CREATING SUSTAINABLE CAREERS IN STUDENT AFFAIRS

What Ideal Worker Norms Get Wrong and How to Make It Right

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1

HOW THE STRUCTURE AND DEMANDS OF STUDENT AFFAIRS REFLECT IDEAL WORKER NORMS AND INFLUENCE WORK–LIFE INTEGRATION

Laura Isdell and Lisa Wolf-Wendel

The work of student affairs professionals is critical to student learning and development in higher education, as it focuses on all aspects of student life that involve personal and interpersonal development and helps support academic learning. The scope of work for student affairs professionals is differentiated by functional area, specialization, expertise, and training and can include areas such as housing, student activities, judicial affairs, orientation programs, sorority/fraternity life, admissions, registration, financial aid, counseling, advising, and other aspects of student life. In these roles, professionals help college students navigate their new environment; provide academic, social, and career support services; engage in student conduct processes; and facilitate participation in student organizations and campus activities (Rosser, 2000; Young, 1990). As Kuh et al., (2007) described, student affairs professionals are responsible for the other 80% of student learning that occurs on campus—all the learning that takes place outside the boundaries of the classroom, which also extends beyond a traditional 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. workday. In fact, student affairs professionals are often the first responders for students in moments of crisis, including suicide attempts, sexual assault, and other health and psychological emergencies (Kuk, 2012).

Student affairs has historically favored those who can prioritize job duties over personal responsibilities, particularly regarding the need for availability during the traditional workday and after-hours response. As the workforce changes to include more professionals who may prioritize personal commitments over work, or at least give them equal billing (Gilley et al., 2015; Jenkins, 2018), the need to critically examine workplace demands becomes more acute.

When the nature of a job requires an employee to be able to put work first during scheduled work hours as well as after hours, ideal worker norms are perpetuated (Bailyn, 1993; Davies & Frink, 2014; Kelly et al., 2008). Families in the early to mid-20th century were typically constructed around the idea of a head of the household who was the primary breadwinner for the family (historically a cisgender man) while the other member of the couple (historically a cisgender woman) took care of home and family responsibilities (Davies & Frink, 2014; Jones, 2012; Williams, 2000). As late as 1960, only 10% of mothers were employed outside the home (Jones, 2012). As described in this book's introduction, ideal worker norms were constructed around these traditional gender roles, where the only, or primary, responsibility of the man was paid work. This meant that the employee was available and ready to work at the will of the employer and either had no family obligations or had a spouse to assume those responsibilities (Bailyn, 1993; Davies & Frink, 2014; Hochschild, 1995; Kelly et al., 2008; Sallee, 2016; Wilk, 2013; Williams, 2000).

In many ways, the student affairs profession favors someone who can put work before all other responsibilities, which can be challenging for student affairs professionals who have both work and personal commitments (Cameron, 2011; Fochtman, 2010; Rosser, 2000; Spangler, 2011; Wilk, 2013). As a result, some professionals leave the field or forego advancement opportunities to avoid sacrificing their personal responsibilities for the sake of work (Bailey, 2011; Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Jo, 2008; Marshall et al., 2016; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Spangler, 2011; Ting & Watt, 1999). Other student affairs professionals choose to give up personal aspirations due to their perception that it is not possible to successfully navigate both the demands of home and work (Stimpson, 2009). The perceptions of incompatibility with having a life and a career in student affairs may also affect who enters the field in the first place. Undergraduates, for example, may opt out of pursuing a career in student affairs if they witness members of the profession engaging in what seems like unending work. Such a decision can have negative effects on the future quality of student affairs and ripple effects on the ability of the field to fully serve students.

This chapter explores the demands of the student affairs profession, how the culture of the profession is shaped and perpetuated by ideal worker norms, and how ideal worker norms create conflict for work–life integration goals. This topic is of increasing importance as our workforce evolves to include more individuals who prioritize personal needs that they are unwilling to sacrifice for the sake of work (Jenkins, 2018). The chapter begins with a description of the culture of student affairs in relationship to work–life management. Next, the notion of the ideal student affairs worker is examined, including the influences of socialization as well as the role that institutional leadership and supervisors play in perpetuating these cultural norms. This chapter concludes by looking at ways to consider changing the culture of student affairs and subsequent recommendations for practice for various constituency groups. We argue that student affairs work, and the context in which it occurs, needs to evolve away from ideal worker norms toward a more "life-friendly" orientation to best accomplish the goals of facilitating student success. Such an evolution will require cultural shifts that begin with how we treat student paraprofessionals, graduate students, new professionals, those in midcareer, as well as those at the highest levels of the profession.

Before proceeding farther in this discussion, a note about terminology seems in order. *Work–life integration* is a term that refers to the ability to effectively manage interactions between, and overlap of, personal and work responsibilities. We purposefully use the terms *management* or *integration* and avoid the term *balance* because few professionals with outside-of-work commitments would describe themselves as feeling balanced. Further, we use the term *work–life* or *life-friendly* rather than *work–family* or *family-friendly* because we fundamentally believe that everyone deserves a life outside of work, even people who do not have traditional family responsibilities. Much of the work–life management literature focuses on a narrow demographic, specifically young women with young children (Bailey, 2011; Spangler, 2011; Williams, 2000). This focus is too narrow. Work–life management is important for individuals of all identities, with all types of family and life commitments. Work–life management is not just the province of new parents in the early career. Rather, it is an essential consideration for those across the career trajectory, from those in entry-level positions to those who hold senior-level positions and everyone in between. We also caution the idea that work should compete with life—because, as Friedman (2014) suggested, life is the intersection of work, home, community, and self. To frame the two as wholly separate spheres is potentially problematic. In addition, we suggest that work–life integration is not merely a personal responsibility of the individual professional, but instead it is incumbent upon institutions of higher education to create policies, structures, and cultures that allow their

employees to have fulfilling lives outside of work. Such work–life friendly environments are essential to facilitate recruitment and retention of high-quality individuals into the field, as well as to facilitate positive morale and greater work productivity (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Casey & Grzywacz, 2008; Dickson, 2008; Kelly et al., 2008; Siegwarth-Meyer et al., 2001; Williams, 2000). As noted earlier, it is also a key ingredient in being able to properly serve students and facilitate their growth and development, ultimately supporting their academic learning.

It is also important to note that the literature on work–life integration upon which this chapter is based, including the phenomenon of the ideal worker norm, frames the experiences of workers through binary gender-based, heteronormative, and Eurocentric norms. For example, the literature uses terminology of *man and woman*, *mother and father*, and even *husband and wife*. It is important to approach this work critically, as it can easily be viewed as exclusionary of those who do not identify themselves within the traditional confines of gender and sexuality. It is also important to recognize that much of the work–family literature centers the experiences of White women. In this chapter, our intent is to be inclusive of individuals of color, those who do not identify on the gender binary, and those who identify as LGBTQIA+. As noted previously, we intend to be inclusive of all those who engage in work–life integration, regardless of family type or specific role. That said, as this chapter is largely framed by the existing literature, we acknowledge that many experiences are left out of the narrative. We recognize that the language used in this literature presumes, for example, a gender binary. These are the realities of this literature, and it is incumbent upon those of us who do this work to call out these problematic norms and to work on being more inclusive in our research and in our language moving forward.

The Culture of Student Affairs Work

Student affairs work requires expert knowledge of how the experiences of college students shape their development so that the services and programs provided address the needs of the whole student (Keeling, 2004). The historical emphasis on developing the whole student as a core value of the profession acknowledges that students exist beyond their classroom responsibilities as they also navigate work, family, or other personal obligations. Administrators in student affairs are not always afforded that same level of awareness in their workplaces, as the nature of their work is uniquely well-suited to perpetuate ideal worker norms, which assume work is the employee's primary, if not the sole, responsibility.

Recently, there has been a growing interest in how the culture of the student affairs profession contributes to ideal worker norms and therefore challenges work–life management for administrators (Bailey, 2011; Cameron, 2011; Collins, 2009; DeMinck, 2017; Fochtman, 2010; Isdell, 2016; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Spangler, 2011; Ting & Watt, 1999; Wilk, 2013; Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2011). In a recent study by Wilk (2013), for example, while college administrators in all areas felt obligated to be on campus during normal business hours, 12 of the 14 student affairs professionals regularly worked evenings and weekends as well. This is a common experience described by student affairs professionals, often feeling there is an expectation that they are available and responsive to student needs 24 hours a day and 7 days a week (Bailey, 2011; Cameron, 2011; Collins, 2009; DeMinck, 2017; Fochtman, 2010; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Isdell, 2016; Jo, 2008; Marshall et al., 2016; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Spangler, 2011; Ting & Watt, 1999; Wilk, 2013).

It is not uncommon within the student affairs profession for employees to be required to work scheduled events after hours or to serve in a prearranged on-call rotation. These types of planned work commitments outside of the traditional 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. workday afford administrators the ability to plan their personal priorities around work commitments or allow known personal commitments to influence which after-hour work commitments they take on. There are also work situations that require responses outside those planned times, which can contribute to conflict between work and personal roles. For example, a campus crisis that requires on-site response in the middle of the night or requires an unexpected late departure from work can create a challenge for someone with caregiving responsibilities or other out-of-work commitments. Personal commitments can also spill over into work, such as when a course required for a graduate degree is only available during scheduled work time or when children are out of school for events like parent–teacher conferences.

Cultural norms are embedded in the fabric of the profession and influence what it takes to be hired, to be promoted, and to be recognized as a "pillar" of the profession. The culture of a profession like student affairs becomes entrenched from the beginning of the career pathway when undergraduates are hired to serve in paraprofessional roles, like resident advisers and orientation assistants, and are told what it takes to be successful in the field—that is, dedication to the whole student they serve even if it means working beyond prescribed hours. Those who then self-select into the profession to pursue careers in the field learn the cultural norms of dedication and hard work, which are then reinforced in graduate school through practica, internships, and field experiences (Sallee, 2016). In the early career, the

profession socializes its new hires to recommit themselves totally to their jobs, often asking them (directly or indirectly) to sacrifice personal time in order to demonstrate their dedication to their work as a means of eventual upward advancement.

The trend of self-sacrifice continues at midcareer, a time when student affairs professionals often begin raising families but are also pursuing advanced degrees so that they can propel themselves even further up the administrative ladder. The midcareer phrase is extended—and may take many forms—but this is typically a period in which student affairs professionals are overextended in terms of personal and professional time commitments (Bailey, 2011; Cameron, 2011; Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Spangler, 2011; Ting & Watt, 1999). Finally, at the senior student affairs level, the ideal worker norm is reified and reinforced as the institution places increasing expectations on those in upper leadership roles to endlessly and selflessly give of themselves to their institutions and profession. Individuals can buck this trend—opting out of the cultural norms or out of the profession altogether—but they may do so at a professional or personal cost (Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Spangler, 2011; Ting & Watt, 1999).

The expectations of what it means to be a successful student affairs professional are rooted in the culture of the profession and of the institutions in which these professionals work. The culture of any profession or workplace is influenced by formal structural supports and informal practices. Formal structural supports include written policies, defined procedures, and communicated departmental expectations. Informal practices include unwritten expectations and encompass how formal policies are implemented and supported by campus leadership, supervisors, and colleagues. For example, an employee may have flexibility to work from home written into their contract or they may be allowed to do this through an informal agreement with their supervisor (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Koppes, 2008; McNamara et al., 2012). Time off for wellness, education, or other personal priorities may be granted in a policy manual or through a flexible schedule created between supervisor and employee. There is typically not a written policy that says that student affairs workers should adhere to ideal worker norms. Rather, professional and institutional norms and practices reinforce the perpetuation of these ideals.

Individual as well as institutional costs come with expecting that student affairs professionals (and all employees, for that matter) engage in all-consuming work patterns. When individuals perceive that there are not enough hours in the day to accomplish both work- and home-related obligations, they may experience negative effects in terms of their ability to do

their work, career satisfaction, and/or personal well-being (Cameron, 2011; Chessman, 2018). Institutionally, the costs that are incurred from failing to pay attention to the needs of workers include turnover of employees, which can lead to an overload on remaining staff members and time and resources needed to recruit and train new employees (Lorden, 1998). Given the role that student affairs professionals play in the development of students, unending workloads can send negative signals to students about their own futures as workers. In fact, to the extent that student affairs professionals serve as role models to their students, there is added importance for them to show students how to "have a life" *and* be in a professional role after college. Further, when student affairs professionals are not operating at high levels of capacity, which comes from having high levels of personal and professional well-being, they likely are not able to positively impact their students as well as they should (Chessman, 2018). High-quality workplaces can yield employees who are more present and better able to do their jobs; in the case of student affairs professionals, this translates into better facilitating the success of students.

Socialization Into Ideal Student Affairs Worker Norms

Ideal worker norms, within the culture of the student affairs profession, are reinforced through informal and formal practices that begin as early as undergraduate student leadership positions on campus and continue into graduate training programs (Cameron, 2011; Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Sallee, 2016; Spangler, 2011; Stimpson, 2009; Ting & Watt, 1999; Wilk, 2013). Student affairs professionals routinely recognize their own role in shaping the culture of their undergraduate and graduate student leaders around work–life integration or how leadership at their own undergraduate institution shaped their perception of what it means to be a "good worker" in the profession of student affairs (Isdell, 2016). Sallee (2016) found that informal supports, such as faculty, peers in student affairs graduate programs, and the graduate student supervisor, all contributed to the perceived cultural norms of the student affairs position. Graduate faculty members in higher education and student affairs programs influenced role expectations for graduate students through factors such as their level of support in accommodating work- or family-related emergencies or considering evening and weekend commitments of parents when constructing course assignments. Conversely, the absence of these accommodations suggests a culture that is unsupportive of graduate students' lives outside of the classroom (Sallee, 2016).

Peers also perpetuate ideal worker norms for graduate students in their approach to scheduling group events within student affairs programs. For example, when social events are scheduled in the evening, on weekends, or are not family-inclusive, it can exclude participation from students who are managing outside personal priorities (Sallee, 2016). When lunch times are regularly used for workplace peer-level meetings, it turns that otherwise scheduled personal time into work time, which could conflict for employees who intended to use that time for personal needs. These examples of informal social workplace norms that are constructed through interactions with faculty, peers, and supervisors for those in student affairs graduate programs can either promote or hinder support of responsibilities outside the workplace (Kossek et al., 2010). When there is a lack of consideration for responsibilities beyond the campus, ideal worker norms are perpetuated for graduate students studying to become student affairs professionals.

Role of the Supervisor and Senior Student Affairs Professionals in Perpetuating Ideal Worker Cultural Norms

Supervisors and senior student affairs professionals also convey the extent to which success in the profession requires total dedication and therefore perpetuate ideal worker norms. There is no doubt that graduate students, new professionals, and even those in midcareer learn tacit lessons about the degree to which having a life outside of work is valued by watching how their more senior colleagues manage their professional and personal responsibilities. Powerful messages about how successful student affairs professionals are always on the clock or should be available on demand are conveyed by senior colleagues or supervisors who send emails at all hours of the day, call employees during their personal time, or send text messages during off hours. The unending demands of the profession are perpetuated by leaders who fail to demonstrate and model self-care, such as consistently neglecting their own fitness time or missing medical appointments and personal priorities to get work done. The ways in which senior leadership talk about their own lives outside of the profession also shape the perception of what a successful career in student affairs entails. Indeed, when mid- and senior-level professionals consistently demonstrate the inability to navigate personal relationships outside of work or share their decisions not to pursue personal interests or family goals as a result of the demands of their job, messages are sent to student affairs professionals who have personal priorities outside of work to pursue other career options—or to hide their outside interests in favor of perceived devotion to the field.

Although campus leaders and formalized policies and campus leadership influence the institutional culture supporting work–life management, supervisors can more greatly impact how the student affairs professionals navigate day-to-day work and family responsibilities. Direct supervisors at any level can perpetuate ideal worker norms and the cultural expectations of the student affairs role in multiple ways. Supervisors serve as role models and influence the perception of what it means to be a "good" student affairs professional. When graduate students and new professionals see their supervisors sacrificing personal goals such as marriage, children, or friendships, it contributes to a perception that effective student affairs professionals cannot also be successful in personal roles (Silver & Jakeman, 2014). In addition to modeling behavior, supervisors influence workplace culture through their acknowledgement and support of nonwork priorities of their staff members. It is not uncommon for two employees who report to two different supervisors to have similar evening responsibilities that keep them at work until 10:00 p.m., but who then are given different expectations regarding their presence at work the following day. Supervisors who expect their employees to be at work the following day at their normal 9:00 a.m. start perpetuate ideal worker norms. Supervisors who encourage their employees to use flextime to attend to a personal commitment during scheduled work time, rather than submit leave time, demonstrate a commitment to work–life integration rather than perpetuating ideal worker norms.

As emphasized by this example, supervisors also play a key role in conveying cultural norms through providing (or not) access to formal and informal supports for their employees. Many supervisors have discretion over how work–life policies and practices are implemented (Bailey, 2011; Jo, 2008; Koppes, 2008; Maxwell, 2005; Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000; Stone, 2007; Wilk, 2013; Williams & Dolkas, 2012). For example, several professionals at one institution in Isdell's (2016) study perceived conflict between the espoused values of the institution and reality of practice even when their personal experience was positive. While campus leadership was blamed for discrepancies between policy and practice, direct supervisors were seen as the primary influencers. Supervisors can perpetuate ideal worker norms at an institution that has established work–life policies through their lack of support related to use of the policies. Conversely, supervisors can create a positive culture around work–life management at an institution that lacks formalized policy through informal practices (Cameron, 2011; Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Isdell, 2016; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Spangler, 2011; Stimpson, 2009; Ting & Watt, 1999; Wilk, 2013).

Changing the Culture of Student Affairs

Ideal worker norms in the student affairs profession have been created through the utility of the 24/7 role and further perpetuated by academic programs, campus leadership, peers, and supervisors. Several studies have demonstrated early career departure because of perceived, or actual, conflict in managing personal responsibilities and student affairs work (Marshall et al., 2016; Silver & Jakeman, 2014; Ting & Watt, 1999). For example, for the 153 administrators in Marshall et al.'s study, two of the top contributors to departure from student affairs were stress and burnout (53%) and work–life conflicts with night and weekend responsibilities (34%). Other professionals have remained in the field but have opted to change roles or institutions in order to have a more flexible work schedule, even though this transition resulted in a decrease in their overall pay (Jo, 2008). Still others have opted out of pursuing higher level positions due to the perceived inflexibility of these positions with greater responsibility such as deans, vice provosts, and other chief student affairs positions (Collins, 2009; Hebreard, 2010). As a result of prioritizing availability to work over ability to produce good output, the field is likely not retaining the best and brightest and likely perpetuating inequities throughout the ranks of the profession (Eddy & Ward, 2015).

One of the means to combating ideal worker norms has been the creation and support for work–life policies and practices. Isdell (2016), for example, studied institutions with strong work–life supports and found that when administrators were empowered by their supervisors to accomplish work and personal commitments through flexibility within their scheduled work time and physical location, the employees felt that they were successfully navigating work–life integration despite working beyond a 40-hour week. For these professionals with master's and doctoral degrees, the flexibility to choose how and when they accomplished their work, rather than that being dictated to them, was a key factor in their motivation to remain at their current institution and to stay in the field (Isdell, 2016).

In order to shift organizational culture from an ideal worker construct to one that is supportive of work–life integration, policies and culture must be in alignment (Sallee, 2016). Most research on administrative staff in higher education has not focused on how existing structural supports affect work–life integration (Isdell, 2016; Lester, 2013; Wilk, 2013). The importance of policy and practice alignment was demonstrated in Lester's (2013) study of two institutions that had undergone intentional changes "to establish more practices, policies, and cultural change for work–life balance" (p. 485). For example, there was great variance in how and when flexible work schedules

were granted, because they were implemented through guidelines and supervisor discretion rather than formalized policy. When the women in Isdell's (2016) study of work–life friendly campuses noted discrepancy in access to workplace supports, they had a more negative view of the culture surrounding work–life management at their institution even if their own experience managing work and family was positive.

Institutions can positively influence cultural norms by creating policies or practices that enable employees' personal responsibilities to not always be secondary to work commitments, but these "work–life friendly" institutions are mostly still anomalies and do not represent the norm (Isdell, 2016; Wilk, 2013). Further, even within these progressive institutions, there is great variance on how these policies and practices are manifested to employees. In other words, the effectiveness of these work–family policies and practices is dependent on who the supervisor is and whether and to what degree they allow their employees to opt in to these practices. Institutional leadership can also encourage or discourage utilization of work–life supports and reinforce or refute ideal worker norms through their actions.

Recommendations for Practice

Work–life management is a consideration of the modern workforce of student affairs as an antidote to pervasive ideal worker norms. It is possible for student affairs professionals to successfully navigate both work and personal commitments when they have workplaces and/or supervisors that are open to creative approaches to managing both roles. This requires a shift away from ideal worker norms into a model that supports fluidity in and out of roles and allows for overlap between work and personal commitments (DeMinck, 2017; Isdell, 2016). As employees embrace commitments outside of their work responsibilities, identifying careers and workplaces that support work–life integration will be increasingly important. The next section includes advice for graduate students and new professionals, midcareer professionals, supervisors, and campus leaders as well as considerations for policy and practice.

Graduate Students and New Professionals

As we discussed earlier, graduate students and new professionals quickly learn the professional norms of the field by watching what is rewarded, valued, and modeled by their more senior colleagues. Professionals in the first few years of their career are less likely to have been at multiple institutions to see the range of ways that departments, various positions in student affairs, or institutions may provide "life-friendly" environments or perpetuate ideal worker norms.

There is likely greater struggle related to work–life integration for those who find the expectations on how they navigated competing responsibilities as an undergraduate (i.e., in their role as student/staff/athlete/worker/family member/etc.) to be incongruent with the expectations on how they navigate competing personal and work responsibilities as a graduate student or new professional. For example, if it was the cultural norm to spend 50% of their waking hours focused on student leadership roles (e.g., event planning and implementation, peer counseling, executive board duties) as an undergraduate student, then continuing to spend half of their time on weekends after also working a 5-day work week may be perceived as acceptable. However, if that was not the norm, then taking on a first position that is perpetuating ideal worker norms may be a more difficult transition. It is important to know what a person is "getting into" in any new position.

New professionals should ask good questions at interviews and try to find a fit between workplace culture and life outside of work. It is acceptable for those in the job market to ask questions about work–life management and to find out what resources are available at the institution and in the community to live the kind of life they desire. It is wise to ask questions of paraprofessionals, future peers, and supervisors about how they integrate work and life outside of work. Questions could include: (a) Can you share with me how you navigate work–life management in this department? (b) What are the typical working hours of this role? (c) How does this department support employees who work evenings or on weekends as a regular part of their responsibilities and/or when emergency situations arise? (d) What institutional policies or departmental practices are in place to support work–life management? An employer's openness to questions about work–life supports can help convey the reality of utilizing formal and informal supports as well as the underlying cultural expectations and norms around work–life integration of that department. Job candidates can also gain some insight into the workplace culture by listening to how employees discuss their own experiences navigating work–life integration and by observing artifacts in the workplace that reflect personal roles outside of the office such as pictures of family, vacations, or photos of someone running in a 5K or triathlon. Of course, the job market may encourage a candidate to take a position—any position—regardless of fit. Nonetheless, it is important to know the expectations and norms of any workplace situation as soon as possible.

It is important to recognize that new professionals often have greater face-time with student employees and leaders than their more senior colleagues and can help influence appropriate work–life integration by creating a culture that recognizes the multifaceted nature of students' roles and advocates for supports that allow them to be successful within the workplace

and classroom. This includes paying student leaders an equitable wage for the time they commit to their work and creating paraprofessional leadership roles that are not all-consuming of students' time. It can also include being a good role model for students, acknowledging good work, providing professional development for student staff, and setting clear goals and boundaries for what the work entails.

For new professionals who find themselves at an institution that does not align with their work–life needs, it is important to know that not all institutional cultures are the same. A desire to be more than just a worker is valid and a reason to gradually advocate for change or potentially to leave the institution. This incongruence is not necessarily a call to leave the profession, though such a possibility is clearly an option as well.

Midcareer Professionals

Just as it is important for graduate students and new professionals to ask potential supervisors and colleagues about work–life supports during the interview process, it is equally important for midcareer professionals to do so. Midcareer professionals also play a role in fostering a positive work–life culture for their employees and challenging their colleagues and supervisors when their actions are not supportive of life demands. Additionally, midcareer professionals are able to advocate for institutional and professional change. This is a group of professionals who likely need support and continued mentoring as they often have a lot of responsibilities, including mentoring junior colleagues. Midcareer professionals also likely have more intense family responsibilities than colleagues at other career stages. This group of professionals needs to be empowered to make change and provided support to be successful.

Supervisors

It is imperative for institutions to create structural supports, policies, and cultures that enable administrators to live beyond the boundaries of their work. Where institutional supports are lacking, however, supervisors can mitigate work–life challenges by providing opportunities for flexible work schedules, job sharing, work from home, or condensed work weeks. Additionally, when supervisors empower their staff to manage their own schedules by granting them flexibility in how their work and personal responsibilities overlap or coexist, it can mitigate stressors and ideal worker norms for the employee.

Other suggestions for optimizing work–life management and reducing ideal worker norms include setting clear and reasonable goals for what needs to be accomplished on the job, so that employees know when they have achieved

them and can focus on other tasks both inside and outside of work. Further, there is great value in providing feedback to employees to tell them what they are doing well and what they can continue to work on. Acknowledging the good work of employees both publicly and privately is an important means to facilitate employee personal and professional well-being. Employees can thrive when they know that they are doing their job well.

Senior Student Affairs Officers

Many of the pieces of advice that we would give supervisors is echoed in our advice for senior student affairs officers (SSAOs). However, these individuals have some additional responsibilities, given their leadership roles at the institution and within the profession. Above all, SSAOs, as leaders, play an important role in creating workplace cultures that either enforce or disrupt ideal worker norms. As role models, they send important messages through their own actions—including when they answer emails, how they demonstrate self-care, and what questions they ask of their employees. For example, there is value in having the SSAO take an interest in employees' lives outside of work by asking questions and encouraging such activities. The SSAO is also in a unique position to influence the climate in the unit through who they hire, who they promote, and how they reward behavior. If the SSAO rewards employees for taking care of themselves and having lives outside of work, then other employees will see that working all the time is not essential. SSAOs also are able to create formal policies and encourage informal practices that support life outside of work. Through their leadership positions, they are uniquely suited to advocate within the institution and the field for both policy and cultural change. It is essential that SSAOs recognize that their own experiences and socialization toward ideal worker norms are not "the way it has to be" and that they can disrupt these cultures by demanding that the culture change. This is in contrast with the notion that because they had to endure one set of norms, so should the next generation of workers. Because culture is so embedded and can sometimes be invisible, sometimes the first step is just recognizing that the norms exist and can be countered.

Policy and Practice

While this advice is focused on what individuals should do as they navigate the various levels of their career, true change in making higher education a space that supports work–life integration rests at the level of policy and practice. It should not be up to individuals to navigate the hurdles of work–life management alone—structural supports need to be put into place. Indeed, it behooves institutions of higher education to consider ways to foster formal and informal

policies and practices that facilitate the ability for all their employees to manage work–life demands. Regardless of whether work–life support structures are formalized, the goal of work–life supports is the enhancement of work performance and organizational effectiveness through the reduction of conflict between competing demands (Beauregard & Henry, 2009).

The institution plays an important role in changing ideal worker norms, which starts with recognizing and encouraging healthy living among its employees. Isdell (2016) found that student affairs professionals valued having access to campus recreational facilities and appreciated workplace cultures that encouraged employees to utilize wellness time within their work hours. This is a low-cost way to maintain healthy living among employees and to role model to students the importance of wellness. Other work–life supports institutions might provide include access to on-site childcare, tuition reimbursement, and professional development opportunities.

Institutional approaches could also include policies focused on how and when time is used, including compressed work weeks; time off for education, professional development, or physical wellness; and the ability to take unpaid vacation days, sabbaticals, or a career break (Koppes, 2008; McNamara et al., 2012). These types of programs can provide great value to employees if their utilization is encouraged and supported. For example, granting flextime to employees who have scheduled obligations after hours (i.e., on-campus events) can lead to greater employee satisfaction and improved commitment to the workplace (Dickson, 2008; Ferguson et al., 2012; Kelly et al., 2008; Kossek & Lee, 2008).

Flexible work schedules are a key contributor to work–life management for student affairs administrators, and it is important, where possible, to provide it to employees (DeMinck, 2017; Isdell, 2016; Lester, 2013; Wilk, 2013). Workplaces that support employees by giving them the ability to schedule work and personal activities to avoid conflicts are incorporating a strategy to separate work and personal domains as a mechanism to support work–life integration and to oppose ideal worker norms. Alternatively, having supports in place (e.g., technology) that allow work to be more fluid in regard to how and when it is completed is another strategy to help support effective management of both personal and professional domains and could lead to an intentional overlap of the competing areas. For example, being able to participate in a meeting via teleconference allows one to be actively engaged in work activities while also being physically present should a personal commitment require an employee to remain at home for the day. Either way, creating formalized policies around flexibility in where and when work is completed can positively affect institutional culture around work–life management. However, if implementation of flexible work schedules is entirely at the discretion of the supervisor, these types of formalized policies are just words, not practice.

Conclusion

The student affairs profession has been committed to the ideal of developing "the whole student" since *The Student Personnel Point of View* was published in 1937 (American Council on Education, 1937). That same value, of seeing an individual as more than one-dimensional, has not always been prioritized for the student affairs professional. Leaders within the profession would be well served to reflect on this incongruence between the espoused student affairs values and the reality of the practitioner's experience, just as institutions that celebrate their work–life supports can benefit from an examination of the actual lived experience of their staff, administrators, and faculty. We should ask and answer some key questions. What is role modeled by those we recognize as a pillar of the profession? Can someone serve in a leadership role within a professional organization or their institution while also having a life outside of work? Can up-and-coming professionals see student affairs leaders in their wholeness? Or are we only witness to what appears to be great personal self-sacrifice? It is essential for the leadership in professional associations (e.g., NASPA and ACPA) as well as leaders on campuses to reexamine the culture of the profession, the role expectations, and the structural supports for work–life integration to see if we are sending the right message about caring for the "whole professional." If there is not a cultural shift to expand the nature of the position beyond the construct of ideal worker norms, professionals who find themselves dedicated to a more holistic approach to their own life, who care about being actively engaged in their own wellness, community, family, and friendships outside of the workplace will leave the field or never enter a profession that requires them to be committed to the development of others' wellness at the expense of their own.

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