Looking Back with Gratitude: Reflections on the Past Year

by Peter Konwerski

With last month’s Commencement ceremony a recent memory for the Class of 2013 and Orientation for the Class of 2017 now in full swing, this is an ideal time to reflect back and look ahead.

I, myself, am looking forward to some downtime this summer, with friends and family and of course our new puppy Tux. Truth be told, he’s been one of the best ways I relieve stress now: going on hikes, playing in the park, and literally taking time to smell the flowers – although he also likes to stop to water them too!

For me, summer is my best chance to recharge after a year full of exciting activities and interesting educational experiences including an election and an inauguration as well as those special “Only at GW” moments on and off campus that even I can’t keep up with on Twitter!

In the cycle of higher education, summer is optimal time for clearing out the clutter from the past year and beginning to plan for the future. Thoughtful reflection allows us to begin to analyze what we accomplished and begin to categorize what lessons we learned and what impact we had on our campus and community.

In that spirit of reflection, we have a great deal to be proud of this year, most notably our efforts to build the community among our many stakeholders, including students who become alumni and our other partners, including parents and families, employers and campus allies on the faculty and staff, and especially our own team in the Division of Student Affairs. Through our efforts at building a new standing committee structure and launching a series of student and other partner advisory boards, we further advanced our agenda around building a community of engaged stakeholders.

Likewise, we are also equally able to celebrate the efforts we put forward to enhance the student-academic experience, through our many programs and services, as well as the care and attention we put toward supporting the personal development of our community members, most notably our students. While this will only grow with the advent of the new GW strategic plan, we continued to lead the way in connecting city, classroom and campus and helping our students develop and practice their “passion for change” and “knowledge into action” through our wide array of programs, services, and activities.

Our efforts are important because, in the eyes of our students and their families, we are often the units responsible for providing the stable, day-to-day support structures that:

• Support their learning, growth, health, and wellness as future citizen leaders through the caring individuals who assist in their development and maturity;
• Enhance their on campus affinity through student engagement and community affiliation efforts where they can learn to connect, lead, and give back;

(Cont. on page 2)
(“Looking Back” Cont. from page 1)

- Connect them to curricular experiences as we help students explore their professional aspirations through career and experiential learning opportunities;
- Provide unique, tailored services that meet their individualized needs and that they come to trust and depend upon;
- Enrich their academic-residential experience through various administrative programs, on campus events and support resources which build a sense of place; and,
- Ensure we have the processes and tools to document the results of our work, use those results to drive continuous improvement to benefit current and future generations of students, and communicate the results internally and externally.

For each of these efforts to achieve our ultimate mission, to educate the next generation of student leaders for success beyond GW, my heartiest thanks go out to all of you. The challenge, with every cycle of renewal though, is to keep replicating that success over and over again, with every subsequent class. As we begin our cycle again, with the start of the fiscal year on July 1, I have no doubt we are up to the challenge and will make an important impact on these incoming students and their families as they embark on their academic journeys here at GW.

Performance Management

As we look to the new fiscal year right after CI, we will be conducting performance reviews to reflect on this past year as well as establish goals for the upcoming year.

We plan to complete the written assessments and goal agreements by July 26 and have performance conversations no later than August 16 to allow us time to complete everything before starting the new academic year in late August.

Within the context of goal setting, please review GW’s Strategic Plan and discuss the following DSA priorities with your supervisor:

- Create an effective and sustainable approach to assessment
- Enhance service delivery and communication in a blended way to serve our stakeholders
- Improve financial operations and investment through innovation, grant writing and fundraising
- Improve the integration of curricular and co-curricular experiences
- Develop and engage partnerships with key internal and external stakeholders

To find forms, get helpful tips or register for a training session, visit the Organizational Development & Effectiveness website.

If you have questions or need additional guidance, contact your supervisor or e-mail Mike Kohn, the HR Client Partner for DSA.

First Chapter Freshman Reading Program Selection

This year, the Class of 2017 is asked to read Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World, by Jane McGonigal.

“With 174 million gamers in the United States alone, we now live in a world where every generation will be a gamer generation. But why, Jane McGonigal asks, should games be used for escapist entertainment alone? In this groundbreaking book, she shows how we can leverage the power of games to fix what is wrong with the real world—social problems like depression and obesity to global issues like poverty and climate change—and introduces us to cutting-edge games that are already changing the business, education, and nonprofit worlds. Written for gamers and non-gamers alike, Reality Is Broken shows that the future will belong to those who can understand, design, and play games.”

Complimentary copies of the book will be distributed to all freshmen at Colonial Inauguration this summer. For updates and information, visit the website, follow @GWFirstChapter and like GW First Chapter on Facebook.

Also, mark your calendar for October 4, when Jane McGonigal will visit GW.
Staff Spotlight
Naghmeh Merck, University Counseling Center

**DSA:** What is your role here at GW? How long have you been with GW?

**Naghmeh Merck:** I am the Associate Director for Clinical Services at the University Counseling Center. I have been at GW for 2 months.

**DSA:** What have you enjoyed about working here?

**NM:** Everyone at GW is so friendly; and I am enjoying meeting and learning about everyone’s roles at the university. I am very excited to collaborate with other offices on campus in the coming academic year. I also have to admit that I love being in the city and feeling like I can travel around the world at lunch by eating at a different culturally diverse food truck daily.

**DSA:** How did you end up deciding to go into the mental health field?

**NM:** I knew that I wanted to be in a helping field for a long time and realized early on that I loved mental health. In fact, I came up with the idea of “the talking locker” in the 7th grade. It was a locker that any student could use to drop a slit of paper with a question, dilemma or problem that the student was needing advice or guidance on. Every student would write their locker number on their paper and a group of us, including a teacher would meet to respond to each problem/question and drop the answer into the student’s locker confidentially. That is actually where I dealt with my first student in crisis and had to elicit the help of the school counselor to handle the situation. It was so much fun for me to come up with this idea and have a teacher help me bring it to life at the age of 12, it’s where my foundational therapist skills developed.

**DSA:** If you weren’t working in higher education or mental health, what do you think you’d be doing?

**NM:** If I wasn’t a mental health therapist I would be most likely be doing macro level work in the realm of socioeconomic development in developing countries. I spent a year living in indigenous villages in Otavalo, Ecuador. Because of this experience I have a great interest in socioeconomic development.

**DSA:** What do you do for fun outside of the office?

**NM:** I love to travel and learn about new cultures. However, I have two toddlers so that doesn’t really happy much anymore. We spend most of our time at playgrounds, pools, and beaches. We make sure to maximize our time outside engaging in exhausting activities that will ensure a longer nap in the afternoon for my boys. I also love to cook and I am a bit guilty of watching some reality shows that shall remain nameless.

**DSA:** As we’re making our way through CI, do you have any good memories about any of your orientation experiences?

**NM:** My orientation was a great experience, although not as elaborate and awesome as CI. I met some friends during orientation that are friends for life. I do remember packing tissues for orientation and sure enough my mother occasionally needed my supply of tissues that I had packed for her.

**DSA:** What’s one of the things you’re looking forward to most this summer?

**NM:** I am looking forward to spending time with family, friends and of course my boys. My husband and I will be taking our two boys to the beach every chance we get.

**DSA:** Looking a little ahead, what do you and your family like to do to celebrate July 4th?

**NM:** We have a tradition of going to Ft. Hunt in Alexandria to watch the DC fireworks from across the river and the National Harbor fireworks simultaneously.
Departmental Spotlight: Center for Student Engagement

After an exciting two years filled with new programming and a move to Colonial Crossroads, the Center for Student Engagement (CSE) is about to start its third year on campus this month!

Building on two very successful years, CSE restructured our staffing model effective June 1st with two new teams. The first team is focused on Graduate, Distance, and Professional Students, Special Populations (Transfers, 1st Generation, etc.), and Experiential Learning and Leadership. The second team combines Student Involvement and Greek Life so we can provide greater support for student organizations and our growing Greek community. We hope to maximize our ability to serve our students while maintaining a year-based model of residential and campus programming with our teams dedicated to the 1st year, 2nd year, and 3rd and 4th year experiences. (We’ve included our new Organizational Chart on page 5 so you can see for yourself!)

One of the great benefits of this new model is an increased ability to collaborate with other GW and DSA departments on a more regular basis. We’ve included specific potential networks in the pink boxes on the Org Chart – so don’t hesitate to reach out to someone on one of our teams if you have ideas on how to better work together! We welcome opportunities to partner and to have more meaningful interactions with students.

We are always working to find new ways to engage with our students and one change for the next year is a transition from the GPS program to a new “Connect Network” which will be announced soon. We will also be partnering with both the Center for Career Services and Alumni Programs on “Future U” which is designed to help our seniors with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in the real world after college. There will be many other exciting things to come over the summer and we look forward to working with the entire Division to transform the student experience for every student at GW. If you have questions or have ideas about how we can better partner e-mail engage@gwu.edu to connect with a staff member in our office!

### DSA Staff Updates

**New Hires:**

- Stephanie De Souza, International Student Advisor, International Services Office (started June 10)
- Staci Fowler, Managing Director, Employer Services, Center for Career Services (started June 12)
- Nicole Mintz, Senior Coordinator, Career Assessment and Professional Skill Development, Center for Career Services (started June 3)
- Nicole Urlass, Coordinator, Career Assessment and Professional Skill Development, Center for Career Services (started June 3)

**We wish this former DSA staff member well in his future endeavors:**

- Jason Lifton

### Around DSA

**Social and Behavioral Wellness Team Visits the Kennedy Center**

On June 10, the DSA Social and Behavioral Wellness Team (Student Rights & Responsibilities, Civility & Community Standards, Academic Integrity, Student Health Service, University Counseling Center, and Center for Alcohol & other Drug Education) took a field trip to the Kennedy Center.

The group of about 30 (see the picture at right) went on a docent-led tour of this beautiful memorial to President Kennedy, seeing four of the six theaters and many of the gifts by various countries donated as a way to celebrate the legacy of John F. Kennedy. The stop at the Presidential Box in the Concert Hall included gifts for the Wellness Team as the snacks were being restocked and everyone present received a box of presidential M&M’s. (In case you are wondering, they are red, white, and blue!)

After the official tour ended, the group received a very special, behind-the-scenes tour by Silvio Weisner’s partner, Jeff, who plays bass in the National Symphony Orchestra. After showing us the performers’ cafeteria, lockers, and backstage entrances, Jeff took questions from our group while we sat in the choir seats on stage in the Concert Hall – very cool. It was a wonderful afternoon full of history, art, fun, and laughter! And by the way, if anyone wants to know what happens when you wander away from the group while on tour at the Kennedy Center, just ask Amber and Imran from UCC. :-)

![Image of the Kennedy Center group](image-url)
The Center for Student Engagement at the George Washington University is committed to transforming the student experience and empowering students to become active and engaged global citizens and leaders.

Center for Student Engagement - Organizational Chart

- Jeff Llewellyn, Director, 1st Year Experience
- Angela Esquivel, Area Coordinator, 2nd Year Experience
- Vernon Williams, Director, 3rd & 4th Year Experience
- Grace Henry, Director, 2nd Year Experience
- Nancy Ross, Area Coordinator, Ivy, 1959 E St, NW
- Alyssa Hart, Grace Woodruff-Diaz, Residence Directors
- Angie Erskine, Area Coordinator, 2109, Fulbright
- Greg Rheault, Area Coordinator, Ivy, 1959 E St, NW
- Chris Rose, Eva Broughton, Residence Directors
- John Gillis, Leah Galasso, Residence Directors
- Connor Knapp, Area Coordinator, Dakota, FSK, Mitchell
- Maritza Pediar, Shaylyn Laws, Residence Directors
- Katie Monsky, Nana Adu-Krow, Residence Directors
- Justin DeMott, Area Coordinator, Greek Life
- Joey Maman, Residence Director
- Tim Miller, Associate Dean of Students
- Julia Haigney, Department Operations Supervisor
- Orlando Dozier, Financial Assistant (Student Orgs)
- Sarah Grun, Academic Programs Coordinator (Selection)
- APC, Social Media and Marketing (1)
- Marcus Williams, Program Coordinator, Student Orgs
- Rachael Wise, Program Coordinator, Student Orgs, Greek Life
- Andy Goresky, Assistant Director, Greek Life, Academic Programs, Greek Life, Leadership and Experiential Learning
- Andrew Goresky, Director, Student Life, Leadership, and Experiential Learning
- Lyndsey Fjellstedt, Assistant Director, Student Life, African American Programs, Multicultural Programs, Special Populations, Recruitment/Rush/Intake, Grad, MBA, and OCSA
- Abby Baker, Residence Director
- Megan Thomas, APC (1)
- Ellie Hansen, Program Coordinator, Student Life, African American Programs, Multicultural Programs, Special Populations, Recruitment/Rush/Intake, Grad, MBA, and OCSA
- Andrew Goresky, Director, Student Life, Leadership, and Experiential Learning
- Lyndsey Fjellstedt, Assistant Director, Student Life, African American Programs, Multicultural Programs, Special Populations, Recruitment/Rush/Intake, Grad, MBA, and OCSA

- Populations - Freshmen
- Networks - Freshmen
- Work Assignment - Selection
- Programs - Freshmen Welcome Program
- Work Assignment - Assessment
- Programs - 1st Year, Pathways to Grad
- Sophomore Welcome Program
- Populations - 2nd Year, Study Abroad
- Networks - OSA, ISO
- Work Assignment - Assessment
- Programs - 1st Way to Grad, Sophomore Welcome
- Populations - 3rd & 4th Year
- Networks - Alumni, Career, GW Housing
- Work Assignment - Residential Life/Duty/RHA
- Programs - Petition Dinner, Future U, House Tours
- Populations - Greeks, Student Orgs
- Networks - Career, Hallmark
- Work Assignment - Marketing/PR
- Programs - Greek Awards, SLR, Org Fairs, Recruitment/Rush/Intake
- Populations - Grad Family Day, Grad Welcome, Int’l/Transfer Welcome Week/IBW orientation, Off-Campus Fair, DC Bound
- Populations - All Students
- Networks - Athletics, Schools, Hallmark/CIS
- Work Assignment - Training
- Programs - Adventure Bound, SLS, All staff training

Jennifer Salt, Area Coordinator, WVC
Jen Alexander, Area Coordinator, LAFF
Rhonna Bollig, Area Coordinator, Terre
Colby Moss, Area Coordinator, Lafayette, Madison, Potomac
Kingsley Chikata, Lauren Wallace, Residence Directors

New (2) Residence Directors
Julia Collins, Josh Pavano, Ebony Surnpeter, Residence Directors

Populations - Freshmen, Networks - Libraries, Work Assignment - Selection, Programs - Fountain Day, Octoberfest, Freshman Reading Program, FT/Grad/House Staff selection
Red Boxes
Show populations of focus, Campus Networks assigned, work assignments for each area, and Programs overseen

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Around GW & Beyond

Grants for High Impact Teaching and Learning Practices

The Office of the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning invites proposals from GW departments, faculty, and students to improve teaching and learning activities at the undergraduate and graduate level. The application deadlines are July 31, 2013 and October 15, 2013 (assuming funds remain after the July deadline). Learn more and apply.

We Are GW

In the Division of Student Affairs, we work each and every day to enhance student life at GW and to provide the services that our students and their families need to be successful. Join 1,000+ staff and faculty across the university and show your support for our community by making a gift of any size, to any part of the university today.

2014 NASPA Annual Conference Call for Programs Now Open

The 2014 NASPA Annual Conference Leadership Committee is seeking innovative and engaging program proposals that address conference themes like changing demographics, public policy and advocacy, student success and persistence, and more. Learn more and submit your proposal.

Interested in Contributing to the DSA Newsletter?

E-mail students@gwu.edu with story ideas, events, etc. We look forward to hearing from you!

From Our Students

Thank You for Having Taken Me Here
by Luan “Jonathan” Dong, ESIA MA ’13

May 24, 2013

Dear friends,

Two years ago, I flew out of home for the very first time to the United States. Now the primary reason of the trip has been completed. I am now a proud graduate of Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University in Washington, DC.

Harvested throughout the trip, however, has been much more than the pursuit of this degree. I have been blessed to have encountered brilliant minds, wonderful personalities, heartwarming friendships, thought-provoking places, and inspiring stories. Though I understand clearly that the past two years only mark the beginning of a new period of life - one of independent personal development for a hopefully rounded and grounded individual - I realize today that these years have put me in a place that was beyond my imagination before I set foot in this country. I have been engaged in research on energy and environmental issues in China and beyond since the beginning of this year in a think tank that was established by U.S. Congress. I live in a wonderful community in the heart of Washington, DC, biking through inspiring blocks of international organizations and in front of the White House every working morning. I have traveled to more lands in this country than back home. And today, my beloved parents had come out of China for their very first time for my graduation and 24-year-old birthday.

None of those experiences would have come true without a wonderfully internationalized world, modern technology, and your support. I am deeply indebted to your teaching, company, support and belief in me. My gratitude is beyond description.

Yet, it is my belief that my journey has just begun. I have obtained the necessary VISA requirement to stay in this country for another year - a year of never-experienced personal and professional development in order to figure out what I really want to do, where I really want to be. Amidst the challenges and unpredictability in the coming year, I remain determined and hopeful, for I see your support, and a world of even bigger challenges I want to contribute to make a difference.

Thank you again, and wish all is fine.
Best regards, Jonathan | 栾栋
From Our DSA Colleagues

Summer Reading List
By Katie Porras, Office of Civility & Community Standards

*Gaining Ground: A Story of Farmer’s Markets, Local Food, and Saving the Family Farm*, by Forrest Pritchard

*And the Mountains Echoed*, by Khaleid Hosseini

*Sisterland*, by Curtis Sittenfeld

*The Returned*, by Jason Mott

*The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, by Neil Gaiman

*Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail*, by Cheryl Strayed

*The Long Walk: A Story of War and the Life that Follows*, by Brian Castner

*The Interestings*, by Meg Wolitzer

*TransAtlantic*, by Colum McCann

*Z: A Novel of Zelda Fitzgerald*, by Therese Anne Fowler

A Recipe for Dr. Pepper Can Chicken
by Seth Weinshel, GW Housing

Serves 6-8
Cook time: 1 hour 30 minutes

1. 4-lb. chicken
2. 3 tbsp. olive oil
3. 1 opened, half full can of Dr. Pepper, at room temp
4. 1 tbsp. kosher salt
5. 2 tbsp. chopped fresh thyme
6. 2 tbsp. black pepper
7. 1 tbsp. Spanish paprika

1) Prepare your grill for indirect heat.
2) Remove neck and giblets from chicken.
3) Mix, salt, thyme, pepper, and paprika.
4) Rub olive oil all over chicken.
5) Sprinkle spice mixture all over chicken and in the chicken cavity.
6) Place Dr. Pepper can inside chicken and place on grill as a tripod.
7) Cover the grill, check the chicken every 15 minutes and adjust placement. Cook until 160 – 165 F. A 4-lb. chicken should take about 85 minutes.
8) Take off grill and cover in tinfoil for 10 minutes.
9) Remove can and cut chicken into desired pieces.

Serve with grilled vegetables and oven roasted potatoes.
In Case You Missed It: DSA in George Washington Today

“GW Increases Support for Student Veterans”: http://gwtoday.gwu.edu/gw-increases-support-student-veterans


“Four GW Students Awarded Pat Tillman Foundation Scholarships”: http://gwtoday.gwu.edu/four-gw-students-awarded-pat-tillman-foundation-scholarships


“The Fray to Headline Colonials Weekend”: http://gwtoday.gwu.edu/fray-headline-colonials-weekend

“Staci Fowler Named Managing Director for Employer Services”: http://gwtoday.gwu.edu/staci-fowler-named-managing-director-employer-services
News & Tips

Inside Higher Ed featured “Too Much Information” about the results of an audit at Monroe Community College that found officials were over-communicating with students. Read the article.

Daniel Pink, author of several books about the changing world of work, posted a blog entry and short video, “How to Pitch Better: The E-mail Pitch” about crafting an effective e-mail subject line. Read the blog post and view the video.

REMININDER: EAB Website Access
DSA renewed its membership with the Student Affairs Forum of the Education Advisory Board (EAB). EAB is based in the West End a few blocks from the Foggy Bottom Campus and describes itself as providing “best practice research and practical advice to leaders of academic affairs, business affairs, student affairs, continuing, online, and professional education, and community colleges across North America.”

Any member of the GW community can sign-up for an account on the EAB website. This account allows access to EAB’s vast library of best practice studies and custom research reports and registration for a variety of webinars and other training resources, all of which are included in our membership. To create your account, visit the EAB website and complete and submit the registration form. For more information about accessing EAB’s programs and services, e-mail Robert Snyder.

Harvard Business Review explained “How to Make Time for Social Media” as one of its Management Tips of the Day. Read the blog post.

Ever wonder what student affairs professionals do over the summer? Check out the “Student Affairs Summer” video by Steve Whitby for some insights. View the video.

The New York Times reviewed two new books about higher education: Is College Worth It? by William J. Bennett and David Wilezol and College (Un)bound by Jeffrey J. Selingo. Read the review.

Huffington Post College included a quote from a GW student in a blog post, “Can Greek Life Ease the Transition Into College?” Read the blog post.