

Influencing Change from a Foundation of Authenticity
Moderated by Marilee J. Bresciani, Ph.D.

The following leaders will address some challenges and resulting strategies used to lead from their center of authenticity. Using case studies, the panel will discuss how they influence change and how they may need to “refashion their personal beliefs and commitments in a way that is true to one’s own self while recognizing the contributions of others” (NASPA/ACPA Competency Areas, 2010, p. 27). Participants will leave with a practical framework to inquire into their own practices as well as several strategies of how to apply that framework in the day-to-day.

Case Study A

ScenarioSetting – coffee shop in San Diego, where I am meeting one of my beautiful female colleagues for coffee

(Adapted from *Surrendering to the Call*, 2012, Balboa Press)

“OK,” Kelsey said with her impatience growing by the moment. “Tell me what you are learning. Tell me about what you are practicing. What do you think authenticity is and how do you ‘do’ it in light of everyone around you asking you to simply play political games?”

I told Kelsey about how I had just gone to yoga class¹ that morning where the instructor defined what authenticity was. She spoke to us as we began our integration series of yoga and she told us that being authentic was the willingness to be with what we felt and thought and to be OK with those feelings and thoughts. As I listened to her speak about being authentic, I thought of the irony of my having looked this word up in the on-line Merriam Webster dictionary just two days prior. In the dictionary, I had read that authentic had been defined as “true to one’s own personality, spirit, or character.”² It was interesting to me how the yoga instructor’s explanation landed more solidly on me than did the dictionary definition.

I explained to Kelsey that I understood authenticity to be just what my yoga instructor said that it was. That in simply acknowledging that when I was angry, I was angry and that was my authentic self. To be angry and then tell my self why I shouldn’t be angry was not authentic. Yes, there would be a time for acknowledging the anger and then exploring it, but that was part of the authentic process. Feeling angry and pretending not to be angry because someone thinks I shouldn’t be that way was not authentic.

I could see Kelsey’s furrowed brow as I spoke so I shared a few more examples.

“You know, it is like when I am in a meeting and someone starts speaking about something I don’t care about and I think, ‘I don’t care about this at all. I am not even interested in this topic and furthermore, I don’t agree with the position this person is even

¹Core Power Yoga, San Diego, CA

²Merriam-Webster on-line dictionary; <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/authentic>

taking on this topic.’ But then I start feeling guilty about it, thinking that I am a bad person for not caring about this topic or that I am rude for not listening. Other thoughts also run around in my head, some of which say, make sure you pay attention or people will know you are not interested in this and you will get in trouble for that later. Or don’t let this person think you are not interested in their topic because you need this person to listen to you and care about your topic when it comes time for you to speak.”

Kelsey started to giggle and I could tell this example, as goofy as it was, was resonating with her. She leaned forward and asked, “so where is the authenticity in all of this?”

“The authenticity is that I don’t care about the topic and I don’t agree with the position that is being taken. That person’s position doesn’t resonate with me.” I replied. “Those are my authentic feelings and my truest self. Everything else going on in my head - all that chatter about what I should or should not think or feel - is nothing more than a big ‘ole mind mess’.”

As Kelsey drifted off in her own thoughts and the experience she had earlier that day, I attempted to explain more of what I meant. The point that I was trying to make here was three-fold. First, I was explaining that my thoughts and feelings were authentic but I was feeling guilty for having them. Guilt isn’t an authentic feeling – it is what comes when I have a concern for looking good or a concern for pleasing others. The feeling of non-interest and then disagreement with the position were strong feelings of mine and they were authentic. Telling myself that I shouldn’t feel that way is guilt. Guilt is inauthentic and it is simply a waste of energy. It would be far wiser use of my energy to use an inquiry process to explore why I am not interested and why I am in such disagreement with my colleague’s position. Furthermore, I could use the inquiry process to explore how I could connect my authenticity with their agenda so as to offer genuine understanding and support should it be my role to do so.

Second, exploring why I am not interested in my colleague’s topic and why I am in such disagreement with my colleague’s position opens up the possibilities for me to tap into my authenticity and find a genuine connection with my colleague’s point of view. There is no guarantee after self-exploration that I will find this genuine connection with my colleague. However, what I do know is that without the exploration, I am likely not to find a genuine connection at all.

Third, the other messages that were running around in my head, such as the ones that told me to make sure I pay attention or people will know I am not interested in this and I will get in trouble for that later, or don’t let this person think I am not interested in their topic because I need this person to listen to me and care about my topic when it comes time for me to speak - all these are also inauthentic. I am making up stories in my head about what other people may be thinking and as I do this, I am moving farther and farther away from my authenticity and further into game-playing. As I move into game-playing, I am engaging in covert and overt manipulative behavior to advance my own agenda. It is all inauthentic game-playing and the appearance of respect isn’t respect at all; it is manipulation, coercion, and ultimately complete disrespect.

“It is just ridiculous.” I announced triumphantly at the end of my long monologue.

I could tell Kelsey was listening and I could also tell she had more questions.

“I get the difference in these examples between being authentic and not. But I don’t get how I can remain authentic when others are asking me to play games. How do I nurture my creative self when I have to work within an environment that fully doesn’t recognize my gifts?”

“Dang, you are asking some great questions girlfriend!”

“For me Kelsey, it is the difference between recognizing my authenticity and recognizing the agenda on the table. What I mean is that as I am just learning to walk in my own authenticity, I prefer to show up as my authentic self. Yet there are many times when I am caught up in the agenda that is on the table. I don’t mean a meeting agenda; I mean that which I feel people are asking from me or that which I am asking of them. My getting caught up in the ‘agenda’ gets me lost in the agenda and I find myself losing my authentic self for the sake of the agenda. Other times, I can walk away from having engaged in the agenda and have been fully my authentic self. There are very few times, because I feel I am so new at this that I can maintain my authenticity and move fully within the agenda.”

“For example, I was at a conference the other day and a colleague who I respect and adore asked me to serve on a very important national task force. I was so honored by the invitation and I respect this person so very much. I even feel that I ‘owe’ him a service or two, if you know what I mean. I mean, he has done a great deal for me and my career, he is one of those amazing people that you feel like you *should* do anything that he asks of you because he has given so much to you. Well, that is how I feel about him. However, when he asked me to serve on this committee, it just didn’t resonate with me. I mean, the purpose of the task force – it just wasn’t what I felt led to be spending my time doing. I wasn’t sure I agreed with what the task force was created to do. And when I shared that I wasn’t sure I could support the work of the Task Force, he advised me to be on it so that another perspective would be represented. But, it still didn’t resonate with me. I could genuinely tell him how honored I was to be asked. I could genuinely thank him for asking me and then I told him that the work of the task force was of no interest to me.”

“Holy Moses Marilee. Are you kidding me? You said it just like that? How did he respond?” Kelsey was so shocked; she had knocked her latte cup over. But neither one of us hurried to stand her cup upright. Fortunately, it was empty. She had finished it almost 20 minutes ago.

I smiled and replied. “Well, I think I used more words than that...at least, I hope I did. And I hope I was compassionate and honoring when I told him of my response. But I did tell him that the work he proposed did not resonate with me. He looked at me in complete shock and as he did so, I could begin to feel my mind kick in and start some sort of story

about how I better think of something quick and change my mind and blah, blah, blah. You know the routine. Basically fear took over my mind and I was afraid of the repercussions for having said no to this very gracious invitation. But instead, I asked silently for wisdom and it came. I told him what I felt my work was about now and why his generous offer didn't resonate me, even though I was sincerely honored by his invitation to me. I also told him what I would be happy to do to serve him should those opportunities arise. As I spoke, he softened and a smile returned to his face. I could see that he was hearing me that he understood me, and I couldn't help think that it was all because I was showing up authentically. But perhaps it was also because he was keeping his own ego in check. I don't really know. I am just grateful that it was a beautiful conversation."

"Are you still scared that there may be potential repercussions to saying no?" Kelsey inquired leaning forward on her elbows, chin propped in her hands.

"I would be lying if I didn't tell you that I don't think about that." I responded solemnly. "But, at this point in my life and with this particular scenario, it was so much more important for me to pay attention to that still, small, inner voice that told me this opportunity was not for me. I chose to listen to that voice, regardless of what it looks like on the outside and regardless of any repercussions that may come from saying no. I do accept full responsibility for that."

"But," I chimed in energetically, "I also remind myself that saying 'no' to this opportunity because it did not resonate with my authentic self means that a very exciting 'yes' opportunity is around the corner."

Questions to Consider:

1. Who am I (e.g., the practice of self-referral, not object-referral)?
2. Who am I in relationship to the idea, suggestion, and/or assignment being presented to me or the behavior I am witnessing?
3. How do I resonate with what is being asked of me or what I am witnessing?
4. Why am I resonating in the manner in which I am with what is being asked of me or what I am witnessing? What lessons are here for me to learn about who I am or who I am becoming?
5. If I am not resonating with what is being presented to me or what I am witnessing, how can I engage in inquiry to expand the possibilities of what I now see?
6. What do I see as my choices with regard to how I will engage in what is being asked of me or what I am witnessing?
7. Which choice or sets of choices best resonates with who I understand myself to be (self-referral)?
8. What consequences seem apparent from that choice or set of choices?
9. What opportunities seem apparent from that choice or set of choices?
10. Which choice do I want to own?

Suggestions:

1. Journal on the questions listed above if time permits before you make a choice.

2. Talk the scenario and your journaled answers over with a trusted friend or mentor before you make the choice if time permits.
3. If you don't have time to journal or seek counsel from a trusted friend or mentor, then do your best on the spot to work through this process in your mind and most importantly, your heart.
4. Trust your "gut."

Brief Bio

Marilee J. Bresciani, Ph.D. is a professor of postsecondary education at San Diego State University (SDSU). Before coming to SDSU, she was an Assistant Vice President of Institutional Assessment at Texas A&M University and prior to that, she was the Director of Assessment at North Carolina State University. Her student affairs work began at the University of Nebraska - Kearney where she served in a number of roles before going to the University of Kansas Medical Center where she served as the Assistant Dean of Students prior to moving to North Carolina. Her now more than twenty-four years of higher education faculty and administrative work has been committed to changing the way that America talks about the quality of higher education. In order to keep from going crazy about trying to get the American public to care about what students are actually learning and how they are developing rather than being concerned with other indicators that have nothing to do with that, she has sought out yoga and meditation. Marilee's mantra is "I teach what I need to learn." More information about Marilee can be found at www.rushingtoyoga.org

Case Study B

Scenario Setting - An Outstanding Prestigious University

I was in my fourth year at Outstanding Prestigious University (OPU) serving in a new role as the Victim Assistance Coordinator for the OPU Police Department, the first full time person to hold this position. I was the only female on the management team of 10 and one of three in a department of 50 employees. My role was to assist any person who was injured, the victim of a crime, or who had a major suicide attempt that involved the Police. I also coordinated the Orientation sessions for the Police Department with students, and provided training to the officers around sexual assault, diversity issues, conflict resolution and intervention techniques. I was 28 years old when the following incident took place.

A sophomore woman at OPU was sexually assaulted by a male (senior I think), international student whose father was a prominent donor to the University. I assisted the woman from the time at the hospital, to her interview with the Community Police Dept and the DA's office. She had a compelling story to tell, but as is usual in these cases, her memory was clouded from the use of alcohol. Three days before the court hearing, I received a call at home from the Senior Vice President for OPU (at least three levels above me). Mr. M asked me to recount for him the story of the woman, which I believed was confidential unless we only spoke of public information. Further he asked me

directly to help convince the woman to drop the complaint. I politely told him that my role was to provide support for her, whatever her decision was, and I could not convince her to move in any particular direction. I also made some reference to not interfering with the legal process and that I would be meeting with her and the DA rep tomorrow. I knew in that moment that I was heading down a path that was going to be difficult. I had no idea however, the major repercussions that would occur.

The woman met with the DA and independently decided to remove her complaint based on the information provided by the DA about how the defendant's attorney would question her on her alcohol use, her background with counseling, dating behaviors, etc. This was 1989, so things were just beginning to change, although there are still major issues to deal with in terms of sexual assault.

Two weeks after this, I went into my boss' office, the chief of Police, to find the VP for Human Resources sitting with him. I was told that I was being "laid off"; they had decided to go in a different direction with the position and that they needed someone with a degree in Counseling to hold the position. (I had a Master's in Education, and was currently in the Doctoral Program in Administration, Policy and Training). I was told I had to clean out my office by the next day, and I could meet with the VP for HR to finalize an exit plan. I left the office and went back to my desk, put my head down and cried. I was dating one of the Police Detectives at the time and he, and several others in the leadership team came by and were angry with the decision, and with how I was being treated. I packed up my desk that night, and began to assemble a team of support to move forward.

Before I met with the VP for HR, I went to an attorney to understand my rights. I was living in OPU provided housing (the president owned my building!) and I was almost done with the course work for my doctorate and wanted to finish the program. An article in the paper shortly after I was let go quoted the president as saying "Ms Jablonski must be a paranoid nitwit to think I had anything to do with her termination". He also made disparaging comments about women and sexual assault. After speaking with the attorney and realizing that I did not have very good grounds on which to sue, nor did I want the public condemnation of peers or future employers, I decided to negotiate for the best deal I could get. I became very pragmatic, and asked for 6 months of salary, my apartment until the next summer, and for OPU to pay for my graduate program for one year. They agreed to pretty much all of that, and I had to sign an agreement that I would not speak about this during the time of my continued benefits. I maintained some contact with former colleagues, began a job search and was fortunate to secure a Director of Housing position within 3 months, and finished my doctorate three years later. About 6 months after my final paycheck, I wrote a full page column for the student paper that presented the true picture of what happened from my perspective. It took a lot of soul searching and some measure of courage to do this, but I thought I had to for my own credibility and "truth", as well as standing up for the principles that I believed in. Several people over the course of my career have referenced how I handled this situation, and how they saw a strong advocate for women and for students in general dealing with an extremely difficult leadership situation and culture.

At the time, I believe I acted more out of instinct than from a place of “authenticity”. I didn’t reflect on the long-term implications of what I was doing, except to know that I did not want to be public in the first few months, and I needed to secure a settlement that would enable me to move forward. I did draw on my inner strength of character, a principled approach to problem solving, and a social justice approach to acting in the world. Although at times I felt I was acting “selfishly” by protecting my own interests, I realized later that by doing just that, I was able to move forward from a position of my basic needs being met, and continue to emerge as a leader in the student life field. In other words, I lived to continue the fight another day.

Questions to Consider:

1. What options did I have to publicize the situation given my role in the administration, living on campus and my graduate student status?
2. Was I authentic in presenting my understanding of my role to the Senior VP?
3. How do you manage fear about your job in relation to doing the right thing?
4. What choices were available to me, and did I adequately explore them all before making moves/decisions?
5. Given this happened when I was a relatively new professional, what role did experience, or lack thereof play into the decisions made?

Suggestions:

1. Play out in advance possible scenarios that could be presented to you- best case and worst case- so you may be prepared.
2. Attend professional development training sessions that address communication skills, conflict resolution and problem solving, and organizational culture issues.
3. Do everything possible to understand the culture where you work, the leadership styles of the leaders around and above you. If there is not congruence, seek alternative employment asap!
4. Know yourself enough to trust your intuition; your heart/mind as some call it.

Brief Bio

Dr. Jablonski, who is known as Peggy, has served thirty years in higher education and is widely recognized as a leader in the field of university student affairs. She is currently the vice president for student affairs at the University of New Haven, working with students, faculty, and staff to create and maintain a climate that fosters student learning and development while enhancing a strong sense of community. She was previously vice chancellor for student affairs at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and has held senior administrative positions at Brown University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the University of Connecticut. Peggy has been active in the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, serving as the Vice President for Region I and the NASPA Journal Editor.

In the selection process for the next Head of Miss Hall’s School the Search Committee provided this summary:

“During the course of her career, Dr. Jablonski has demonstrated passion for the education of young women, including the academic and out-of-classroom experiences required for them to become effective leaders. In the process, she has mentored hundreds of women students on academic, career, and personal issues and has been a vocal advocate for education. Throughout her career, Dr. Jablonski has also continued to teach, including graduate courses in higher education policy, women's issues, leadership theory, and student affairs. Additionally, she has worked closely with boards of trustees, faculty, staff, and students to raise funds and design major campus facilities, and she understands the complexities of leading an academic institution. Furthermore, during the course of our conversations with her, it became clear to us that Dr. Jablonski exemplifies our own values of authenticity, honor, respect, and growth.”

Peggy has continued to seek a balanced life through a commitment to formal retreats, a regular yoga practice, time in nature, and even chasing a little white ball around a golf course. She believes we all have significant contributions to make if we slow down enough to listen to our inner voice guiding the way. She was honored to be asked to participate in a panel about “authenticity”, as that has been a guiding principle for her as well as for the girl’s school she will join this summer. Synchronicity!

Case Study C

Admissions Scenario provided verbally

Questions to Consider:

- 1) How do I live my daily life in a daily that is consistent with my values? (What are the decisions I make over time, each day choosing to live in ways that reflect who I believe myself to be).
- 2) How do people know you are who you say you are?
- 3) Do I love or fear students more?
- 4) How do I embrace intellectual diversity, especially with my conservative colleagues?
- 5) How might I continue to move beyond dichotomies?
- 6) How do I stay true to the gentleness in my nature amidst very grumpy times, including the grumpiness within myself?

Questions Specific to the Admissions Scenario:

1. How do I influence colleagues who are wedded to quantitative admissions approaches (GPA, GRE)?
2. What are the concerns of those who oppose me?
3. To what extent should I be encouraging out of state students of color to come to Arizona?
4. How do I increase recruitment of Native and Latino students within Arizona?
5. How do I communicate to White students and faculty the educational and social value of learning among diverse peers?

Brief Bio

Susan D. Longerbeam Ph.D. is an associate professor of educational psychology at Northern Arizona University. Before coming to NAU, she was a doctoral student at the University of Maryland, and prior to that, she was the Administrative Director of Student Health Services and Interim Dean of Students at Oregon State University. Her undergraduate degree in Community Studies from UC Santa Cruz continues to influence her—she has been committed to community work, in education and health care, for thirty years. She believes in: supporting every student, lifelong learning, the student affairs profession, gentleness, using privilege to empower others, and building bridges across diverse peoples and perspectives. She is influenced by her research on the powerful effect of peers in college. More recently, as a faculty member of the student affairs preparation program at NAU, she developed a global learning curriculum. Susan integrated international content into coursework, and leads international study tours for graduate students. She studied in West Africa as an undergraduate, and believes in the transformative learning potential of international experiences. She identifies as a White bi middle class woman, the mother of an infant, and an educator.

Case Study D

Excerpted from: Chávez, A. F.(2009).Leading in the borderlands: Negotiating ethnic patriarchy for the benefit of students. *Journal About Women in Higher Education, 1*, 39-65.

Because I, a *mestiza*, continually walk out of one culture and into another, because I am in all cultures at the same time ...*alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro, me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio*...a soul between two worlds, three, four. My head buzzes with the contradictory; I am disoriented by all the voices that talk to me simultaneously.

– Gloria Anzaldua --

Healing the Unforgivable: Troubling Choices by Good People

I chose this professional teaching story to further illustrate the concept of “remaining ourselves” and bring to life “learning to speak the language and priorities of those you wish to persuade.” By listening to and responding from my own ways of being while working to understand someone else’s way of being, I was able to facilitate some healing during a difficult time. While serving as a dean of students, the university where I worked made headlines when someone noticed photographic discrepancies on the cover of a marketing publication. It was revealed that a photo of an African American student had been inserted into a photo of a crowd of Caucasian American students and reporters descended on the University. As dean, I contacted the African American student to offer assistance, fielded some of the media, and offered support to groups of upset students of color. In addition, I chose to offer support, assistance and accountability to a decision maker in the situation. Journal reflections follow from that time.

Today, I met with an African American student whose photo was inserted into another photo for a marketing publication. He has been hounded by reporters and is struggling to cope with unasked for and unwanted national attention, the use without permission of his image, and trying to keep up with academics in the midst of turmoil. It is heart wrenching to know that all I can offer is empathy and a bit of support on campus. I am so very impressed with his graceful dignity and compassion in dealing with all of this.

An excerpt a few days later,

Yesterday, I heard calls for firing of the leader who decided to portray diversity by altering a photograph in a University publication. Though I am angry too, my reaction has been far different. I want this White male leader to stay and make reparation to the campus! It is too easy to walk away and in my cultural traditions it is important for all to consider longer term relations, regain dignity, and make amends by being held responsible for repairing the damage of our actions.

An excerpt a few weeks later,

Today, I had lunch with the leader who made decisions about the photograph. It has been a difficult three weeks and I can see that he is down. I asked him if he would find it helpful to know what I have been hearing from students of color and others on campus. He seemed distraught as he spoke of meeting with minority students and feeling like they hated him. He spoke of how he was trying so hard to build the student diversity of the campus and was dedicated to advocating for students of color to improve retention. I asked him a few questions about what behaviors from students made him feel that he was hated then reflected for a moment on how I might assist him in finding healing and in continuing with this priority. I told him that I didn't believe these student behaviors showed hatred. They were clearly frustrated, angry, and hurt about being used and not served well and their main concern in my experience is to work with us as leaders to improve the campus for those who come after them. I spoke of how misinterpretations are often made across cultures when there are differences in how much we show emotions and asked if part of what he was feeling might also be from an upbringing of low public displays of emotion. He looked startled and said that yes; he had been raised to show mostly positive emotions and had been taken aback at the strong emotions shown by these students. He asked me how he might go about working through this and I suggested he meet with some of these students, share how he was feeling, ask for their assistance in significant ways, and work to apply as many of their ideas as possible.

By putting aside my own frustrations and empathizing with this leader from a *Mestiza* framework of lifelong relationships, accountability, and healing I was able to facilitate shifting his focus toward understanding, connecting with students as partners, and finding solutions. In a small way I assisted a well meaning person to overcome a profound misjudgment. It was important in this situation for me to draw from the concepts of Spanish and Indigenous cultures to frame every relationship as a lifelong one, healing beyond mistakes, and making reparation to those we harm. It was also important to work at understanding some of the cultural and gender

perspectives of this leader and to assist him to reconsider his assumptions about students of color. As I began to urge others on campus to support this leader in making reparation, I found that ethnic patriarchy manifested also among cultures with long term relational orientations like mine. Many continued to call for his firing, some becoming angry at my call for us to work through this together. My greatest ally in this instance proved to be the African American student who had been added to the photograph. He came out in a very public way to offer forgiveness and urge the campus to work with this and other leaders to heal the community and learn from this mistake. In this way, we were able to negotiate some of the individualistic, quick solution orientations of White ethnic patriarchy that can prevent healing, reparation, connection, and longer term solutions within the diversity of our campus communities.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is frustrating me and how can I take a step back to reflect on a way through my own frustrations toward hope, activism, and healing?
2. What elders, colleagues, friends, and family can I reach out to for guidance and processing?
3. What do I truly believe and how do I wish to bring my beliefs and values to bear in this situation?
4. What might the other person believe, what were their intentions, and how can I be of assistance to facilitate these underlying truths within our community?
5. How can I approach with kindness, authenticity, fierce activism, and hope?
6. How will I negotiate through responses to my choices -- those who support, those who are hesitant, those who question, and those who resist, speak against, or threaten?
7. What choices and actions will I be at peace with twenty years from now?
8. How will my actions affect the world in future generations?

Suggestions:

1. MAKE time for reflection, meditation, prayer, processing through initial emotions, and/or processing with those you trust.
2. Remind yourself of your own deepest values and beliefs
3. Consider walking for a moment in another's shoes
4. Imagine someone else's good intentions
5. Look for the good in others
6. Expect others' differences and similarities
7. Look for and create ways to encompass yourself AND others' ways of being
8. Call forth and trust in your greatest self

Brief Bio

Alicia Fedelina Chávez, Ph.D. is a faculty member in the Department of Educational Leadership at the University of New Mexico A Mestiza of the high desert mountains of Taos, New Mexico, she is dedicated to facilitating socially, culturally, and ecologically sustainable college communities by applying anthropological analysis; recrafting higher education toward diverse

epistemologies; exploring cross-cultural leadership and college teaching; and promoting balance, authenticity and spirituality in professional life. Alicia holds a Ph.D. from the University of Arizona in Higher Education Policy Studies; an MA from Iowa State University in Student Personnel & Higher Education Administration and a BA from New Mexico State University in Psychology. Her experience includes serving as Executive Campus Director of University of New Mexico-Taos; as Dean of Students at University of Wisconsin- Madison; as Assistant Professor Miami University, as Director, Hispanic Cultural Center at University of Northern Colorado, as Diversity Development Consultant at Iowa State University, as Assistant Director for Career Services and Program Coordinator for New Student Orientation at Nebraska Wesleyan University, as Hall Director at Iowa State University, and as Hall Manager and Academic Advisor at New Mexico State University. Alicia has made choices to live a life of balance among her extended family in Taos, New Mexico, to serve as a teacher, and scholar in higher education, and to practice a life of spirituality, kindness, fierce activism, laughter, reflection, hope, and interconnections with the natural world.

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