

One of the great mysteries in the student affairs profession involves locating the beginning of the story. Absent a defining moment, a Big Bang of a beginning, it becomes necessary to carefully examine the available evidence and clues, and set about making meaning of our story. Fortunately our ancestors and predecessors can assist us in that process. They wrote expressive letters; they chronicled their experiences and accomplishments in journals (or, in current terms, they blogged even before the technology arrived); and they documented initial exploratory gatherings with precision and wit. The early years are available to us but the stories remain buried until someone asks, “Why?” or “How?” or “Who?” and then sets about finding an answer. Some of the obvious questions have been answered to reveal early deans of women and men sharing observations about behaviors expressed in the college environment. These professional pioneers articulated common needs, concerns, and challenges, and defined the need for specialized knowledge and training in the budding student affairs field.

Like all history our profession’s story is subject to continuous revision and refinement; it is always being rewritten. That is as it should be. We know some accounts have been marginalized, omitted, and lost in translation, and it is incumbent upon us to fill the gaps or reinterpret the narrative to make the story just a little more accurate.

There may not be agreement about when the student affairs profession actually began or what a sequence of events really meant, but many in our profession agree that attempting to understand our past gives meaning and direction to our future. There are a great many who desire to make meaningful contributions to enriching our historical knowledge. For graduate students, preparation program faculty, and practitioners, the challenge can be in getting started or in knowing where the gaps exist that would benefit from further inquiry and study.

One thread in the multifaceted tapestry of our student affairs understandings acknowledges that people have different values and interests and not surprisingly, they are drawn to different types of activities, vocations, and environments to express those preferences. This website might be of interest to those who are investigative by nature, people who take pleasure in seeking the missing pieces to the puzzle, people who ask “Why?” or “How?” or “Who?” and then set about finding answers. These curious types are the treasure hunters in adventure novels; they are researchers in academia. Additionally, this site may resonate with those who have an affinity for ordering, organizing, and following established procedures; people who enjoy labeling, preserving, storing, and perhaps retrieving artifacts. Here we speak of archivists. They are not likely characters in adventure novels, but in academia we entrust our treasures with them. Others among us are captured by old stories, old times, and old stuff. Given a choice they relish a book of historical fiction or a biography. These folk are the ones who *actually* stop along the highway when a sign portends, “historical marker ahead.” For the researchers, archivists, and those just plain interested in the history of the student affairs profession, this website has been developed to assist.

This archival research resource provides starting points and directional arrows. Those who might want to know more about those who shaped our profession will appreciate the list of identified pioneers and the web links and descriptors telling them where to find more information. The general bibliography chronicles books, articles and resources that have illuminated the trail thus far. It references the larger context of early U.S. higher education, specific developments in student affairs, the birth of our professional associations and writings about and by our pioneers. Should a visit to an institutional archive be warranted, the researcher

will appreciate the tips contained herein to assist him or her in making the best use of limited time and resources.

When we investigate history, we may begin to question our own lives and experiences and how they will be remembered and interpreted. This website also provides tips on how to assist in the development of your institution's history, and when to consider making a contribution to professional archives. Another outcome of exploring this site may be that it will prompt you to think about your own personal papers. A review of the guidebook may provide you an impetus to develop an individual records plan so that family and colleagues know what to do when we are gone.

Admittedly, researchers are constantly deciding what to include and what to exclude. This website is an evolving resource and we invite your feedback and your discoveries. Just as the early deans collaborated to make sense of unmapped territory, so must we continue the tradition of sharing what we know. One filter for choosing what to include is based on the notion that although interpretations of historical events begin the moment an incident occurs, just as wine must age in the barrel, time must pass for our perspective to mature. This initial web guide includes information about pioneers, leaders and circumstances dating from the late 19th century up into the 1960s. No definitive cutoff point exists. In recent years there has been great interest and scholarship about campus life in the 1960s. Some of those publications are included here but we are certain more will follow.

The people referenced in this document have been chosen on this basis that information about them is available or easily accessible. These pioneers were present at pivotal moments in our professional history. No one person was purposefully excluded. This is not a comprehensive list of all who have done student affairs work since 1880. Instead, people were

included because their contributions to the shaping of the profession are documented. It was our intent to provide a reasonable idea of who influenced and led the development of our profession and its related specialized functions and branches.

This web guide has been developed under the auspices of an initiative entitled *The Student Affairs History Project* that is headquartered at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. We will incorporate new treasures as we discover them and we hope this site will inspire you to seek more pieces to our puzzle.

We look forward to your participation.

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