

17th Annual Students in Transition Conference, Houston, TX
Roundtable Discussion: **The Senior Year Experience: Current Trends and Issues**

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Session Abstract: It has been 12 years since the thought provoking publication of Gardner and Van der Veer's *The Senior Year Experience*. For years, this resource offered a blueprint of topical issues surrounding student issues in the senior year and beyond. Since, however, higher education has seen an enormous amount of growth and transition. The purpose of this roundtable is to explore and discuss current issues and best practices for the senior year and post college transition.

Detailed Description: Since the release of Gardner and Van der Veer's *The Senior Year Experience*, relatively little research has been published which explores the concerns of the college students' final year and their college-to-career transition. The 1998 publication filled a gap in the literature on the topic of student transition at the back end of the college experience; however, higher education has seen enormous growth and transition in the last 12 years. This roundtable will explore the concerns of today's college seniors. Discussion will center on exploration of the *Senior Year Experience* for today's college students, and focus on current trends and issues with regard to student development during the senior year and college-to-career transition. For example, how have changes in social networks and social support systems influenced the senior year experience? What are some of the recent career-related concerns of this population? How are seniors dealing with transitional loss and change in lifestyle? How is increased financial debt and responsibility impacting decision-making with regard to post-graduate plans? How are institutions adding valuable learning experiences for students during senior year and beyond? Participants are asked to bring their ideas and experiences to this roundtable, and together we will form a clearer understanding of the current and future issues impacting this important population.

Discussion Points:

Understanding Today's Seniors

Population

- Who are they?
- What are their needs/characteristics? What has changed over the past decade?
- Special populations? - Community College; commuters, non-traditional

- Social support? Who/what are seniors turning to for support?
Parents? Media?
- Technology
 - How has technology impacted today's seniors?
 - Played a role in the undergraduate experience of today's seniors?
 - Virtual Learning? Social Networking? Blended Classrooms?
- Tech Tools?

Addressing the Needs of Today's Seniors

Educational Practices in the Senior Year

- What pedagogical practices are occurring? What has went away?
- Are new programs/models being added or tweaked? Why? Are they working?
 - More or less emphasis on alternative methods of learning: study abroad; service learning; capstone course; senior seminars?
- How are current initiatives being assessed for effectiveness?

Career/Professional Development of Today's Seniors

Career Planning

- How are students viewing the labor market and their employment options? What
 - are the trends in job search? Business as usual? Prolonged unemployment?
 - Denial? Turning to alternative options, such as internships or graduate school?
- How is increased financial debt and responsibility impacting decision-making with regard
 - to post-graduate plans? The economy? The media?
- Communication methods-have they changed? Outreach-how are we getting seniors
 - involved in their post-college professional lives? Are parents involved?

Transition Out for Today's Seniors

Transition Out

- How is the transition out of college being addressed? What support mechanisms are in
 - needed? In place? Working? Rituals?

Life as an Alumni

- How are we keeping young alumni connected and engaged with campus?

Looking Ahead

- Are there any major themes in the early stages of development?
Issues to watch out for?
- How will the experience look for our seniors in the years to come?

For more information or additional comments, contact:

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