

Personal and Ethical Foundations Competency Reflection

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The Personal and Ethical Foundation (PEF) competency area contains many characteristics that are vital to success as a student affairs practitioner. These characteristics include integrity, ethics, and the inclusion of wellness and growth (NASPA & ACPA, 2015). PEF describes the importance of “a combination of external ethical guidelines, an internal voice of care, and our own lived experiences” (NASPA & ACPA, 2015, p. 16). Personal and Ethical Foundations underscores the significance of knowing one’s personal identity and the beliefs that guide decision making. A quote by James Clear came to mind when thinking about this competency: “every action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become” (Clear, 2018).

As a student affairs practitioner and scholar, I would self-assess my PEF proficiency as intermediate. This self-assessment is founded on experiences I have encountered inside the classroom and working in co-curricular spaces. After reading the provided competency examples, I feel confident that I have met or exceeded many of the PEF intermediate standards.

The first competency example that stood out to me was “identify and address lapses in ethical behavior among self, colleagues, and students” (NASPA & ACPA, 2015 , p. 16). As the First Year Experience Coordinator at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, one of my primary responsibilities was ensuring adherence with state and federal regulations. One of the regulations that I encountered was the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regarding student information access and retention. After introductory research, I realized that the orientation program I oversaw was out of compliance with FERPA. Over the next few weeks, I completed FERPA trainings provided by the Department of Education and organized trainings

for student employees to complete. This is one example where I was able to recognize an ethical deficiency and encourage growth for myself and student employees that I supervised.

The second PEF outcome that I have experienced as a student affairs practitioner is “seek environments and collaborations that provide adequate challenge such that personal development is promoted, and provide sufficient support such that development is possible” (NASPA & ACPA, 2015 , p. 16). Similar to my first experience, this example occurred while supervising student employees. After several questions regarding the support of transgender students, I recognized that there was a deficiency surrounding information about salient identities for student employees. After discussing the deficit with several students and supervisors, I reached out to the professional staff that work with diverse students to provide safe zone trainings for all student employees that encounter diverse student populations. At the conclusion of the training, myself and student staff were able to discuss what we learned and how we could apply the techniques and knowledge with the students that we support. This collaborative learning opportunity provided an experience that challenged our preconceived notions and enabled an opportunity to grow.

The third PEF outcome I selected is based on my experience in the classroom as an undergraduate and current graduate student. The outcome to “develop and implement plans to manage competing priorities between one’s professional and personal lives” (NASPA & ACPA, 2015, p. 16) accurately describes the balance between managing academic and co-curricular commitments. Currently in my graduate assistantship, I have had honest and sometimes difficult conversations with supervisors about accommodations of work schedules and project deadlines as they interfere with class assignments. These conversations have allowed me to be more productive in both my personal and professional lives as the expectations are no longer

competing against each other. Although difficult to organize, these plans have allowed me to be successful inside the classroom while managing my responsibilities as a professional in student affairs.

In conclusion, I have found that I apply many of the Personal and Ethical Foundation outcomes to my experience as a student affairs practitioner and as a student. Although I am constantly growing and evolving, I feel confident in my beliefs and assured in what I bring to the people and environments I surround myself with. To further enhance my development in the PEF competency, I will review the NASPA and ACPA outcomes on a regular basis and use them as a reference to make decisions. One outcome where I will strive for improvement is “evolve personal beliefs and commitments in a way that is true to one’s internal voice while recognizing the contributions of important others” (NASPA & ACPA, 2015). By listening to those around me and asking questions, I hope to acknowledge the contributions of my peers and better understand their personal ethical frameworks. Having a strong ethical basis to assist in decision making and help guide professional actions is a crucial aspect of my identity as a responsible professional.

References

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