

Common Questions from Graduate Assistant Candidates
Answered by
Former Graduate Assistants at the University of Central Missouri:
(2016)

- **What has it been like living so far away from home? How have you adjusted?**

*Living away from home has been a true challenge, I never pictured myself living away from my family. But I speak to them everyday so it makes up for it. The Community is very welcoming and Housing has helped form a different kind of Family away from home. I challenged myself to become comfortable in a new environment. **Giovanni Escalera, California State University, San Bernardino, University Housing***

*Though my undergraduate institution was only a little over an hour from my home town, I basically stayed on campus except for extended breaks during the academic year. This made transitioning to some place further from home easier because I was already accustomed to the separation. That being so, adjusting to a new community and starting from scratch with building relationships was still very difficult for me. Fortunately, the cohort style model of the program helped me connect with my peers and my assistantship challenged me and kept me busy as I worked through the adjustment process. I've grown immensely both personally and professionally since I began my journey at UCM and I'm very grateful for that! **Teri Mueller; Manchester, IA; Wartburg College; GA for Volunteer Services in the Office of Student Activities***

*When I was looking at graduate schools, I knew I wanted to push myself out of my comfort zone and experience a new atmosphere, despite knowing that I would become homesick and didn't want to be too far from my family. I ultimately told myself that now was the best opportunity to experience something new and I'm so grateful I took that leap. Homesickness creeps in occasionally, but the friends and opportunities I have at UCM make up for it. I've learned that as long as you work to keep those relationships from home, it's completely worth it. I often think about what it would be like if I stayed closer to home, but I can't imagine being anywhere else. **Alli Nazorek; Chicago, Illinois; North Central College; University Housing***

*For myself, living so far away from home has not been as much of a challenge as I thought it was going to be. While moving half way across the country sounded like it was going to be a struggle, making connections with the rest of the cohort made everything seem so much easier. You are with an entire group of graduate students that are going through the same thing; moving away from home, starting at a new school, and adjusting to the work, life, balance. Don't get me wrong, there are those days where I miss New Hampshire more than anything, luckily, technology is our friend these days, through FaceTime, Skype and other forms of technology, I have been able to keep my relationships with friends, and see my family quite often. What makes this adjustment the easiest is knowing that everyone here at UCM is a family, and here for you. **Brody Glidden; Dalton, New Hampshire; Southern New Hampshire University; University Housing***

To be honest, being away from home is not always easy. Home is your comfort zone, and that comfort zone is hard to break. I found my home at UCM through finding "my people." Those people consist of my peers, my mentors I look up to, and my students. After I made the

connections that allowed me to feel at home, it felt like I made my own home at UCM. Personally, this was the number one factor to my success at UCM. Find your people and find your home!
Chad Franson; Coggon, IA; University of Northern Iowa; University Housing

Living away from home has been a challenge for me. I consider myself to be very close to my family and being 8 hours away from them is not easy. Thankfully, technology is on my side and I can Skype and call home to keep updated with my family. I have also found that I am not as homesick as I thought I would be because UCM has such a wonderful family vibe. I feel at home here and love having a home away from home!
Lauren Svendsen; Medinah, IL; Valparaiso University; University Housing & FSL Advisor

The adjustment from my undergrad to UCM was difficult at first. However, what kept me going was the students that I worked with daily as well as my CSPA faculty. Being away from my friends and family is tough, but I am grateful to have people at UCM that believe in me. They say true growth can only happen outside your comfort zone, which is exactly what I have experienced being far away from home.
Jeina Stoumbaugh, Westminster, CO; Fort Hays State University; Student Leadership GA in the Office of Student Activities

Initially, there was a sense of fear and anxiousness while being so far from home. Most of that came from being unfamiliar with my surroundings, but that greatly changed as time went on. The strong sense of community and support has helped me adjust to be away from home. Whether it be; those professionals who work in housing, the professors in the CSPA program, or my fellow CSPA students, these are the individuals who have been a part of the immense support system that has helped me through my adjustment process.
Jordan Rockwell; Maquoketa, IA; University of Northern Iowa; University Housing

Moving to Missouri has been a challenge in many different ways, but it is a challenge that I asked for. During my search process, I knew that I wanted to push myself and live somewhere I normally wouldn't consider. I have never lived so far from home, or lived so far from my support system. Missouri is also very different from Nevada and the much of the West Coast socially and I identify openly as queer and a person of color, so moving to Warrensburg provided some unique challenges in terms of finding a "home". However, the CSPA cohort, my fellow Residence Hall Directors, and the staff and faculty of UCM have gone out of their way to make sure that I could feel like I belong here and I've never regretted my decision to #ChooseRed.
Jason Angeles; Las Vegas, Nevada; University of Nevada, Reno; University Housing

Living away from home and the support system I created in Southern Wisconsin has meant I have had to be significantly more intentional about maintaining the relationships I left behind. It is important to me to stay connected to my family, friends, and mentors, so I have found I need to schedule in phone calls and Skype dates to make sure I keep in communication with the people who are so important to me. It's easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of school, work, and a social life- it all comes down to making family and friends a priority in my schedule!
Liz Brunner; Monroe, WI; University of Wisconsin-Platteville; University Housing

The adjustment hasn't been as severe for me as it might have been for others. When selecting both my undergrad and my grad institution, being reasonably far away from home was on my requirement list. Granted, 14 hours is a little bit farther than 2, but the principle has proven to

be about the same for me. The biggest concern I had when arriving at UCM regarding distance was whether I would be able to make friends and find my space at a decent pace. I didn't want to get all the way out here and then find out that I didn't belong. That has not been a concern, however. All of the other grads have been super welcoming and amazingly friendly. I've found a place here, and I'm excited to get to share that place with people I consider good friends.

Joshua Kane; Boone, NC; UNC: Chapel Hill; University Housing

The UCM community has been incredibly supporting and encouraging, so it doesn't feel like I am far from home because home to me is where you feel at ease and like you can be yourself. I found that at UCM. Yes I miss the Southern California weather and my mom's hugs, but we make time to talk every week. It makes going home over winter break that much more meaningful.

Kerri Jensen; Temecula, CA; Pacific Lutheran University; University Housing

Living away from home, while being difficult (my hometown was 45 minutes away from my undergraduate institution), the UCM Family helps the transition so much! While my 1st year was harder than this year, I truly feel like the people that are here (both the graduate assistants and professional staff) make sure you are feeling Warrensburg as home, and try to help with the adjusting period. The most important thing you can do during the adjustment period is find a group of people to hang out with, and latch on. Totally makes things easier!

Jason Chambers; Wilton, WI; University of Wisconsin-La Crosse; University Housing

Though I may only be a little over six hours from home, it has been tough, especially not being able to see my family. Being at UCM has helped me develop a sense of comfort through developing a "housing family". My peers and supervisors are always here to pick me up when I can't be home or when I'm overwhelmed with how to balance my social, school, and work life. I learned to be more intentional in continuing the relationships I built at home and that a simple call to grandma will make everything better.

Rachel Shepard; Lenora, KS; Emporia State University; University Housing

To be honest, a lot of the time the schoolwork and the assistantship work keeps me so busy I forget that I am really 10 hours from home. It's OK to miss home, and there are definitely days where I'd love to be able to go home and snuggle my dog or be near the things I grew up knowing to be home, but at the same time UCM has really felt like home away from home. I feel like I live here in Warrensburg. I feel like the family that is created not only within housing, but the CSPA program in general is what has kept the transition easier to handle. I also think that being intentional about keeping up communication with those you love back at home has been key in helping me to feel like I didn't leave anything behind.

Addela Marzofka; Schofield, WI; University of Wisconsin Oshkosh; University Housing/Fraternity & Sorority Life

It's tough, but it has been the most developmental part of my experience. I knew I wanted to go out-of-state for graduate school but I never knew how attached I was to my home. I also identify as a queer person of color and navigating through that in such a critical time in our society politically and socially has seen its fair share of challenges. There were a couple of times I doubted myself in this journey, but you always need to find something to get you back on your feet. For me, it was going to a place I was familiar with like Starbucks, or eating food that I recognized, or talking to other Grads that felt the same. It's important to lean on these things when needed. It's also important to always remind yourself that your journey has a purpose and that this experience is going to make you stronger.

Krystal Rodriguez; Fontana, CA; California State University San Bernardino; University Housing

*Warrensburg “The Burg” to me now feels like home now. I think that once I was able to invest in calling The Burg home it helped me adjust from having my family not as close. I feel like my fellow graduate assistants have become my family away from my family. **Jared Marcuson, Kansas State University, Oberlin KS; University Housing/Fraternity & Sorority Life***

*I have never had a problem living far from home. I attended James Madison University as an undergraduate which was 9 hours from home, now at UCM I’m about 22 hours from. I love new experiences and seeing what it's like to live in different parts of the country. Sometimes I do miss my family, but they are only a phone call away! **Chelsea Curtis; Windham, NH; James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA; GA for Human Development and Family Science Department.***

- **What has been some of the challenges of making the transition to UCM you have had to face and how have you adjusted to them?**

Being part of the minority group at UCM, I adjusted by branching out and looking for those of the same background. If i may say it was fairly easy to adjust to UCM coming from California, Open Mind. Gio, California State University, San Bernardino, University Housing

Switching from a private institution to a public institution was a bit of a challenge for me. I was used to the feeling of a very close-knit environment where I personally knew many of the students and members of the administration. I knew no one when I came to UCM and I felt like I saw different people on campus every single day. I also struggled with not being a part of musical ensembles on campus as music has always been a huge part of my life. I've adjusted by truly diving into my assistantship and the overall atmosphere of UCM. Now I have a better appreciation of public institutions and enjoy pulling from my experience in both sectors. Teri Mueller; Manchester, IA; Wartburg College; GA for Volunteer Services in the Office of Student Activities

It has definitely been interesting to come from a small, private institution to a public one, especially coming from a large city to a small town. Being an introvert, I was nervous that I would let myself fall through the cracks or feel like I wasn't part of the UCM community since it was so much easier to get to know others at a smaller institution. After a few months at UCM though, I feel a strong sense of family and community. People are friendly and there is always something to take part in. I like to think of UCM as a mid-size school with a small school feel. Alli Nazorek; Chicago, Illinois; North Central College; University Housing

The biggest challenge about the transition is for sure going from an undergraduate resident assistant, to a graduate hall director. We all say that time management is key to making sure things are getting done, and we say that we have great time management skills. Once I began this position, I have had to adjust my time management and really structure my time and organization to make sure that things are getting done, homework is being completed, and I am still having the time for having fun! Brody Glidden; Dalton, New Hampshire; Southern New Hampshire University; University Housing

Being away from family and friends was, and still is, the biggest challenge while transitioning to UCM. I enjoy my time at home, and because my personal life must be fulfilled in order to thrive professionally, I knew I needed to go to grad school where I could make weekend trips to home and back. UCM has the family atmosphere which helped me feel at home quickly. That family atmosphere is something I would definitely recommend looking for! Chad Franson; Coggon, IA; University of Northern Iowa; University Housing

*The biggest challenge for me was the increase in the workload, both in school and in my assistantship. My time management skills have grown tremendously to help in this transition to be sure I have some “me” time in my life. **Lauren Svendsen; Medinah, IL; Valparaiso University; University Housing & FSL Advisor***

*The biggest challenge for me coming to UCM was the fact that I could've stayed at my undergraduate institution with my friends. I decided to come to UCM for many reasons, but knowing that I could've had more time with my friends made it hard. In the end, it made spending time with friends from my undergrad more special and this experience has allowed me to focus on my future as a student affairs professional; both through my classes and my GA position. **Jeina Stoumbaugh; Westminster, CO; Fort Hays State University; Student leadership GA in the Office of student activities***

*The biggest challenges have been adjusting to the new culture of the campus and practices/procedures. Ultimately, what helped me with this was keeping an open mind and allowing myself to “soak in” all that this university had to offer. The reason why I came here was to gain a new perspective from those around me, not to force my own previous perspectives on those around me. **Jordan Rockwell; Maquoketa, IA; University of Northern Iowa; University Housing***

*My two biggest challenges have been adjusting to the life of a Residence Hall Director and finding “my fit” in the UCM community. It was a considerable leap in responsibility and committed time, going from a Resident Assistant to a Hall Director, and I had to be very intentional when finding ways to balance graduate studies, my staff, work, and effective self-care. UCM is also a very different campus culture, when compared to my undergraduate institution, and it has been a struggle to find people who look and identify like myself. My supervisors and mentors have been the biggest help in helping me navigate through both challenges, but it was important that I was open and honest about my challenges. Everyone has been so comforting and welcoming, including our professors and supervisors, and I feel more and more like a UCM Mule with each passing day. **Jason Angeles; Las Vegas, Nevada; University of Nevada, Reno; University Housing***

*As a self-proclaimed ambivert, I need both extroverted and introverted time to maintain balance. The grads in the CSPA program are an incredibly social bunch, and navigating how to best spend time and connect with my classmates and coworkers while balancing time to myself and to devote to my personal life has been something I have been working through while at UCM. I've learned it all comes down to being honest with coworkers and classmates about when I need that introvert time! **Liz Brunner; Monroe, WI; University of Wisconsin-Platteville; University Housing***

*Learning that I can't do it all. This is actually the first time in my life that I have felt consistently challenged, between my GA responsibilities as a Hall Director, my course load, learning to feed myself, and finding ways to destress. For the first time, there isn't enough time in the day for me to do everything, and I've been learning how to prioritize what needs to be done, what I want to get done, and what I have to do to keep myself sane. Working out has transitioned from something I do for fun to something I do to burn off stress, and I've gotten a lot better at planning my schoolwork in advance. **Joshua Kane; Boone, NC; UNC: Chapel Hill; University Housing***

The hardest transition for me has been being giving myself permission to say no to different opportunities. Whether it is extracurricular, social, or professional, I have found myself wanting to do it all at the expense of losing sleep or time for myself. It has taken conversations with others and personal reflection to remember that we don't have to say yes to everything graduate school offers us. Be intentional with what you invest your time in so you can give your best effort.
Kerri Jensen; Temecula, CA; Pacific Lutheran University; University Housing

I would say the biggest thing for me was being away from family. My sister lived in La Crosse, where I went to school, and the rest of my family was 45 minutes away. During my sophomore to junior year, I lost my mother to cancer, so my family was and is still trying to figure out how to function without her in the picture. Secondly, I would say going from having someone tell me what we are doing in CA training, or what to do the Hall Director job, to being a Hall Director. Has challenged me so much, and also made my organization and time management soar higher than I ever thought!
Jason Chambers; Wilton, WI; University of Wisconsin-La Crosse; University Housing

Reflecting on the transition to UCM, is a constant reminder of how much I have grown as a person thus far. I worked for three years at my undergrad in housing and it became my life. I knew everyone and everything and how to do it all. Transitioning to a new school where there are new procedures, policies, and a new culture was hard to get a hold of. I was having a difficult time adjusting to being a Hall Director and understanding what all the position entailed. Through the support of my peers and supervisors, everything worked out just fine. I learned more about myself during the first two months at UCM than I did the four years in undergrad. I'm thankful that I pushed myself out of my comfort zone and asked for help when needed and let other people know I was struggling; it only made me stronger.
Rachel Shepard; Lenora, KS; Emporia State University; University Housing

The biggest challenge has been adjusting to the increased schoolwork and work load. It's been hard to figure out how to find work life balance and to learn that it is OK to say no. I'm doing a lot better this year, in my second year, than I did last year, but it is a constant thought in my head to make sure that I'm giving my best self to the things that I invest my time into. It's OK that that isn't every single opportunity presented and sometimes it's OK to go to bed at 8pm on a weeknight.
Addela Marzofka; Schofield, WI; University of Wisconsin Oshkosh; University Housing/Fraternity & Sorority Life

I came from a large division one university whereas, UCM is much smaller. I noticed that campus life was different than that of my undergrad. A former graduate assistant gave me the advice that I should not compare my UCM experience to that of K-States. This has stuck with me during my time here. At UCM you will have a different experience and it is one that you should cherish and allow yourself to grow.
Jared Marcuson, Kansas State University, Oberlin KS; University Housing/Fraternity & Sorority Life

The biggest challenge that I have faced is transitioning from a large 20,000+ undergraduate institution to a smaller institution.. My undergraduate was extremely school spirited and extremely lively on the weekends. I have adjusted by involving myself in different aspects of the CSPA organization and staying busy on weekends by riding horses/running.
Chelsea Curtis; Windham, New Hampshire; James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA; GA for Human Development and Family Science Department.

- **What has been your best experience in your assistantship and CSPA so far?**

*Assistantship has been amazing to me, the process has taught me so much and learned so much about myself. CSPA has opened my eyes to a new perspective working with students. This program will definitely show me more than what I bargained for. **Gio, California State University, San Bernardino, University Housing***

*This is such a difficult question! The best part of my assistantship has been working directly with students and getting to take on professional projects and responsibilities. Each day is an adventure of its own! The best part of the CSPA program is meeting fellow GAs from other offices and learning from each other in and outside of the classroom. **Teri Mueller; Manchester, IA; Wartburg College; GA for Volunteer Services in the Office of Student Activities***

*I love how much the assistantship and what you're learning in class connect. I get really excited when a theory we're learning plays itself out in my assistantship. Having so much interaction with students, I learn something new about them and myself each day -- in and out of the classroom. **Alli Nazorek; Chicago, Illinois; North Central College; University Housing***

*My best experience so far in my assistantship would have to be the ability to advise a hall council and supervise a staff of undergraduate students. It's a totally different experience than you would imagine, seeing students grow day to day and challenge them is extremely rewarding! As for CSPA, the best experience so far is making the connections with graduate students in other departments! It is important to have these connections so that we know what things are going on around campus. **Brody Glidden; Dalton, New Hampshire; Southern New Hampshire University; University Housing***

*The best experience in my assistantship is my students. Although being a student supervisor is not always easy, the reward of the student connections I make is worth it. My students are the reason why I love to go to work every day. **Chad Franson; Coggon, IA; University of Northern Iowa; University Housing***

*I don't think I could choose just one best experience for my assistantship and the CSPA program. My assistantship and this program have challenged me to grow in so many ways, both professionally and personally, that I can't choose just one. From getting to work with the FSL community, to Halloween get togethers at the professor's house, and attending professional conferences with other GAs, I have had so many best experiences that I can't choose just one! **Lauren Svendsen; Medinah, IL; Valparaiso University; University Housing & FSL Advisor***

The best experience so far through my GA position has been getting to work with all types of students daily. I am constantly surrounded by positive student leaders that encourage me to keep

doing what I do. Through CSPA, I have been able to learn about topics that I am interested and I know will benefit me as a future student affairs professional. **Jeina Stoumbaugh; Westminster, CO; Fort Hays State University; Student leadership GA in the Office of student activities**

That is an extremely tough question. For my assistantship I would definitely have to say the human interactions I have been able to have with; my fellow graduate assistants, the housing pro staff, and my students have been my best experience so far. As for CSPA, I would have to say all of the classes I have been a part of have been a good experience in the sense that they have challenged my thinking and allowed me to grow as a professional. **Jordan Rockwell; Maquoketa, IA; University of Northern Iowa; University Housing**

My honest first answer is to say that the people have been the best part, but I recognize that to be a fairly generic and nebulous answer. At almost every level of interaction with people at UCM, I have noticed a genuine want to include and support everyone is CSPA. Our supervisors and professors show great investment in our success and comfort. They open up their homes for socials, they actively participate in our education and engage us in our coursework, they offer assistance whenever they can regardless of inconvenience. Our cohort spends much of our time together, regardless of what office we work in. We go to conferences, socials, study groups, etc. When I say that the people are my favorite part of my assistantship, I mean it. My assistantship is all about engaging with people (and making sure my building doesn't burn down) and the people I get to engage with have been so wonderful and reaffirming for my choice to pursue Student Affairs **Jason Angeles; Las Vegas, Nevada; University of Nevada, Reno; University Housing**

As a housing graduate assistant, I am fortunate enough to get an incredible amount of autonomy in my work. I appreciate that the leaders of the housing department trust the grads so much that they let us directly supervise our own staff teams in whatever way works best for ourselves and our students. **Liz Brunner; Monroe, WI; University of Wisconsin-Platteville; University Housing**

The best part of my assistantship has been the freedom I have in my job as a Residence Hall Director to develop and work with my student leaders. University Housing gives us autonomy unlike any other graduate program I've seen and I can see it directly translating into professional growth and positive development of students. **Kerri Jensen; Temecula, CA; Pacific Lutheran University; University Housing**

I would say the greatest thing I've seen so far is whether it is with Hall Council Execs, Community Advisors, or Desk Managers/Office Assistants, that lightbulb going off above their heads when something that I said earlier on in the year clicks. Also, when I have seen things we have learned in classes translate to the real world. Amazing feeling. **Jason Chambers; Wilton, WI; University of Wisconsin-La Crosse; University Housing**

In my assistantship, I work with so many students from so many different backgrounds and getting to know those students and help them succeed and watch them grow is the best part of this job. The late hours, crazy amounts of stress, silly frustrations, is all worth it when it comes to watching my students succeed. For CSPA, there are so many great experiences! I love all the socials we have and interacting with people outside housing. **Rachel Shepard; Lenora, KS; Emporia State University; University Housing**

I think it is hard to choose just one best experience. My assistantship and the CSPA program has offered so many things that are valuable. The one common denominator in all of it is the people. Whether it is the co workers that become close friends, or the students that feel more like you've known them forever, I love being able to create and build those relationships. I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to work with students in all the councils here in our fraternity and sorority life community and it has been amazing to see them grow! **Addela Marzofka; Schofield, WI; University of Wisconsin Oshkosh; University Housing/Fraternity & Sorority Life**

Working with the amazing student's in fraternity and sorority life by far is the best experience I have had. They have a passion to help develop themselves as well as the chapters they represent. Half of the time I don't feel like I'm at work. They have taught me so much and the energy they bring has been amazing. **Jared Marcuson, Kansas State University, Oberlin KS; University Housing/Fraternity & Sorority Life**

The best part about my assistantship is the professors that I work with. They are all extremely intelligent and I have enjoyed learning under them. The best part of the CSPA organization is learning from other graduate students that are in other offices and all the personal growth that the organization promotes. **Chelsea Curtis; Windham, New Hampshire; James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA; GA for Human Development and Family Science Department.**

- **What are the benefits of being a part of the CSPA program at UCM?**

The staff is here to develop you and show you your hidden potential and utilize it in the real world. I have learned more about myself in 8 weeks then what i did in 5 years at my undergraduate institution. **Gio, California State University, San Bernardino, University Housing**

*UCM takes the idea of theory-to-practice learning very seriously. Our assistantships apply to our classwork and vice versa. The cohort model style of the program is also a huge plus! **Teri Mueller; Manchester, IA; Wartburg College; GA for Volunteer Services in the Office of Student Activities***

*There are so many! Everyone pushes you to succeed at UCM, in the classroom and in your assistantship. The cohort model provides a built in family while you all bond together over similar interests and passions. Your cohort cares. Your supervisors care. Your professors care. **Alli Nazorek; Chicago, Illinois; North Central College; University Housing***

*The professors are current or past professionals in the field, and they understand the work that we are doing day-to-day. The CSPA program at UCM is a generalized program that focuses on theory to practice. With this in mind, we are able to have a very broad education on higher education, and take what we are learning in the classroom and put it into action through our assistantships! **Brody Glidden; Dalton, New Hampshire; Southern New Hampshire University; University Housing***

*The connections you will make is the largest benefit of being a part of the UCM CSPA program. The professors, CSPA advisors, and being surrounded by peers who also love the field of student affairs all help make your academic experience much more fulfilled. Learning does not just occur through reading a textbook. It also occurs through class discussions. Surround yourself with an environment where you feel comfortable sharing. UCM CSPA allows you to challenge yourself! **Chad Franson; Coggon, IA; University of Northern Iowa; University Housing***

*One of the benefits of the CSPA program is all the connections I am able to make because UCM has such a large network of dedicated and passionate individuals. Once a mule, always a mule! **Lauren Svendsen; Medinah, IL; Valparaiso University; University Housing & FSL Advisor***

*Being able to learn more than what you have experienced in your undergraduate experience about student affairs has been most beneficial. Also, being surrounded by people passionate about working with college students is very rewarding and creates a positive environment. It's also incredible to make connections with people from different interest areas as well as states makes this experience worthwhile. **Jeina Stoumbaugh; Westminster, CO; Fort Hays State University; Student leadership GA in the office of Student activities***

*There are definitely a few significant benefits that the CSPA program has to offer. The professors are definitely there for their students. Dr. Bob and Sonny are always willing to meet students where they are at and that is greatly appreciated. On the other side of things, both are always willing to challenge their students to help them grow the most they possibly can. Also, the sense of community present among the students is also a great benefit. **Jordan Rockwell; Maquoketa, IA; University of Northern Iowa; University Housing***

One of the greatest benefits to the CSPA program is definitely the professors that we have. Each of them really understand what "theory to practice" means and work to make each class immediately applicable and salient to the assistantships that we all have. Our professors work to meet you where you are at when you begin in the program. and value your success and your

honest input during class. Jason Angeles; Las Vegas, Nevada; University of Nevada, Reno; University Housing

The most significant benefit of being part of the CSPA program at UCM is the theory to practice approach of our professors and assistantships. There have been so many times where I will learn something in class and be able to apply it to a situation later on that day while at work, and many of my supervisors actively engage in discussions with myself and my coworkers about our courses and how we are connecting what we learn in class to our individual jobs, as well as the Housing department. The education I am receiving at UCM is a truly holistic experience. Liz Brunner; Monroe, WI; University of Wisconsin-Platteville; University Housing

The professors are dialed into the reality of our roles as students and staff on campus. They assign papers and projects to make us think critically about our current jobs with students and how we want to form our professional philosophy. Not to mention, UCM represents at conferences! The past two years we have had the winning team in case study competitions in the state of Missouri and Midwest regional conferences. The program speaks for itself in the types of students and professionals it produces.

I would say the most amazing thing about the program here at UCM is our faculty. They actually care about me not only as a student, but as a human being. They take the time to get to know me, my assistantship, and also as a student. Also, the cohort model at UCM is amazing! All of my classmates and I challenge each other every day in the classroom, and keep things entertaining in class as well. Jason Chambers; Wilton, WI; University of Wisconsin-La Crosse; University Housing

The biggest benefit of being part of CSPA at UCM is the connections you make. You build lifelong friendships and networking opportunities with so many people. The care the professors have about the students as individuals and future professionals and genuine. I never feel like I can't talk to someone in the program, because everyone is so open and welcoming; you are never alone. Rachel Shepard; Lenora, KS; Emporia State University; University Housing

Theory to practice is taken very seriously and it is amazing to see the class work connect with the assistantship work. The professors are here for you to succeed and will do whatever is needed in order to make sure that you do succeed. The professional staff cares too. They want this to feel like home for the 2 years you are here and they want you to come out developed into the person you want to be as a professional. Addela Marzofka; Schofield, WI; University of Wisconsin Oshkosh; University Housing/Fraternity & Sorority Life

One benefit is the theory-to-practice approach that our cohort takes. Everything that we learn in the classroom we can relate to or use in our GA positions. Chelsea Curtis; Windham, New Hampshire; James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA; GA for Human Development and Family Science Department.

- **Why did you choose UCM?**

When interviewing everyone made me feel so welcomed, the staff told me what it was really like and hid nothing from me. I also knew that being in the Mid-west my eyes would be opened to new

*opportunities. I had previous supervisors speak nothing but great things about UCM. **Gio, California State University, San Bernardino, University Housing***

*I chose UCM because of the theory-to-practice approach of the program, my positive experience interviewing with UCM at OPE, and the specific assistantship I was offered. **Teri Mueller; Manchester, IA; Wartburg College; GA for Volunteer Services in the Office of Student Activities***

*After interviewing at UCM and then other institutions, it was clear that UCM really stood out. Besides providing great academic and hands on-experience, everyone was so nice, honest and engaging. It was easy to talk to not only the students here, but those who are higher in various departments. **Alli Nazorek; Chicago, Illinois; North Central College; University Housing***

*I chose UCM for a few different reasons. The generalized program of study is going to prepare me for a career in any part of higher education. My interview at OPE was more of a conversation, and they really wanted to know about me, what I wanted in a school, and how they would benefit me in the future. Lastly, when I was at UCM for my on campus interview, I felt welcomed, and that they professional staff and students were going to push me to my limits, and enhance my out of the classroom experiences. Trust me, all of this has happened so far! **Brody Glidden; Dalton, New Hampshire; Southern New Hampshire University; University Housing***

*The family atmosphere is the reason why I chose UCM. Although grad school goes by quickly and is only two years, being happy and feeling at home while in grad school is important. I want to look back on my experience knowing I had great times with great people, school and work aside. I will be able to do that as an UCM alumni. **Chad Franson; Coggon, IA; University of Northern Iowa; University Housing***

*I chose UCM because it felt like home. At OPE, the interview felt more like a conversation to get to know me as an individual instead of judging my current skill set. I felt at ease and that continued to my on campus where I got to meet the current graduate students. I remember the laughter and stories being told about all their great experiences at UCM and I knew this was the graduate school for me. I wanted to have similar experiences of being challenged and supported by my professors, supervisors, and peers and have the opportunity to grow into a young professional. **Lauren Svendsen; Medinah, IL; Valparaiso University; University Housing & FSL Advisor***

*I chose red because of my mentor and role model from my undergraduate institute. He went to UCM and did the GA position that I am currently doing, and I knew that if I could do anything to be like him, I would do it. I also believe that people can only grow outside their comfort zone, so I pushed myself towards UCM. I loved hearing stories from people about how their experiences in graduate school at UCM provided them incredible experiences, which is what I was hoping to get from choosing red. Out of this experience, I have been challenged to change for the better while having support from my professors and students. **Jeina Stoumbaugh; Westminster, CO; Fort Hays State University; Student leadership GA in the office of student activities***

*There were a variety of reasons why I chose UCM. The greatest reason being the sense of community and family that is provide to its students and staff. Going through the grad school search process, that was the single most important thing I wanted in a grad school, that sense of family. The grad assistant position also intrigued me because it was a unique and challenging opportunity (Supervising my own residence hall). This was the sort of challenge I was looking for in a graduate school and UCM has continued to fulfill that desire of challenge. Finally, the graduate school program itself was more of a general practitioner based program and I felt as though that would help my develop as a student affairs professional the most. **Jordan Rockwell; Maquoketa, IA; University of Northern Iowa; University Housing***

*I chose UCM for many reasons, but the biggest one is that, Throughout my process, everyone that I got to interact with made me feel wanted. My first interview at the Oshkosh Placement Exchange was such a genuine and organic experience; instead of a heavily formalized interview, we had a conversation. I didn't have the opportunity to have a site visit, and instead had a "Skype visit", and I still felt a strong gut feeling that pulled me to choose UCM for my graduate experience. **Jason Angeles; Las Vegas, Nevada; University of Nevada, Reno; University Housing***

*I chose UCM because I was looking for my best "fit," and it was clear throughout the interview process that UCM was also looking for candidates that best "fit" with the team and institution. Everyone at UCM was welcoming and warm, without pressuring me to commit to the institution and program before I was ready. I could tell how much the team valued being honest in the interview process about what UCM and CSPA are truly like, and I really appreciated that transparency. The supervisory opportunities were fantastic, and I was looking for a position in which I could directly supervise my own staff and run a hall either solo or with a co-RHD in a large complex-style residence hall. **Liz Brunner; Monroe, WI; University of Wisconsin-Platteville; University Housing***

*I chose UCM on sort of a whim in my graduate school search. When meeting with the team at Oshkosh, I felt a strong connection with the school, that was reinforced for me in the on-campus interview. Furthermore, Warrensburg would be a challenge, as I was moving away from home, and working as a Residence Hall Director. I would say now the biggest reason why, is because I've found my family away from home here! **Jason Chambers; Wilton, WI; University of Wisconsin-La Crosse; University Housing***

*Since I am very devoted to family, I wanted to a school that could give me that family atmosphere. My former supervisor told me about applying to UCM and I did some research online about the program and applied. At my on-campus interview, I felt so welcomed and comfortable. I knew I would be supported by all those around me and that I would succeed to help me out in my future. **Rachel Shepard; Lenora, KS; Emporia State University; University Housing***

I chose UCM because of the theory to practice program is what I was looking for, the assistantship I was offered was in Fraternity & Sorority Life, and when I was on campus for my interview it felt like home. The feeling I got visiting my undergraduate institution in high school was the same feeling I got visiting UCM for my interview weekend. It was a gut feeling that told me I could feel at home here for 2 years and feel good about it. I knew that everyone here was interested in finding people to add to the UCM family and that made me feel like this could be

home. Addela Marzofka; Schofield, WI; University of Wisconsin Oshkosh; University Housing/Fraternity & Sorority Life

*I choose UCM because of the theory-to-practice approach that this program takes very seriously. When I came to campus, everyone was extremely welcoming and having an assistantship was very important to me. This program offered exactly what I was looking for! **Chelsea Curtis; Windham, New Hampshire; James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA; GA for Human Development and Family Science Department.***

- **What do you do for fun while at UCM?**

*I like going to the rec to play basketball, if not i rent out a bike and ride around Warrensburg. I also like to hang out with those that are in the CSPA program that can be either going to dinner or catching a movie at someone's place. **Gio, California State University, San Bernardino, University Housing***

*Though Warrensburg can seem small at times, there are a lot of ways to have fun! I enjoy running outside, shooting hoops and climbing the rock wall at the Rec, hanging out in coffee shops, and going hiking. I also really enjoy spending time with others in the CSPA program whether it's by having a game/movie night, going out to eat, or attending one of the various socials we have throughout the year. **Teri Mueller; Manchester, IA; Wartburg College; GA for Volunteer Services in the Office of Student Activities***

There's always something to do! I can usually be found spending time with others in the CSPA program, exploring Warrensburg, attending on-campus events or having a casual homework

night. It's a much smaller town than what I'm used to, but there's no shortage of things to do. **Alli Nazorek; Chicago, Illinois; North Central College; University Housing**

UCM and Warrensburg has many activities offer, it all depends on if you take advantage of it! In my free time I enjoy going to the Rec Center and play basketball with some of the other graduate students, play sand volleyball, and win Big Pink Volleyball Championships!! Recently, I went to the Zoo in Kansas City too! It may seem so simple, but taking some time for yourself is very important. There are also some great coffee shops and restaurants in town as well. **Brody Glidden; Dalton, New Hampshire; Southern New Hampshire University; University Housing**

There is little down time in grad school, but when I do have it, I enjoy hanging out with my friends and also just having "me" time. Take the time to make connections and get close with your peers. Also take the time to work on you and your personal interests. Although Warrensburg is a smaller town, there is plenty to do. Kansas City is less than one hour away if you wish to get away for a day as well. **Chad Franson; Coggon, IA; University of Northern Iowa; University Housing**

While Warrensburg is a small town, there is always something to do! I enjoy going to the rec, going to the farmers market on the weekends, shopping in downtown Warrensburg, and participating in the socials offered by the CSPA group. **Lauren Svendsen; Medinah, IL; Valparaiso University; University Housing & FSL Advisor**

When I have down time, I like to experience Kansas City as well as enjoying programs offered by the university. I also enjoy spending time with fellow classmates and students, or just taking personal time for myself. **Jeina Stoumbaugh; Westminster, CO; Fort Hays State University; Student leadership GA for the office of student activities**

When it comes to having fun, the activity I enjoy most is spending time with fellow housing and CSPA graduate students. Whether it be; spending time at the rec, having dinner at a restaurant/someone's place, or heading to KC for fun, there are many ways to keep entertained and spend time with others. **Jordan Rockwell; Maquoketa, IA; University of Northern Iowa; University Housing**

Going from a big city like Las Vegas or even Reno, made moving to Warrensburg very interesting, but there's a ton to do if you look for it. There's plenty of cute little shops that are great for studying with other grads, shopping for thrifty deals, or just learning more about Warrensburg. Almost all of my fun time is spent with other CSPA graduates as well. We explore the nearby towns and cities together, go to pumpkin patches, cook and eat tons of food, and some of us even have a Dungeons and Dragons group that meets weekly! There are many things here in Warrensburg and UCM that will surprise you and catch your eye! Most of our cohort comes from all different parts of the country so we are always excited to try out new things and share interests with one another. **Jason Angeles; Las Vegas, Nevada; University of Nevada, Reno; University Housing**

Warrensburg is a hidden gem, especially for individuals who enjoy smaller towns, and in a great location in relation to larger cities like Lee's Summit and Kansas City when seeking out greater accommodations such as restaurants, shopping, and activities. There are many fun local restaurants, coffee shops, and parks to enjoy in Warrensburg. The CSPA grads are a very social

*bunch, so there are always opportunities to spend time with classmates and coworkers, but it's also important to find your own interests and focus time on the creation of a personal life while in graduate school. **Liz Brunner; Monroe, WI; University of Wisconsin-Platteville; University Housing***

*Like most people will tell you, Warrensburg is a very small place. However, if you have the right people surrounding you, there is lots to do. Whether that is a late-night Sonic run, Walmart run, going to KC to explore, playing Dungeons and Dragons, movie nights, coffee shops, you name it. I've found that going and hanging out with fellow CSPA students is the most important thing you can do here while at UCM. **Jason Chambers; Wilton, WI; University of Wisconsin-La Crosse; University Housing***

*For fun, I typically hang out with other people in the program and do whatever sounds like fun! I enjoy food and I have found some amazing restaurants and coffee shops! I get the most joy when we have movie nights or game nights because everyone is so laid back and it gives me a great opportunity to get to know those around me more. **Rachel Shepard; Lenora, KS; Emporia State University; University Housing***

*I spend time with others in the program. We find places to eat or go shopping or we pick someone's place to get together and play games or watch movies at. Sedalia, Lee's Summit, and Kansas City are all close enough to be able to go and make day trips to do things if there is time. CSPA also plans social functions for us to be able to hang out and do fun things. We do enjoy spending time together and so usually it doesn't matter what we are doing because we're having fun getting to know each other. **Addela Marzofka; Schofield, WI; University of Wisconsin Oshkosh; University Housing/Fraternity & Sorority Life***

*For fun, I like to spend time with others in the program and attending CSPA events. I also ride horses and have found a barn to ride at only 10 miles from campus! I'm also a runner and love to take long distance runs around Warrensburg. Kansas City and Lee's Summit are also close enough that I'm able to go and explore them too! **Chelsea Curtis; Windham, New Hampshire; James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA; GA for Human Development and Family Science Department.***

- **Comments & Advice offered to potential CSPA students at UCM:**

*Have an open mind when coming to UCM, it will be the best decision you've ever made. I would also recommend to cherish the new environment because nothing is ever the same in two places. Explore and develop yourself in the process by either mentoring groups or going to conferences to search for your true passion . **Gio, California State University, San Bernardino, University Housing***

Don't be afraid to give UCM a chance and don't hesitate ask questions about the program and assistantships! Current CSPA students and UCM Faculty/Staff want to be active resources for

*you as you go about your search process. **Teri Mueller; Manchester, IA; Wartburg College; GA for Volunteer Services in the Office of Student Activities***

*Step outside of your comfort zone! Moving to UCM has been one of the greatest decisions I've made. Despite being nervous, I challenged myself to come with an open mind, and it's taught me so much about what I'm capable of. **Alli Nazorek; Chicago, Illinois; North Central College; University Housing***

*It is very important and promoted to have an open mind during this process of searching for a graduate school. I couldn't agree more, except how important it is to find that perfect fit too. Not every institution is going to be a perfect fit for everyone. It is important to make sure that your personal preference, values and necessities are met in this process as it is going to be your home for two years. Make sure that you will be proud to call UCM your home for the time you are here! **Brody Glidden; Dalton, New Hampshire; Southern New Hampshire University; University Housing***

*No matter what your previous experiences are, be confident and genuine in who you are and what you want to accomplish in grad school. It's okay to be different than your peers, and even if you are, you will still fit in. Grad school is all about learning, and you will make mistakes, but with confidence, you cannot go wrong with the work you will do. **Chad Franson; Coggon, IA; University of Northern Iowa; University Housing***

*Take a leap of faith if you feel the fit is right. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be at UCM at the beginning of my search process, but during OPE and my on campus interview I felt myself click with the grads, professors, and professional staff. Trust in that click and let it take you where you're meant to be! **Lauren Svendsen; Medinah, IL; Valparaiso University; University Housing & FSL Advisor***

*Remember, true growth begins outside of your comfort zone. Put yourself out there and take chances when they're offered to continue your road to personal growth. So don't be afraid to be uncomfortable, the majority of your classmates are feeling the same way you are. If you're passionate about something, don't lose that passion and continue to find it at UCM. Your time as a graduate student is meant for you to grow into a professional, and I truly believe that UCM can do that. **Jeina Stoumbaugh; Westminster, CO; Fort Hays State University; Student leadership GA for the office of student activities***

*Keep an open mind while you are searching for graduate schools and a HOME. On the surface, UCM may not seem like the most "appealing" but that does not do the program, the school, and the Warrensburg community justice. As I referenced earlier, UCM provides a sense of community and family that is truly unmatched. When being away from home, this is something that is overlooked at times. The students, professors, and professionals at UCM are always willing to provide support to its graduate students, no matter the situation. **Jordan Rockwell; Maquoketa, IA; University of Northern Iowa; University Housing***

During your process it is so very important to be yourself. Do not be afraid to be authentically and unapologetically you. This will likely be a movement outside of your comfort zone and you want to be sure that you can feel secure in your decision - well secure enough with a thousand butterflies in your stomach. Those of us who are currently in the program want you

*to feel welcomed and valued, and we want you to take advantage of that and ask us whatever questions you need to feel secure in your decision. **Jason Angeles; Las Vegas, Nevada; University of Nevada, Reno; University Housing***

*Find an assistantship that you will enjoy, but much more importantly than that, find the graduate program that is the right fit for you. First and foremost, the graduate assistants at UCM are students wanting to gain an education, and being successful in CSPA is the most important. Be honest with yourself throughout your search process, and move forward with what will be your best fit, regardless on if that is UCM or not- we want you to succeed, no matter where you go! Two years is a significant commitment to make although the time flies by. Be confident in your decision, your previous experiences, and the potential you have to become an incredible Student Affairs professional with the foundation that can be built at UCM. **Liz Brunner; Monroe, WI; University of Wisconsin-Platteville; University Housing***

*Trust your gut in this process. Sure, there may be a school that might offer you more financial incentives, but find a school that fits for you is the most important. I know for me personally, I needed to feel at home both at Oshkosh and on-campus, and that is valuable. Also, don't be afraid to just go on a whim and go after a random school. Who knows, maybe you'll end up there! **Jason Chambers; Wilton, WI; University of Wisconsin-La Crosse; University Housing***

*Stay true to who you are, but allow yourself to grow. If we want our students to step outside their comfort zones, we should too. Though it may be painful and stressful to go somewhere new, or try something new, it won't last long. Staying true to your values will help you stay grounded and help you believe in yourself. **Rachel Shepard; Lenora, KS; Emporia State University; University Housing***

*Sometimes it can be really easy to focus more on the assistantship portion of the search and not focus as much on the program portion. Don't forget to look equally at both pieces for each institution you are looking at! The end of this experience results in a Master's Degree that you have to earn through your classwork, so it needs to be something you truly love. Be honest with yourself through the process- know who you are, what you are looking for, and what you want out of an institution. You will find the right fit! **Addela Marzofka; Schofield, WI; University of Wisconsin Oshkosh; University Housing/Fraternity & Sorority Life***