Can Film Capture the Reality of Higher Education?

by Peter Konwerski

As the new film Admission recently opened and the film The Internship opens in June, higher education eagerly anticipates the portrayal of the field and the stereotypical portrayals of academe. Will there be messages we agree with? Or will these films only contain the simplistic stereotypes of college, which often overshadow the quality and commitment of educators?

Films like this force us to question our value and validate our existence. It’s not that they are bad. In fact, it seems like each few years there is a quintessential college film that captures the essence of the era and another view on the academic experience.

Some of my personal favorites that fit the bill as college-genre movies include The Social Network (2010), Accepted (2006), Old School (2003), National Lampoon’s Van Wilder (2002), Legally Blonde (2000), Good Will Hunting (1997), The Nutty Professor (1996), Higher Learning (1995), Rudy (1993), School Daze (1988), Back to School (1986), Revenge of the Nerds (1984), and my personal, all-time favorite, Animal House (1978), which I saw as a 10 year old kid -- with adult supervision. It was the film that first convinced me that college was “the place to be”.

But what do movies like these tell us about our industry, the prevailing perceptions about college life, or the real student experience? While most are filled with overblown, excessive debauchery, and an array of eccentric characters, there are certainly some undeniable, underlying truths about college that should be part of the discourse around this film genre we must be willing to examine or explore.

The opening of a new film allows that discourse to begin and helps those of us in the field start to shape what we believe is really the essence of the student experience. It helps us identify the factors that contribute to student academic success, personal development, and the building of that collegiate community we all aspire to achieve.
Staff Updates

New Hires:

• Amy Dewar, University Psychiatrist, Student Health Service (started May 6)
• Courtney Luque Jacobson, International Student Advisor, International Services Office (started May 13)
• Adam MacTaggart, International Student Advisor, International Services Office (started May 13)
• Naghmeh Merck, Associate Director, Clinical Services, University Counseling Center (started April 15)

New Roles:

• Tracy Arwari, Case Manager, Division of Student Affairs (effective May 20)
• Chrissy Batterson, Coordinator, Administration and Hallmark Programs (effective May 8)
• Jennifer Donaghue, Assistant Director, Student Services, International Services Office (effective March 25)
• Heather Schoff, Assistant Director, Experiential Learning and Leadership,
  Center for Student Engagement (effective April 8)
• Christina Witkowicki, Director, Student Involvement and Greek Life, Center for Student Engagement (effective April 8)
• Alia Rikabi Zein, Senior Coordinator, Student Employment, GW Career Center (effective April 8)

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

• Robin Wood, GW Housing

Special thanks to all the DSA student staff members for their contributions to the success of our community during the past academic year, and special congratulations to those who graduated this spring. In case you missed it, see the end of this newsletter for the student staff recognition ad that appeared in The Hatchet earlier this month.

Around DSA

Join the GW Summer Softball League!

As some of you know there is a summer softball league at GW and we want you to play on the Division of Student Affairs team.

Who should play? If you are mildly athletic and have some experience on the diamond then this is for you.

Who should sit this one out? If you are not sure which one is left field and your idea of a double play is buying two lottery tickets at the same time then this might not be a fun time for you. We are a competitive and fun team and love to get some exercise and meet colleagues from across campus.

To sign-up, e-mail Tim Miller at millertm@gwu.edu.

For more information, visit http://www.gwu.edu/hr/colonialcommunity/health/softball.html.

New Department Names:

• The GW Career Center is now the Center for Career Services.
• The Office of Veteran Services is now the Office of Military and Veteran Student Services.
Recent Events Spotlight

On Tuesday, April 23, CADE and GWise presented GW’s 5th Annual Mix-Off (see picture below), which brought all types of organizations together in the ultimate mocktail-making showdown. Each participating team created its own signature non-alcoholic drink and a related educational palm card. Top winners received CADE co-sponsorships for events without alcohol next fall. Attendees enjoyed free mocktails, free BBQ, and raffle prizes and voted for the People’s Choice Award by ticket and tweet using #gwmixoff. There were approximately 425 attendees, including 14 teams.

Emily Rasowsky, President of GW Students Against Sexual Assault (SASA), was interviewed on campus for the PBS segment, “On the Contrary,” in April. The segment focused on sexual assault on college campuses, particularly the social media outreach that SASA has utilized for programming in the past as well as SASA’s events and achievements over the past 4 years. For the full segment, visit http://www.pbs.org/to-the-contrary/watch/676.

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GW SASA recently completed its 2013 Take Back the Night events beginning with a very successful Clothesline Project on University Yard with hundreds of shirts decorated by survivors and supporters of survivors. On Friday, they formally launched the Purple Pinky Campaign to raise awareness on domestic violence, which is featured in a phenomenal launch video. Take Back the Night culminated in the cornerstone event, Walk a Mile in Her Shoes, which started in Kogan Plaza and walked participants down to the Lincoln Memorial.

Department Spotlight: International Services Office

The International Services Office (ISO) has had a whirlwind spring semester! After moving into their new office space in Old Main in December, they jumped right into hosting International Student Orientation for spring 2013 and welcomed approximately 250 new international students to the university. The vacant ISO Assistant Director for Programming position was converted to a new Assistant Director for Student Services position and filled, and the office’s work in support of international student admissions was centralized. Three vacant International Student Advisor positions were recently filled by new staff members. The ISO is ready to keep them busy! (see the “Staff Updates” section on Page 2 for details.)

Besides providing advising hours and processing immigration benefit requests for over 3,500 international students, professors, research scholars, and their dependents, the ISO still found time to play! In January, the office collaborated with the Center for Student Engagement to host a Welcome Back Week mixer event at Tonic. In February, international students met for a dinner outing at Bistro du Coin in DuPont circle, and, in March, the ISO collaborated with Gelman Global Resources Center to host an international student coffee hour, pictured below. April brought a cherry blossom picnic and paddle boating excursion and May brought the annual Fulbright Reception co-hosted by GW, ISO, and the Institute of International Education. Co-sponsors this year’s reception were the Office of International Programs, the Office of the Senior Associate Provost and Dean of Student Affairs, the Career Center, and the Center for Undergraduate Fellowships and Research. The final event of the semester was the Graduating Student Reception co-hosted by ISO and Alumni Affairs.

An initiative of the GW strategic plan is globalization, and the ISO is poised at the forefront of making that initiative a reality. Through the office’s love of the field of international education, the ISO team is ready to meet the unique challenges of serving a growing international student and scholar population, and their university partners. Do you have ideas they could build upon? The ISO would love to hear from you! E-mail iso@gwu.edu
**Inside Higher Ed**

*Inside Higher Ed* featured Wake Forest University’s efforts to redesign a campus space to promote interaction in “All Work and No Play? No More.” Read the article.

**Yahoo! News**

Yahoo! News published “Narcissistic, broke, and 7 other ways to describe the Millennial generation.” Read the article.

**DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS IN GW TODAY**


“Student Aid Tops GW High5 Challenge” (also features Career Services and Student Organizations as among the other finalists): [http://gwtoday.gwu.edu/student-aid-tops-gw-high5-challenge](http://gwtoday.gwu.edu/student-aid-tops-gw-high5-challenge).


**“Student-Focused Offices Integrate”** (about the merger of Academic Integrity and Student Rights and Responsibilities): [http://gwtoday.gwu.edu/student-focused-offices-integrate](http://gwtoday.gwu.edu/student-focused-offices-integrate).

Education Advisory Board Website Access

DSA recently 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 at rsnyder@gwu.edu.

Staff Spotlight
Bridget Schwartz, Center for Career Services

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

Bridget Schwartz: I am the Associate Director of Student Employment in the Center for Career Services. I have been at GW for three years.

DSA: In your three years, what’s one of the best things about your time working here?

Bridget Schwartz: My favorite thing about working at GW are my colleagues. My Career Services family makes every day so enjoyable to work here and I truly value the relationships I have with HR, HRIS, Payroll, and Financial Aid.

DSA: You probably get to help make connections for a lot of students getting started on their career paths. Did you have a great student employment experience when you were in the student mode?

Bridget Schwartz: My Federal Work Study experience when I was in school was nowhere near close to the opportunities that our students have. While working toward my BA I worked in food service, and smelled like grease and fried onions every day when I left work. I would have loved to have the option to work at someplace like Peace Corps or RAINN.

DSA: Switching gears a bit, if you weren’t working in higher ed, what do you think you’d be doing?

Bridget Schwartz: I would be working as a pastry chef or a culinary instructor. I attended culinary school after completing my BA (because I was NEVER going to work in an office environment) and then taught Culinary Arts at my local community college.

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

Bridget Schwartz: I love to read and bake, but spend a lot of time taking care of my four dogs and completing home improvement projects on our 100 year-old house in DC.

DSA: It’s commencement time now at the university. Do you have any fun graduation stories?

Bridget Schwartz: I didn’t think it was very funny at the time, but two days before I graduated with my BA I thought it would be a good idea to dye my hair red and decided that I could save a lot of money and color it myself. My hair turned out Ronald McDonald red...I was horrified and had to spend a few hours in a salon getting the color stripped out and redyed.

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

Bridget Schwartz: I am more of a winter/fall person. I hate the heat and thought I was getting away from it when I moved from Georgia (boy was I wrong), but I am excited to start working on some projects to further development Student Employment’s role in preparing our students for their future careers.
DSA Employees of the Month

Congratulations to the DSA Employee of the Month recipients for March and April! Submit your nominations for May today!

March: Greg Rheault, Area Coordinator, Center for Student Engagement.

Greg’s nominator wrote: “Greg Rheault is a phenomenal employee all year round, but what sets him apart this month is his commitment to our GW students (especially through this student organization advisor role), his dedication to staff, and commitment to the CSE team. Specifically, Greg individually met with each group he advises and conducted a version of SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats). Following this exercise, groups reported feeling more energized, organized, knowledgeable, and confident. In fact, with Greg’s assistance, the College Republicans were able to secure former presidential candidate Ron Paul as a speaker. Greg was the primary contact for the event accounting for every detail ranging from the bottles of water to the speakers itinerary and contracts. This event would not have been possible without all of Greg’s hard work.”

“In addition to supporting student groups, Greg also assisted with the programmatic initiatives of his grad/student staff. Greg helped arrange a CSI (Crime Scene Investigation) event where a GW faculty member solved a theft crime right before the eyes of the audience. This innovative event left participants shocked, amazed, and had one student strongly considering applying to CSI graduate studies based on the event.”

“Finally, during a time of transition for our department, Greg has worked on tangible projects such as spearheading the website conversion, but also intangible activities- like hosting events in his place of residence. This allowed staff to connect outside of work and get to know one another in an informal environment.”

“Greg is a great employee and I am so privileged to get to work with such an intelligent, motivated individual.”

April: Randy Grey, Office Supervisor, GW Housing.

Randy’s nominator wrote: “Ours is a small office and we were short one staff member for the entire fall semester. Randy really stepped up to take on extra responsibilities to make sure that the office continued to run smoothly so that students and parents would not see a change in the level of service that we provide. He is also always willing to offer extra assistance wherever he is needed throughout our operation. Most recently, he has been working with our Assistant Director for Technology on preparing our new application website for the first year application and making sure that the transition from our old application process to the new one is smooth. While much of the work he does is behind the scenes, our office would not be as productive or have such seamless transitions without his hard work.”

“I believe that Randy is an excellent candidate for DSA Employee of the Month. He embodies many of the GW Values as he works with students, parents, and staff throughout each and every day. He embodies learning with his detailed approach as he is continually training new student workers on the art of customer service when interacting with GW student and parents. As you can imagine there is a great balancing act when providing customer service in an environment that you have to be able to say “no”.

“Over the last few weeks we have been able to fill our final professional staff spot within our office. Prior to this Randy has been key to keeping the office staffed, functioning, and really stepping up while we had vacancies. It is his years of experience in housing that allowed him to fill these gaps while we searched for a new associate director and assistant director. I really think the office, and more importantly, the student and parents would have suffered if it were not for Randy.”

“Just a couple weeks ago Randy attended a training regarding software we use for academic year housing. Since then, he has built out a new design using the new tools and resources from the training. It was actually funny to see his smile as he “geeked out” while showing us the new look. It is this type of excellence that makes Randy the ideal candidate for DSA Employee of the Month.”

Upcoming Events

LEAD Professional Development Day: The Service Experience

- Foggy Bottom: Monday, June 3, 9:00 am - 4:30 pm
- VSTC: Tuesday, June 4, 10:00 am - 4:30 pm

For more information and to register, visit ODE Homepage.

Colonial Inauguration

- Session 1: June 13 - 15
- Session 2: June 19 - 21
- Session 3: June 25 - 27
- Session 4: June 30 - July 2

For more information, visit the CI website.
Congratulations & Best Wishes
To those who are graduating this year.