



Patricia A. Perillo, Ph.D.
ACAP Presidential Address
Associate Dean of Students, Davidson College
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Thank you Tom Shandley and Nance Lucas, your words were very gracious. It is a real blessing to have your collegueship and friendship!

I want to begin by lighting this candle – may it serve to remind each one of us of that we can bring light to this world or choose to reflect it. May it also serve to remind us of those who came before. I am grateful for their contributions to the Association and to my own growth and development. I invite us all to reflect on those, not here, who served us well.

As I enter this presidency, I am clear that I stand on the shoulders of those who came before me and I will also have the honor of serving with others. And I don't want to just say this – I want to show you this! It is about all of us in this room, because we are ACPA – and it is what we all do that makes ACPA the successful, vibrant and valuable Association it is today; our work in this professional association advances the noble work of our profession.

While serving this past year as ACPA's Vice President, I have come to learn the significant contributions ACPA's presidents can and do make. I would like to ask all past ACPA past presidents who are with us this morning to stand, as they are able, so we can publicly thank you for your work. (please remain standing)

And, there are others who choose to serve the Association in significant ways:

- I invite all former executive council members to stand, as you are able, so we can thank you for your work.
- To my current and elect governing board members, I invite you to stand, too.
- All current and past, commission chairs, standing committee chairs, state and international division presidents – please stand, as you are able. Thank you for your service.
- Staff in ACPA’s International Office – please stand. We are grateful for your work, too.
- To the 2008 & 2009 Convention planning team – please stand, as you are able. To my 2009 team, I know that we will do great things together this year and I am deeply grateful for your service – you represent our theme because you exercise your power to imagine and you are acting with courage. And a special thanks to Jonathan Poullard, convention chair extraordinaire.
- To my faculty colleagues in the room – please stand. Your scholarship and teaching contribute greatly to our profession. ACPA is the student affairs leader in the generation and dissemination of knowledge and this is because of your work – thank you!
- To my former colleagues at UMBC and my current ones at Davidson College, I know that you serve the Association in many ways, but one of the ways you serve that is important to recognize, is the support that you provide which has allowed me to do this work for ACPA. I thank you.

Now, I could continue to call people out – but for the sake of time I will stop. Look around the room – we lead ACPA together. Many of us serve this Association and our profession in very important ways. And, if you are not standing I am certain it is only

because you are not able, or because I did not have the time to call your role out or because you haven't yet determined how to take an active leadership role in ACPA, even though you are engaged in our professional work on your home campus. (Please sit)

You can see my friends, it is all of us who comprise ACPA – ACPA is not just an office at the national center for higher education - we are ACPA! Although I get the chance to give this presidential talk I know that this is not about me – it is about the “we” – an organization that is about “the people.” But, don't be fooled my friends. It is really not just about choosing to lead but rather how we lead that has such great importance and impact.

On a more personal note, I come from a family of eight children – I happen to be number five. My father was the youngest of 15, and I have 80 first cousins. So I have come to learn in a very profound way the power and value of community. And one of the reasons I have remained an active member of ACPA for over 20 years is because the values of this Association, particularly the values of inclusivity and community, are congruent with my own. There is an undeniable sense of community and welcoming that ACPA offers each of us and it is palpable whenever we're together. How lucky are we! It is because of these shared values that I continue to serve in ACPA...do you know why you continue to serve?

I also am first generation college-educated, and I know part of the reason I have succeeded educationally, personally and professionally is because of the amazing family from which I come – the Perillo family is an extraordinary group of people. I also know that I have achieved because of people just like you who made a difference in my life while I was an undergraduate and graduate student. Our work, my friends, matters – as long as we remain intentional about it. It is purposeful and can make a huge difference in the lives of individuals and in this world as long as we are thoughtfully applying our

profession's scholarship to our practice. I am grateful that I am a part of a family and a professional association who contributes to my own growth and development and encourages me to do the same for others. Because this work allows me to more fully self-actualize and because I get the privileged opportunity to encourage others to do the same, this is why I choose to remain in this profession...are you clear about why you remain?

Last and certainly not least, my family of origin and my family of choice provide a phenomenal support team that enables me to make greater contributions to this profession and world. I want to thank my partner, Lisa Speas, who has been a part of my life for 15 years, for her commitment to my/our life's work. I also want to thank Lisa for reminding me every day of the importance of my work. You see, Lisa is a Police Officer in Charlotte, NC, working with troubled and disadvantaged youth – kids involved in violence and gang activity. So everyday, I get to see the world of the “haves” – highly selective private liberal arts Davidson College students – and the world of “have-nots” – these troubled youth in Charlotte, like disadvantaged children everywhere.

Institutions of higher learning were created to serve the common good, and I am grateful that ACPA continues to keep its eyes on this prize. We have the power to contribute to the common good by encouraging college students everyday to better understand their privilege and responsibility to improve this world – not just themselves – and this is why I continue to serve the profession. Why do you remain in this profession and do you serve the common good with your work?

I come into this presidency when ACPA is 84 years strong, and make no bones about it, my friends, ACPA is as strong as it has ever been. It remains strong because it is a values-based organization that talks the talk and walks the walk. ACPA's stated values are its lived values and that is why it has been my professional home for years.

- We believe that every voice matters, and that's why every member in ACPA gets to vote.
- We believe that inclusivity matters and this inclusivity is represented at every level of the Association; it was this issue of inclusivity that the Governance Task Force struggled most with because, unfortunately, there are very few models of organizations that value this AND have this value represented in its structure. ACPA has done this for years and continues to do so.
- We believe that our work is about helping young people become authors of their own lives and that is why we continue to offer so many professional development opportunities because we can only take people as far as we have come.
- We believe in the transformative power of our people – that we as leaders on our campuses and within ACPA have the potential to not only enhance the work of ACPA but the work of the profession and the world as well. And, our ACPA Assembly will help us do this even more so.
- We believe that transparency is important so we take every effort to inform all members about associational matters.

As you know, ACPA is in its first year in this new organizational structure; an organizational structure whose composition reflects our mission and our values. People are really excited about being a part of this Association – I know this for a variety of reasons but two clear markers this year are that over 75 people were nominated for or applied for 6 open leadership positions and we've had to open more tables in convention placement to support the demand this year... being a part of ACPA is exciting, it is powerful and it is important.

ACPA is vibrant and strong, and my tenure as president will bring us into our 85th birthday – now, there's a lot of wisdom when one turns 85! When we get to Metro DC in

2009, JCSD – the premiere journal in student affairs - turns 50. And, the ACPA Foundation turns 15! And, I come into this leadership year as ACPA finalizes our strategic priorities, and my work as president is to ensure that these priorities manifest; “my” initiatives are “our” initiatives.

In addition to shepherding our strategic priorities – as all presidents who follow me will have responsibility for - other important initiatives have emerged as I have spent the last three years actively listening to the voices of ACPA members. We will spend this next year focusing on:

- Women’s leadership in higher education & women’s leadership in athletics
- Issues of faith, spirituality and meaning-making
- Senior Student Affairs Officers – offering student development and student learning primer & development and fundraising primer
- Faculty-focus/initiatives
- Sustainability
- Inclusion
- Strategic planning for the profession - collaborating with other professional associations

So these are some of the ways that I am choosing to serve the Association and profession this year - ways that are congruent with my own values – ways that will allow me to connect others’ voices to my own – ways that will allow this presidency to be about “what the people want” – ways that will allow me to work in relationship with others who share these passions of mine - work that connects my head and my heart - work that allows our work to be informed by scholarship. Now, this is how I choose to lead. Again, how we choose to live or lead is what matters most. Students learn from us directly. And, I want to challenge and encourage you to reflect on what you are doing and how you are contributing because this, my friends, is what provides hope for our future. If we manifest the ideals and purpose of our profession, we can change this fragmented world we live in...we have this power if we do our work intentionally and purposefully.

Several years ago I went to a presentation that Marcia Baxter-Magolda was offering. And, in the middle of her presentation I had this very powerful “aha moment.” As you know, Marcia’s work informs our understanding of how to foster self-authorship in our students. While listening to her I realized that much of the practice I had witnessed broadly in student affairs was not necessarily designed to facilitate such cognitive, psycho-social development; I realized that there was, a disconnect in our translation of scholarship to practice. How we were “taught” to lead has not been fully actualized in our practice – what we “know” is not also manifested by what we do. I also know this to be true of the work that Vasti Torres, Jamie Washington and others are doing regarding work of equity and inclusion. So, I strongly encourage you to consider these questions because it is not that we lead that matters most but how we choose to lead:

Are you an “author” of your own life? And, do you continue to foster an environment that allows others to do the same? My dear colleagues, if we cannot do this for ourselves we will not be able to do this for the students we serve.

Are you actively working on your awareness, knowledge and skills as they relate to issues of diversity, multiculturalism and social justice?

Are you doing what you are passionate about? And, does this passion reveal itself in how you live and how you work?

Do you have success stories of students that you have worked with over the years who turned their lives around or who succeeded in ways that superseded what you might have imagined?

Do you have success stories of staff members who you worked with who grew or flourished because of your focused commitment to their growth?

Does the work you are doing make a difference for just a select few or does it contribute to the common good?

Do you know your purpose in this life and are you living it?

Do you have a value-center, a code of ethics, or a personal God which guides or grounds your practice? And, do you do work that is congruent with this center?

What is your work in ACPA – in our profession? Are you just serving or are you serving intentionally, with purpose and passion?

What are you giving back to your community and to our profession?

Are you following your calling? Are you certain you are doing what you were intended to do in this lifetime?

So, when we all get to a place where we can say – Yes! Yes! Yes! to these questions then we are doing what this profession calls us to do – for ourselves, for each other and for our students. Do YOU have the “POWER TO IMAGINE” a world that is whole, where all people have the opportunity to become their best selves, a world where we all make a difference in the lives of others as we live the lives we were called to live, and do YOU have the “COURAGE TO ACT” now, to make it this way?

There is hope for our future, my friends and colleagues, because I do believe in the power of ACPA, in the power of this profession and, most importantly, in the power of YOU. And, it is truly an honor to lead and serve with you this year!