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The Key to Success is Failure

Alexander Thomas, University of South Carolina

“Failure is not fatal, but failure to change might be.” This quote by famed college basketball coach John Wooden, highlights the idea that even when things do not go according to plan, the situation can still be salvaged through change (Bois, 2010). The idea is relevant to new graduate students, as the transition to graduate education can be incredibly difficult and stressful. Students need to change their approach to meet the challenges and demands of the transition to graduate life (Gallagher, 2013). In order to be successful, graduate students must find ways to adapt to the more challenging situations that they encounter. The purpose of this article is to highlight a strategy for graduate students to become more adaptable by embracing failure.

It’s Not You
From time to time, everyone will fail at something or have a task that does not go as well as planned. For graduate students transitioning into a new lifestyle, failure can occur in numerous settings, including work, academics, and personal relationships. In order for students to ultimately embrace failure, they must start by realizing that failure happens and is not fatal. American pioneer William D. Brown once stated, “Failure is an event, never a person” (Goodreads Inc, 2013). By recognizing that even though they have failed, they are not failures, graduate students can start to see these events as what they really are: learning opportunities.

Learning Through Failure
In a recent interview, entrepreneur Richard Branson responded to a question about fear and failure by saying, “The key to bouncing back is to learn whatever lessons you can from the experience so that you can avoid making the same mistakes in the next launch” (Branson, 2013b, para. 6). Though targeted at entrepreneurs, Branson’s advice is useful for graduate students as well; students need to adjust their mindset towards failure, and embrace it as feedback that can be used to become more successful the next time (Bain, 2012, p. 54). As opposed to a novel, students need to see life as a series of short stories, each with its own moral or lesson to be learned. Each of these lessons serves as a way for students to avoid similar mistakes in the future, and encourages a positive outlook on the current situation. “Failure is one of the secrets to success,” a secret that graduate students can utilize by learning as much as they can from it (Branson, 2013a, para. 8).

Conclusion
Motivational speaker Zig Ziglar once said, “If you learn from defeat, you haven’t really lost” (BrainyQuote.com, 2013). Graduate students need to begin embracing their failures as they enter graduate school by viewing them as learning opportunities. In doing so, students will not have really failed at all, but
References
Who Says You Can't Go Home?: Lessons Learned as a New Professional

Chelsea Rhodes, University of South Carolina

The click, click, click of my heels on the pavement outside of my campus office signaled my first day as a young professional, and a return home after a long journey. Instead of feeling nervous about where to park or the location of the office, I knew exactly where I was going. When the opportunity to return to my Alma Mater arose, I leaped at the chance to give back to my undergraduate institution. However, I could not help but wonder if working as a graduate assistant here might be a poor career move. Entering into the workforce as a young professional is tough and there is a unique set of challenges associated with working at your alma mater. This article provides tips to individuals considering a similar return to their alma mater.

Tip One: Dress the Part

My first tip is to dress the part of a professional staff member. Many higher education professionals understand the idea of dressing appropriately to fit into the culture of the office. Pay attention to what others are wearing in the office and match their level of “office chic.” Considering most of my professors saw me in yoga pants or jeans as a student, making the change to dress pants and blouses was a clear signal that my role had changed. I also found wearing my nametag for the first few weeks helpful as it established me as an official and confident young professional.

Tip Two: Fraternizing with the Family

Deciding how you will interact with faculty and students, particularly those that knew you as an undergraduate, is an important point to ponder before starting work. I returned to campus less than two years after graduating, so some of the students knew me from my undergraduate days. Luckily, a conversation about the change of relationship was unnecessary; however, if needed, this conversation needs to be direct, leaving no room for confusion. One challenge was refraining from visiting past professors. I knew that, like my relationships with students, my relationships with my former professors had changed. It is true that they were, and forever will be, my mentors. But I needed to establish myself as a colleague, not as a student reaching out for support. Now, when I have discussions with them, there is less of a power differential and instead of a conversation occurring between pupil and teacher, the conversation is between fellow employees.

Tip Three: Be Your Confidant Self

Lastly, be confident and be yourself. You were hired for a reason: your supervisor believed you would be a great asset to the team. Although my journey took me back to my alma mater, I reminded myself that I was hired because of my strengths and abilities to serve the students of my institution. If you choose to return to
When is the Right Time to Job Search?

Ali Martin Scoufield, LaSalle University

A question that continues to plague me even as a mid-level professional is ‘When is the right time to job search?’ I asked a few colleagues what their thoughts were and as you can imagine, the responses were vastly different with various considerations, advice, timelines, and cautions. Every suggestion made me more aware that the job search is a very personal process. Sherly Shandberg, the chief operating officer of Facebook said, “Careers are a jungle gym, not a ladder.” I couldn’t agree more. While I worry over questions like, ‘Is a lateral move ok’ and ‘As a housing professional, am I ready to move off’, I have to recognize that my priorities are my own and my job search is my own. The best advice I can offer into this complicated process is to trust yourself.

In addition to trusting yourself, you should also be ready to ask yourself tough questions. Many colleagues said our jobs should make us happy; maybe not happy all the time, every day but mostly. And there may be aspects of your job that never make you happy (for me, budget proposals) but for the most part – you should be excited, look forward to what the day brings, and find new challenges along the way that inspire you. If you’re not finding enjoyment in your work, perhaps it is time to look for something else, even if you’re still within your first year. But be prepared to have a tough conversation with yourself. If after you transition to another job, you again find yourself unhappy...leaving two positions within the first year starts to look like a pattern and employers might wonder if the problem isn’t the positions - but you.

Many colleagues also mentioned that it is time to job search when institutional or supervisor priorities differ from what you originally thought or committed to. Perhaps your SSAO announces a newly crafted Mission Statement that no longer aligns with what you espouse – this might be a reason to search. Again, only you can determine how institutional change affects your work and only you can recognize how your growth as a professional affects your ability to work within certain parameters.

A final theme common in responses was the impact the job search can have on your social life. Not only is the job search often time consuming but the possibility of relocating can wreak havoc on an established social network and can have implications for all of your relationships. Certainly, friends and family are considerations for the job search and you must decide how big of a consideration they should be. For example, if you’re working at an institution that offers partner benefits and your partner is partaking in those, transitioning from that position could pose serious problems.

So when is it the right time to job search? In a very real way, my response is - you tell me. And while you are job searching, surround yourself with supportive mentors who can guide you to your next great adventure.
Lessons Learned: The Values of a Honor Society and Graduate School Transition

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As prepared as we try to become, many cannot completely adjust to the life of becoming a graduate student. Many quickly realize that the 8am-5pm student affairs jobs and 5pm-8pm night classes, along with the countless studying and reading hours, can drain us from truly grasping what the graduate experience is all about. We begin to long for the days when we were in undergrad, when we somewhat cared about academics, but in reality, cared more about the relationships we built and the “enjoy the moment” mentality many of us had.

I can confess that I have been down this road. Unfortunately, the challenges I began to face started to dominate my life and had begun to affect my work ethic and my enthusiasm to learn. I was tired of my schedule and had started to experience laziness and a lack of interest in the things I was doing. Additionally, I had become extremely homesick and any chance I could get to go home, I went home! This was never affordable and it never helped in appreciating where I was currently living. It was in the middle of the semester as I sat in front of my desk that I realized that I was unhappy and I had not been living the graduate experience I had hoped for.

So what did I do? Without knowing it, I began to incorporate the five areas of Omicron Delta Kappa (scholarship, athletics, campus or community service, journalism and creative/performing arts) into my daily life in order to face the challenges I was experiencing. I went to graduate school to further my educational career, so it was only fitting that scholarship became my priority. Thankfully, the program I am in is a cohort model, which allowed me to reach out to many of my colleagues to create study groups. Being around these people rejuvenated my passion for why I am seeking my Master’s in Student Affairs and has also opened the door for a new passion of mine, journalism. In the past few months, I have discovered an appreciation for writing and publishing written work. I have been able to write about my outlook on many of the concepts I am learning in my classes in hopes to make a contribution within my field. To bring balance into my life, I decided to cheer on rather than play the intramurals team my cohort had created. This allowed for me to build relationships with classmates and not feel so homesick. Lastly, the bonds I have created in my graduate experience has allowed me to step outside the classroom and share what I have learned within our campus and community.

To conclude, graduate school is not easy to transition to. But, with a positive mindset and filling up your life with new experiences, it can become the experience of a life time...even better than the one that you had in
Best Practices: Kudos! at Indiana University-Bloomington

Brooke Moreland-Williams, Indiana University-Bloomington

Residential Programs and Services (RPS) at Indiana University-Bloomington implements a promising practice, called Kudos!. The mission of Kudos! is to acknowledge staff that go above and beyond when helping others on campus. When staff members within Residential Programs and Services (which includes Residential Life staff, Dining Services, Custodial and Maintenance Services, and Support Staff Services) have gone out of their way to help someone or made a positive impact on someone’s college/work experience, individuals are able to submit these positive acts into a database online. The reporting individual can be a divisional employee, a student, staff, or faculty member on the Bloomington campus, a parent, or any other member of general public that RPS is providing services to. Reporting individuals write how that particular person has made a difference. Coordinated by the divisional Human Resources staff, the Executive Director of the Division has the opportunity to read these reports, sending to the student leader or staff member, a personally signed certificate along with an official commendation letter outlining the specific act of service that was submitted, a copy of which goes into the employee’s permanent personnel file.

Additionally, each semester, there is a Kudos! luncheon and every individual who has been awarded a Kudos! is invited to the luncheon along with their immediate supervisor. As part of the luncheon, the Executive Director shares with those in attendance some of specific examples of employee’s efforts that have generated Kudos! submissions. The Executive Director also hands out recognition pins to those employees in attendance who have received Kudos! recognition more than once. The Division has created special pin levels for individuals who are consistently recognized by others for their service.

Kudos! is truly a promising practice because it recognizes those individuals who have done a great job making the experience of others better on campus. This program not only empowers the individuals reporting by having the opportunity to show gratitude for their positive experience, but empowers the staff members and student leaders that receive the Kudos! because they are recognized for their hard work and dedication to their job and to the students of Indiana University. As a staff member, I have received many Kudos! awards and it feels good to know that someone took time out of their day and appreciated your work. It is truly a rewarding feeling to be recognized and it motivates staff members and student leaders to continue their best efforts while working in student affairs.
The M.Ed. in Higher Education program at Grand Valley State University (Grand Rapids, MI) is happy to announce the launch of the graduate student peer-reviewed journal, College Student Affairs Leadership (CSAL). CSAL highlights the professional interests of student affairs and higher education practitioners, as well as current national and international student affairs and higher education issues, while giving budding scholars the opportunity to present their work to an international audience. CSAL produces two issues a year and publishes the following: (a) book reviews; (b) literature reviews; (c) opinion editorials; (d) policy papers; (e) research articles and (f) theoretical/conceptual articles. In addition, CSAL accepts special issue proposals. All lead authors must be currently enrolled graduate students during submission. The editorial board is currently accepting submissions for the Fall 2014 issue. The deadline for submissions is September 1, 2014. To find out more about the journal visit: http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/csal/about.html Please email questions to csaljournal@gmail.com

Questions or Concerns about the ACPA'S SCGSNP Eighth Vector?

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