby Daggers, Katherine Carnell, Paul Holliday-Millard, and Nicole Battaglia. Their efforts in this issue have helped us give more detailed and rich feedback to our authors. As we continue to attract more authors with diverse backgrounds, we will need more reviewers like them. Please consider joining us.

I also want to encourage all of you to take the time to deepen your engagement with the written word of your profession. One of my former mentors said to me, "If you don't write it down, no one will know that it happened." He was talking about the work my team and I were quietly toiling away at to help our students. However, I think it equally applies to the moment we are in as a profession. We are in a time where we need to have our voices heard. What will motivate you?