

How did your CSPA degree prepare you for your current job?

- The CSPA degree is directly related to what I am doing with my life. I currently serve as a Residence Hall Coordinator. So classes from assessment to theory to history all helped me in various ways. Every class I took has helped me in some way to take that next step in my career.
- My first few years I rarely used the classroom aspects but definitely always used the out of the classroom experiences. The more I've learned of other programs the more thankful I have been for CSPA's push for involvement in professional organizations and gaining diverse experiences.
- The foundation of theory to practice made me prepared for my current position as an Area Coordinator. The classwork that most prepared me were the Student Development courses 1 and 2 as well as the Diversity elective. Surprisingly, Helping Skills has been far more important than I would have imagined as the campus I work on is a care intensive campus. Having the skills of a good listener and helper have truly been highly beneficial to the working environment I am in now. Especially considering that mental health is a trend that is on the rise, I can see this class becoming more important as well as combining it with a cross over with diversity to see how care can be done among various cultures and backgrounds.
- The courses within the CSPA program provided a generalist approach that have helped me approach my work through a student service lens with important knowledge regarding governance, finance, and law that greatly guides higher education.
- My CSPA degree prepared me for a number of things in my current position - I use theory almost every day, I am constantly using techniques I learned in Helping Skills with students, and learning how to navigate the politics of an institution has proven invaluable. Also - Seminar gave me so many skills that I didn't realize I needed until I started interviewing (specifically how to negotiate) and in talking to colleagues who attended different programs I have found out that many of them did not have a similar experience in their grad program! Brianna Nesbitt '16, Program Coordinator of the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center at Vanderbilt University
- It made me critically think about student development theory, and how it relates to every aspect of my job. I also undervalued the classes that taught me about organizational structure; politics are HUGE here, and I am using my education multiple times a day.
- Learning about law and politics played a huge role - I fall back on that frequently. Having an understanding of development theory and leadership styles has also helped in my approach with supervising and advising students.
- One of the greatest skills I learned in CSPA was being able to work with others even when we had differing opinions. We were able to work together for the benefits of the students.
- CSPA prepared me for my role as a Residence Hall Director by providing a foundation in theory to better understand students and by overviewing organizational structure in order to learn how to navigate the politics of higher education.
- Brandon Kesler, Associate Director for Residence Life, Wichita State University, Class of 2012 Immensely. While I don't remember all of the details of theory, law, history, etc., those classes consciously and subconsciously are a part of every interaction I make.
- My CSPA degree helped me think critically, and be able to question and ask the "why" behind the work that we are doing.
- There have been a few things that have greatly impacted my job thanks to the CSPA program. One of those would be that I feel I was taught a much more substantial amount of Student Development Theory than I had realized while in the program. This information has helped ground my decisions in my full time position, and create a much more intentional educational experience outside of the classroom for students. The second area that I feel I gained a great deal of useful knowledge would be the area of Higher Education Law. There have been multiple times in my full time experience I have been able to reference previous court cases and bring them to the attention of my institution to ensure that things are addressed in the appropriate way. Overall the courses have allowed me to be confident in my position, and be able to give substantial reasoning when talking to supervisors about ways to improve the university.
- The student development theory was helpful.

- My CSPA prepared me for my current job by providing perspectives from several different student affairs roles (i.e. - admissions, housing, student activities, etc.) to student affairs topics. I felt better equipped to meet with campus partners after graduation and to discuss best practices for helping students.
- -Helping Skills was by far the best preparation. -I understand the inner working of a university better due to intro to SA -Personal stories told by professors can be seen coming true as you progress in the field.
- My CSPA degree really prepared me for my first professional position. I feel confident in my daily role and constantly use the lessons and experiences I had in class and in my assistantship. I often find myself discussing theories with coworkers, understanding politics at my university better and relying back on Helping Skills when I'm facing difficult conversations with students.
- I feel like my CSPA degree has prepared me well for my current job, as well as the jobs I held prior to this after graduation. The coursework had a good variety to prepare me for many aspects of working in Residence Life from supervision, administration, student development theory and law. I have even used my law book recently when re-writing our policy language regarding free speech and bias language.
- A big part of the classroom experience that has helped is understanding the history of Higher Education, and that overall it has been a slow moving entity. This context helped me navigate the culture and realize to take my time as a new professional and gain understanding before I pushed new ideas on an organization. Furthermore, I still use the skills gained from "Being a Skilled Helper" in navigating conversations with the students I work with and the professionals I supervise.
- My CSPA degree gave me a strong foundation on a variety of topics and had a nice balance of helping skills/ student development theory and administrative topics. The variety of topics helped me jump right into my job, and I still refer back to content learned as I have increased my responsibilities. Additionally, the hands on experience I gained through my assistantship, practicum, summer internship, and volunteer opportunities have been invaluable. They gave me a wide variety of skills which has been critical with the wide array of responsibilities included in my job. The hands on experience also made the class content richer and helped me apply what I was learning both during the program and in my career.
- When it came to the CSPA degree from UCM, it was very much advertised as a general practitioner degree with a wide variety of focus areas. With going into the professional realm, especially entry-level, it helps a great deal to have a wide knowledge base covering all aspects of student affairs. Whether I am having a conversation with a student of concern needing a good helping skills approach, speaking with a student about their transition onto campus and looking at it from a theoretical frame, or if there is a concern about the legal ramifications of a decision made by administration the CSPA degree provided me with the understanding I needed to be the best professional I could be at this time.
- My CSPA degree provided me a great level of foundational knowledge in many higher education topical areas I use daily within my role as a Hall Director. Helping skills, student development theory, and governance and finance have been particularly beneficial for me. Going through a generalist program like the UCM CSPA program allowed me to gain some exposure to all areas of higher education. (Chad Franson, Hall Director, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2017 graduate)
- I think I have referenced every single CSPA class since starting my first professional job just over a year ago. There are more obvious things like FERPA and financing, but I felt especially prepared as I continue to navigate managing the oldest and largest residence hall on campus. I have to look at things through the political frame when advocating for facilities and amenities while also understanding the types of 1:1 and group interactions needed to create community in a large building. I felt very prepared coming from CSPA to this current position.
- There are many ways my CSPA degree has helped me during my time in higher ed. Knowing student development theory has helped me on an individual basis with students who are going through various developmental struggles while in college. In addition to helping the individual student in one on one meetings, knowing developmental theories has assisted me in creating mindful events.

- I feel like my assistantship provided firsthand experience for the work I was preparing to do. I feel like my classes allowed me to better understand the students I might encounter in my work and how to best serve them and their needs.
- I can think of 1M ways my degree prepared me for my role. First, the background in development theory taught me how to review programs through an educated lens. The diversity in classes taught me a broad understanding of higher education--which is important in my role as VPSA. Last, the intense writing assignments, and intense feedback, prepared me for writing for academic journals and my position. Dr. Keegan Nichols VPSA 2003
- While I do not work in the student affairs side of higher education, I do work with students occasionally. The CSPA program at UCM prepared me for my role on Advancement by teaching me to look at the student holistically and not just in respect to how I interact with them. In my role, I employ students so it can be easy to see a decrease in work productivity and think he or she has low work ethic. Because of CSPA I have learned to look deeper.
- My CSPA degree prepared me by allowing me to practice all that we were learning in the classroom, outside of the classroom. Having the opportunity to do a practicum for my free elective made me more marketable for a job and gave me a chance to explore an area that I had been interested in.
- The CSPA degree prepared me for my role by taking what we were learning in the classroom and finding ways it was showing up in our daily work. This gave us the chance to think critically and look at the content from many perspectives while tweaking our approach in interacting with students - Caleb Lesley, Hall Director, The Ohio State University
- My CSPA degree prepared me for my current job by providing me with the knowledge and insight behind the politics, procedures, and structures of my current institution. I have an understanding of how things work in regards to the larger picture. I'm able to use the information provided from my degree to participate and engage in all the aspects of my current position. My CSPA degree helped me the most when it comes to working with students. Student Development Theory has helped me better connect and serve the needs of my students. (Brittany Mondloch, Residence Hall Director, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Graduated Spring 2016)

If you had an assistantship during your CSPA degree, how did you assistantship prepare you for your current job?

- I had an assistantship in housing. I felt fully prepared after being at UCM. They prepared me for both jobs I have had since grad school. I look back and really appreciate the supervisors I had in my area because they helped in so many ways.
- I find it rare that other graduate hall directors got the respect and autonomy that we had at UCM. In my experience I truly got to run my entire building and was grateful to have a similar experience right out of graduate school as well. I left the specific area of student affairs that I worked in at UCM for a few years but have gone back to that area now and find myself reflecting more on my experience and re-building new aspects off of it even 10 years later.
- My assistantship was within Housing and Fraternity and Sorority Life. To be honest, my assistantship felt more like a full time professional than a graduate assistantship. While this made for long and stressful nights in graduate school, it did prepare me for my current job by giving me a lot of differing experiences when it came to supervising and advising students as well as getting some experience with conduct and crisis response.
- The Housing assistantship I worked while pursuing my CSPA degree was an invaluable experience. The ability to immediately apply the education I was engaging in to my work, as well as gain work experience and professional mentorship made myself marketable and competitive during the professional job search. The theory-to-practice applications and connection between my supervisors and professors made for a holistic experience.
- My assistantship was the Diversity Education GA in the Office of Student Activities, it prepared me in so many ways for my current job! In my GA I advised student organizations, learned about social justice and equity, and learned how to work as part of a team who often have competing interests and how to negotiate those interests to make the best decisions for everyone. Brianna Nesbitt '16, Program Coordinator of the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center at Vanderbilt University
- My assistantship gave me direct experience within an office on campus. It helped me separate from my undergraduate experiences and form my professional identity.
- Housing - definitely prepared me for my position. It was actually more difficult than what I did post-graduation and prepared me for what I'm currently doing.
- Incredibly well- I have received feedback that I am stronger than my peers in administration skills and critical thinking. I also have the confidence to be a leader in many task force groups and other duties as assigned.
- My assistantship as an RHD honestly helped prepare me for my current role as an RHD more than the coursework at times as it was experiential learning and I was able to take what I learned in class and apply it to my students. My assistantship also afforded me the opportunity to try things in an atmosphere where I could experiment with different ways of supervision, programming, advising, conduct so by the time I got to a full time role I had a better grasp of what works and what doesn't work. The assistantship is unique as you get the opportunity to run a whole building. You are not an assistant RHD like other higher education programs.
- I had a year in alumni relations and a year as a RHD. Both prepared me in different ways. The Alumni office was honestly a master class in campus politics, and those lessons have helped me in several situations. Being in housing the RHD position was directly applicable to my first two positions post-graduation. Now in a mid-level role I'm still finding nuggets of information here and there. Supervising a desk manager who also had a role in supervising desk assistants is now helping in my newer responsibilities of supervising people who supervise people.
- I worked in University Housing, so my assistantship felt like my entire graduate school experience. I learned how to be a supervisor, a mentor, and a great professional.

- I had an apartment manager position that was technically not an assistantship at the time. That being said the skills that I gained from that experience better prepared me to be able to address on call situations with confidence. Apartments are sometimes harder to address concerns in given the extra doors that have to be entered to get a true picture of what is going on in a situation. That being said the experiences I had allowed me to gain confidence as I have moved to confronting some larger/more challenging incidents.
- My assistantship allowed me to get training and direct experience in my area of specialization.
- Housing. This was the best preparation for my field that I could ever have. I was able to be a full hall director and take on a lot of responsibility with my supervisors giving me guidance along the way. I was able to learn to be a supervisor and how to empathically meet student where they are at. When I took my first hall director role out of UCM, it felt more of a lateral position than a step up.
- -Occupancy Management -Conduct Hearings -Supervision of RAs -Advising Councils
- My assistantship made me much more confident in my first professional role. I was lucky to be doing everything that a full time hall director was doing, so it was an easy transition. My current director has commented on how prepared I was to step into the position, and I agree. While there are always learning curves and different ways of doing things at each institution, I started my full time role with much more confidence, knowledge and experience than if I would not had done an assistantship.
- My assistantship was as a Graduate Hall Director and it definitely prepared me for my role as a professional hall director. I had real life, hands on experience supervising staff, advising students, adjudicating conduct, working with occupancy and more. It fully prepared me for my role, and I actually found my first professional role less stressful, as I had an assistant hall director and didn't have to fit grad school in too!
- The GA position gave me practical experience that taught me exactly what it was I was signing up for and prepared me on how to manage the blending of work and life. Alan Nordyke and Brenda Moeder taught me work ethic and the importance of attacking a workload and being solution oriented.
- Even though I am no longer in the same functional area as my assistantship, my assistantship gave me a strong foundation of skills critical to my current job. Because of all my hands on experience in graduate school, I had the base skills for my current job and the on the job learning was more content specific. Through my assistantship, I could apply what I learned in class and vice versa. It made what I was learning in class real and helped me better understand how theories look in a practical setting. This prepared me to apply what I learned in graduate school in my career. Additionally having worked in a different functional area prior to my current position, I have bigger view of the university and students' undergrad experiences, which makes me better at what I do now and helps me not become overly siloed within the university.
- I had the absolute pleasure of having an assistantship with University Housing at UCM. What can I say other than that if you are looking for an experience to be THE Residence Hall Director and learn all aspects of the job first-hand, this was the assistantship to do it. Being a hands-on learner and wanting to be challenged right from the get-go, the Residence Hall Director assistantship gave me the opportunity to learn most aspects of the professional job role first-hand while also being given the opportunity to learn from some solid professionals. There are literally times in my professional position that I sit and ask myself what more can I do because the assistantship at UCM Housing provided me so many great opportunities.
- While attaining my CSPA degree, I had an assistantship with University Housing as a Residence Hall Director. This experience prepared me tremendously for my current role as a Hall Director. Overseeing my own residence hall during graduate school allowed me to complete many of the tasks and gain many of the experiences that I do now. It transferred nicely into my first full-time role. (Chad Franson, Hall Director, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2017 graduate)
- As a RHD at UCM I had authority in my building to pretty much the same extent as I do now as a professional RHD. I felt equipped to lead meetings among students and committee experience at UCM helped prepare me to chair committees within my department now. I have also developed a programming curriculum since starting my professional job and Student Development Theory and Assessment have come in very handy in that process.

- While at UCM, I was the Residence Hall Director for Greek Life. This experience helped in every position that I have had so far in my career. I've moved into Academic Affairs after working in housing for the beginning of my career. Having the student affairs background in the academic side of the college means that I am often sought out to explain student development and invited to serve on committees because of the breadth of my experiences.
- I went directly into the field in the area I had served in with my assistantship. I felt the transition was seamless with the experience I had gained. I feel like an assistantship is one of the most valuable parts of the entire grad school experience.
- The experiences and opportunities to fail in a safe space. My former supervisors challenged me to work as a professional, but saved me from real consequences. They taught me how to act like a professional, how to be prepared as if I were a professional for meetings, and the operational skills. My supervisors trusted me to do the work and to be creative. Dr. Keegan Nichols VPSA 2003
- My graduate assistantship in the Foundation Office literally changed my entire life. I started CSPA thinking I wanted to be an academic advisor but after working in annual giving with a wonderful mentor that empowered me to grow in my career I found my real passion for fundraising.
- Being a Residence Hall Director for University Housing during graduate school, allowed me to really immerse myself in with the student population and utilize helping skills, theory and so much more one on one. The experience of running my own building, supervising staff, advising and dealing with conduct allowed me to really talk about the experience, and gave me great and valuable experiences as well.
- I held an assistantship as a Residence Hall Director during my time at UCM, and I was 100% ready to make the jump to a full-time Hall Director role. When you're applying to positions, employers are looking for a lot of the experiences that are available through the assistantship - supervising, advising, budgeting, committees, occupancy management, and crisis response. With this practical experience, it was easy to articulate what I could bring to a team and how I would carry myself on a day-to-day basis. There are a lot of lessons and procedures that I learned at UCM that I've been able to bring to the table when brainstorming at other institutions. - Caleb Lesley, Hall Director, The Ohio State University
- My Housing Assistantship at UCM prepared me tremendously for my current job as a full time Residence Hall Director at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. My assistantship strengthened my critical thinking and problem solving skills, as well as heightened my confidence in the decisions I make as a professional. My assistantship gave me the tools to be successful, and to implement changes at my new institution. At UCM I was given the opportunity to practice and work hard in every aspect of my position, and to overall gain experiences that would help me in my future endeavors. (Brittany Mondloch, Residence Hall Director, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Graduated Spring 2016)

Why did you chose UCM and CSPA for your Master's degree?

- I chose UCM because I wanted a well-rounded program that had a great reputation for preparing students to take the next step. The reputation of UCM and the CSPA program proceeded itself. And after meeting the people at UCM, I just knew it was the right fit and it was where I was meant to be.
- At the time of graduating my undergraduate degree I planned to stay in the region. I spoke with various professionals from around the country and many said if I wanted to stay in the area that UCM was a great school for that. They had the right amount of professionals who had been connected with the University who were in bigger roles who still advocated for the institution. I also valued the opportunity to get such a great experience in regards to my assistantship.
- The initial draw to the CSPA program was the idea of theory to practice. I wanted a program where the learning in the classroom would be connected to what I would be doing within the field. The draw to then choose UCM came from interviewing for my assistantship and meeting the various graduate students. Connecting with them is what overall made me decide to come to UCM.
- During my graduate search, it was important for me to find a generalist program where I could engage in practical experiences. The faculty I met with during my time at UCM provided thought-provoking discussions and challenged me to engage in various perspectives. Classes were engaging, meaningful, and provided a foundation to build myself on professionally.
- I liked that UCM had a set course curriculum for all of its students, which is not the case for many Higher Ed programs. I also appreciated the focus on student affairs. Brianna Nesbitt '16, Program Coordinator of the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center at Vanderbilt University
- CSPA promises and delivers a quality education for incoming higher ed professionals. I never realized how prestigious it is within our region until I left and attended conferences. I chose this school and program because I wanted to grow and develop.
- The people and the reputation of the program.
- I knew I was more interested in an admin (over counseling) focused program. UCM had a great team of people that made me feel valued and supported.
- I chose the program at UCM for multiple reasons. The first reason was that I was looking to get a new opportunity and a new region of the country because I'm always live in the Pacific Northwest and I wanted that experience. Another reason I picked the program was that my supervisor at the time was a CSPA alumni and she had a fantastic time being at you UCM. When she talked about the program she always had a lot of positive things to say about the program. My final reason I choose UCM was opportunity of having an assistantship because that provided a way to gain experience and pay for my education plus a place to live.
- It felt like home during my campus visit. Aside from that, the cohort experience and having faculty also be active in the yield were both major factors.
- Cohort feeling, legacy program, & the more administration-focused coursework.
- I choose to attend UCM for CSPA because I felt it was the most broad program in terms of content that was covered in the classes. I really wasn't sure what area of Student Affairs I wanted to go into at the time, and the program allowed me to experience different areas of the field so that I would be confident when I selected a full time position that I would enjoy the position and have the most positive impact on the student/staff population I would be working with.
- I had an assistantship and I liked the look of the curriculum and the summer internship experience. Also no exams needed to be taken to get in.
- I connected with the staff and team at OPE. I liked that it was administrative focused (as opposed to counseling) and that most expenses were covered.
- -Well known and accredited -Highly recommended by previous attendees -Outside of CA and my comfort zone -No tuition cost -Housing provided
- UCM felt like home. Interviewing on campus and meeting others studying CSPA confirmed that it was a great program. The professors care. Your supervisors care. It's not just professional and academic - it's personal - and I felt that immediately. I also enjoyed that the program was more generalized. It allowed me to study a little bit of everything and become more well-rounded.

- UCM has a great reputation in the field for having a quality program and putting out great students. I knew some folks who had worked there previously, and some who had gone through the program, so I was able to talk with them and get some feedback. My on campus interview was what sealed it for me. I just really felt like I could fit well there. I felt that the staff cared about me as a person and wanted me to be successful both professionally and academically.
- I had a positive undergraduate experience at UCM.
- I chose UCM and CSPA because of its generalist focus and well-rounded array of classes. Prior to starting graduate school I knew I would be transitioning from Housing and Residence Life into another area of Higher Education and wanted a program that would provide me with the skills to be marketable and qualified in a variety of Higher Ed areas. I also loved the cohort set-up and the possibility to build deeper relationships with classmates by moving through the program as a smaller group.
- There were a couple reasons why I chose UCM and the CSPA program. As I said before, I was greatly looking for the opportunity to learn first-hand and partake in a program that embodied the experiential learning approach. Whether it is through the assistantships or the classroom, you constantly get challenged to apply what you learn in both realms and utilize those experiences to determine what kind of professional you are going to be in the future. Additionally, I chose UCM because the faculty present in the program are reputable and have a wealth of experience within the field which helps a great deal in translating to life after the degree. Also, the people were great during the interviews! Whether it was the students, staff, or professors they really help present a familial environment.
- When applying for graduate programs, I was looking for a graduate program that had strong mentors, an assistantship experience where I could practice what I was learning in the classroom, and a place that felt like home. UCM had all of these qualities that I had been looking for. The people truly make the place, and UCM had this for me! (Chad Franson, Hall Director, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2017 graduate)
- UCM offered a great education with assistantship opportunities to cover the cost of tuition while also providing practical hands on theory-to-practice experience. The interview process was great and the people at Central were incredibly welcoming.
- It was a matter of money and experiences to put it plainly. I knew I did not want to take out student loans and I wanted the opportunity to work with housing and Greek Life.
- I started grad school 5 years after I graduated from Undergrad. I didn't know how much I wanted to work in Higher Education until I was out working. I had a colleague that was working at UCM and encouraged me to apply for the CSPA program. I only applied at UCM. I was a full time working professional and didn't have time to research other opportunities. I was grateful that I was offered an assistantship that allowed me to fully fund my experience. I would not have been able to attend grad school without the assistantship. (So Grateful!)
- I wanted Res Life experience, and because I had never lived on campus, no universities would give me a chance to work in housing (they directed to orientation or Greek life-where I had more experience). I chose UCM because of Alan Nordyke. I had no experience in residence life and he took a chance on me. He said he saw something in me and that if I worked hard, I could do this. I knew this was the place for me because I wanted to work in housing and I wanted to work for someone who took a chance on me. Alan is the reason I chose UCM. Dr. Keegan Nichols VPSP 2003
- I originally planned to take one master's level course at my local school to fill some free time but the admissions office and program directors were supportive and engaging that I trusted their recommendations to find an assistantship and attend full time.
- Being from the Northeast, I wanted to experience a different region. I heard nothing but great things and experience from those who had graduated or hired graduates from the CSPA program, and it made me feel as though it would prepare me for the next step. Let's also consider that the GRE is not required, the cohort base and the financial support from the assistantships.

- I chose UCM because of the reputation the program has. Prior to attending the Oshkosh Placement Exchange (OPE), I didn't know much about UCM or Warrensburg. The more research I did and the more I talked with others about the program, everyone seemed to know somebody who went through the program and that previous alumni raved about their experience. After interviewing at OPE and having the chance to chat with the current GAs and Alan, I liked what I was hearing and it made a lot of sense to go to campus and see how I felt about the campus climate and faculty members for the program. Having grown up in a city, the drive to Warrensburg was eye opening for me. My fears of thinking that there wouldn't be anything to do in town were quickly dispelled as we took the campus and city tours. Knowing that I would have a cohort of colleagues was also a large deciding factor for me, as I wanted to be around others who were going to experience this journey with me and who would help each other get through it. These people are still some of my best friends to this day. Finally, the faculty relationships were really important to me. Having completed my undergraduate education at a large Division 1 institution, I didn't have many connections with faculty and I wanted this to be different. The faculty at UCM care so much. They want to take the time to get to know you both as a student and as an individual, which is invaluable. Personally, they helped me through some of my largest life hurdles and decisions at the time, and I could always count on them to be in my corner and give me helpful feedback. - Caleb Lesley, Hall Director, The Ohio State University
- I felt an instant connection with the Housing team during my interview at the Oshkosh Placement Exchange. They created an environment, where I felt relaxed and was able to be myself during the interview. I knew that I wanted to work at an institution where the people felt like family. I also wanted to gain a different experience by working in a different state, and I heard wonderful things about the department and faculty at UCM during my search. (Brittany Mondloch, Residence Hall Director, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Graduated Spring 2016)

What advice do you offer to potential CSPA students?

- Don't forget to have fun while in grad school. Find cohort members with similar interests and make memories. The two years go by quick so enjoy it and continue to learn because you'll grow more than you realize in two quick years.
- Make sure that you are finding every way possible to make connects to your coursework with out of the classroom experiences. Not everyone can have a GA and not everyone can spend summers away at internships so find ways to get diverse experiences through practicums or on campus internships. Find a project to call your own so when you're job searching you have tangible projects and outcomes to brag about!
- Graduate school will simultaneously be the best and worst 2 years of your life. There will be times of stress when papers and tests are looming on the horizon, but you will be able to get through it. The professors will challenge you, but they also want you to be a successful professional. Find your people within your cohort and you will find some of the best friends you never knew you needed.
- Your education will be foundational to how you approach your work. Be sure to find the graduate program that aligns with who you are while still providing challenges to further your professional and philosophical development. Engage with your professors and classmates, even when challenging - that is when class conversations have the most significant impact.
- Never pass up an opportunity to hang out with the rest of your cohort! I made some of my absolute best memories at UCM and they all involve the people I worked with and attended class with every day. Also - comps are not as scary as they seem!!! Brianna Nesbitt '16, Program Coordinator of the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center at Vanderbilt University
- Utilize your professors for more than just school. Ask their advice. Get coffee with them and just listen to their stories.
- Get involved with faculty and staff as much as possible!
- Be sure you know your why before entering the field. There are a lot of challenges and a lot of dedicated time. However, if your why behind your position is strong enough, you will be rewarded every day in your position and life.
- Use every aspect of your time in CSPA as a learning opportunity as you will gain a lot of knowledge. You will also have frustrations and those moments will be learning opportunities on how to navigate creating change or advocating for yourself and your students.
- Get as much experience as you can while you're in the program. Diversify your experiences and work more than 20 hours a week in your assistantship. Study theory - you may not remember all the details afterwards but you will use the knowledge every day in your professional work.
- Get out and get to know your fellow cohort members. I know that it's scary, and that cliques will form up, but be present. Also, buckle up, because it's going to fly by!
- I would recommend trying as many different experiences as possible while in grad school. It is a great chance to try things and see if you enjoy them. Take it as a chance to determine what you want to do and soak up all of knowledge you can from your peers. They will be your support network as you go into the full time world. I would also recommend keeping your text books as you will refer back to them from time to time in the full time world, and students will notice them and be curious about their content.
- If you're not getting equity and diversity training or reading in this area seek it out. You need to be moving along in this area.
- No matter how much you learn- every school is different. Take your first year at any institution to learn how they do things and WHY. The following year give feedback with a plan on how to improve. There's always more that you can learn. I graduated in 2011 and I still feel like I am learning new things. Take this job as a lifelong learner and try not to get frustrated on long days. This job can be so fulfilling and meaningful if you remember that.
- The biggest piece of advice I would give potential CSPA students is to really dig into what you learn, apply it to your assistantship and life in general. This degree program will challenge you but it will be well worth it in the end when you compare the education you receive here to that others receive throughout the country.

- Enjoy it! Grad school flies by. Work hard, but have fun. You will never be in the same position again, and this time is crucial in setting you up for success. Take all opportunities you can to try something new and be open-minded.
- My advice would be to soak up every experience you can. It won't always be easy, but you will definitely learn and grow. I have made some amazing friends from the 2 years I was there, and have amazing memories from my time there. Take advantage of networking and whatever professional development is offered, as it will only help you!
- If you want to become ready to excel in a higher education environment - go through the UCM CSPA program. They will not only work you hard, but you will be supported, allowed to fail and taught how to navigate a work environment that can look different daily.
- Take advantage of all the opportunities to get experience in a wide variety of areas of Student Affairs. UCM is a school where being willing to volunteer with a department will open doors to get involved with a variety of functional areas and to develop a wide variety of skills. There is value to depth of experience, but so often you don't know what you don't know until you try something new. You may think you know where you want to work in Higher Ed, but as careers change, having a variety of skills and experiences makes the changes easier, whether it's job responsibilities or functional area. There is also no better way to clarify career goals than to try different things in different offices/ environments. When I started the program, Dr. Bob told us to think about what we wanted our resume to look like when we graduate and to start working towards it our first year. This was the best advice I received. Two years goes fast, and it's easier to spread a variety of experiences over two years instead of jumping in when you're starting your job search. The experiences can also clarify your job search (type of jobs, what attributes you look for in a department/ colleagues, type of work you enjoy/ thrive with, etc.). Too many people hang back the first year and miss many key opportunities by the time they seek to get involved.
- My advice for future CSPA students would be to enjoy the ride of the graduate search and embrace that "feeling" you get when you are on the search. It is very easy for those who are searching to get inside their own head and overanalyze what is happening around them and taking too much into account from those on the outside. The right school will present itself to you and ultimately you are going to be the one going through the graduate school experience. If you don't have a strong feeling that you belong or that school doesn't check off your "non-negotiables" then that is most likely not the school for you.
- Focus on your academics. It's easy to get pulled into a lot of work with your assistantship because it's enjoyable and makes up a lot of your time. However, you only get two years to be in graduate school. Be a student while you can. You will have a lot of time to work after graduation. Focus on your individual experience, and what you want to make of that experience. (Chad Franson, Hall Director, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2017 graduate)
- Graduate school is a trying time and an unusually busy time. Take advantage of campus resources available to you as a graduate student. Going to counseling was one of the best decisions I made while working in a profession so heavily focused on people.
- Honestly, UCM is one of the best schools that I have worked at during my career and I am on my 4th institution. Know that you are part of a political and bureaucratic system which means that change is often hard. Be mindful about your approach to initiate change and come with solutions to problems/concerns.
- Discover all you can - step outside of what you think you want to do and learn about something new. Learn about your cohort peers! Ask questions! Challenge the Process! Find your passion - it's not all about the page requirements :)
- Try something new in an assistantship, practicum, or class- you'll be surprised with what you learn. Trust yourself and your supervisors- they care about you. This degree helped prepare me more than other colleagues in the field. I have hired 7 Mules since leaving UCM! :) Dr. Keegan Nichols VPSA 2003
- Get connected to your cohort (even if you are a resident hall director). Learn APA early on. Save EVERYTHING. I am pursuing my doctorate now and some of those papers have been live saving. At the end of each course, write a one-page paper on what you learned. It will help you study for comps.

- It took me a while to remember, but without academics there is no assistantship. Find that balance, and always remember that your academics come first (most of the time)! Take advantage of opportunities given to you, attend conferences, do an internship or practicum, bond with your cohort, and join our student organization!
- Figure out what's important to you during this time that will help you get where you want to be after completing your degree. If you're unsure, that's okay - there will be opportunity to explore or meet with multiple functional areas and pick their brains if you're willing to set it up. Also, remember that this is a huge learning experience for you and to give yourself some grace. The transition will have some bumps and there will be some bumps that pop up later down the road as well. You aren't expected to know how to do everything right away but if you're putting in the time and effort to learn and do better, people will be more than willing to invest in you and lend a helping hand. - Caleb Lesley, Hall Director, The Ohio State University
- Take advantage of all the opportunities given to you at UCM. Engage with your faculty and practice what you learn in the classroom in your assistantships. Get to know your peers in your cohort and learn about the different departments they represent. Two years goes by quick, so enjoy it. (Brittany Mondloch, Residence Hall Director, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Graduated Spring 2016)

What would you change about your UCM experience?

- The only thing I would change is that I didn't feel connected to other CSPA students right away. I struggled with the transition but then after some time, it vastly improved and got much better in the areas outside of academics and my assistantship.
- I was not as open minded as I wished I was both in and out of the classroom. I was going through identity development the same as the students in our textbooks and have moments where I was not as plugged in or was not mature enough yet. I think I would have been more proactive on my coursework realizing it's not just about homework but the more research and work I put into my work the more I would learn and grow as a professional.
- I would want more support during my UCM experience. I felt that a lot fell onto the shoulders of the graduate students and while I am grateful for the amount of responsibility I received, there were times that it was simply too much and the graduate students were simply expected to get it done. If our contract states that we are expected to work 20 hours a week, I would want our supervisors to be more conscious of how much we are actually working and keep us to that stated hour amount. While I know some weeks inevitably we needed to work more than 20 hours, such as move-in or Greek Week, the normal every day week should have been more heavily monitored to be sure we could be successful within our assistantship and within our academics.
- I perceived there to be an expectation to be friends with the ~16 of my coworkers while at UCM. That dynamic made work difficult to navigate, especially in a typically competitive environment like grad school. I can be on board with behaving in a friendly manner to coworkers, but trying to develop friendships was tough when connections are often naturally stronger with others in a group that large. In my first full-time job there have been no expectations that the Hall Director team engage in anything but a professional working relationship which has created a healthy environment. Name: Liz Brunner Current title & institution: Hall Director at the University of Wisconsin - River Falls Graduation year: May 2017
- I honestly can't think of anything I would change. I absolutely loved my experience at UCM and it helped shape me into the professional I am today. Brianna Nesbitt '16, Program Coordinator of the Margaret Cuningim Women's Center at Vanderbilt University
- Nothing, honestly.
- My first year the program was growing so my class schedule was difficult - I had class basically every day and no night classes, so that was difficult in trying to manage normal hours with assistantship and also manage school work. Later I was back on the "normal" schedule that was a mix of day and night classes - that was much better in managing my time. I'm not sure how things are now, but I know that was a struggle for my cohort at the beginning with us all having very different schedules.
- I would have liked to see a better connection between 1st and 2nd year grads. Not necessarily socially, but as professionals.
- Speak up more and help create change. Don't be complacent about how things are if you think things could be better.
- I still loathe the book "How College Affects Students" because I don't feel like I got much tangible information beyond "the results were inconclusive". Overall my experience was extremely positive so I don't have much to complain about.
- I sadly don't remember much of my actual course work. I find this was due to not having to apply it in a critical way. So, trying to incorporate that more into the program, and making sure the comps are more application base, not memorization-based.
- I wish I would have realized earlier just how much I would refer back to the things I learned in the CSPA program. I have had to go back and refresh my memory on many different things
- I would include far more curriculum on equity and diversity. I was as realized in this area as I should have been.
- I wish I would have listened to my supervisors more and talked to them more about their journey. I think I was more focused on my journey to be a student affairs professional that I didn't realize how much more I could learn from those in the field longer than me.

- The only thing I would really change would be making UCM closer to home for me. Although, I would just also encourage people to ensure they have things easily transferable to UCM (Ex. tell your medical provider you're moving and allow them to share your info with other hospitals).
- Honestly, nothing. I loved it and miss it a lot. It was the best decision I ever made for myself. - Alli Nazorek Residence Hall Director - University of Nebraska at Omaha CSPA Graduate: 2018
- The only thing I can think of is that maybe I could have done a summer internship elsewhere in the country for that experience, however for my life at the time it didn't really work out.
- I would add additional cross training opportunities. Much of my experience was focused on leadership within Student Affairs. I think understanding the sales component of admissions, and clarification on the importance of retention will be essential given the current climate of HE.
- I would have done a better job including self-care into my schedule. I was so focused on the long goal of the job after graduate school and doing everything well that sleep, eating regular meals, and stress relief took a back seat. It would have been possible to pull back on my commitments just a little and have more room to take care of myself better while still gaining valuable experience. I don't regret being career focused, but I think I could have done a better job taking care of myself in the process.
- For me, I think I would have thought harder about completing a practicum rather than an extra certificate in the program. A perk of the program is you get the opportunity to network and work with numerous offices and professionals throughout the institution. This is an opportunity I sort of wish I would have taken up while I was at UCM. Otherwise, I would not change all that much. I greatly enjoyed the degree program and greatly enjoyed the assistantship I completed.
- Looking back at my time during graduate school, I would have begun to network more with others from various departments on campus. Learning about other departments and their best practices helps one to become more well-rounded in their work for their own department. Time is limited in graduate school, but I wish I would have pushed myself to network more. (Chad Franson, Hall Director, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2017 graduate)
- I would have sought collaboration with my peers more. There were times where it felt like a competition among graduate students and that's not what the CSPA program is about. I would have sought opinions and utilized peers more when I felt stuck in a situation.
- My attitude! Not that I was rude or disrespectful but I do think I was naive about the world of higher ed while at UCM. There was a lot of support and opportunities that were afforded to me during my time in grad school and I'm thankful that UCM is the foundation of my higher ed experience.
- I might have read a little more.... I was very, very busy with my assistantship and didn't always prepare and read for class like I should. I would also have reached out for help sooner - I utilized the writing center once I finally gave up and asked for help. It had been 5 years since I had written a paper and I had never been asked to use APA in my undergrad.
- Make it many years longer--I just loved it!!! Nothing. Dr. Keegan Nichols VPSA 2003
- Get more involved with my cohort earlier on.
- It took me a while to get immersed into the community of Warrensburg and I still wish that I got connected earlier. I love the 'Burg, and I know you will too! Take chances, and know that when you fail, you will learn, and you have wonderful supervisors, mentors and professors that will build you back up.
- I think if I did it over again, I would ask more questions of my colleagues outside of Housing. Discussions about the differing responsibilities and how they interacted with students in their roles would come up occasionally during class, but I feel like I potentially left a lot of knowledge sitting on the table by not talking with them more about their positions. - Caleb Lesley, Hall Director, The Ohio State University
- Nothing! I'm forever grateful to my experience at UCM. I have met the most wonderful faculty and staff members who have been great mentors and role models to me. I have made meaningful and lasting friendships with individuals in my cohort, and I have the pleasure of knowing some of the best student leaders who will make an impact on the world of student affairs someday. (Brittany Mondloch, Residence Hall Director, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Graduated Spring 2016)