A Study of Student Personnel Administrators in Theological Education

By Shonda Jones

Introduction

In late 2019 The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS) launched a study of six leadership education groups—presidents, deans, chief financial officers, chief development officers, student personnel administrators, and technology officers—to better understand the state of each role in theological education. In late 2020, ATS specifically launched a research study on student personnel administrators. The purpose of the study is to gain critical knowledge of the role of senior student personnel administrators (SSPA), to understand their perspectives and experiences, and to gain insight on how the profession may have changed over time. This project will inform curriculum and leadership education for this population of theological educators.

A strong research team was recruited to execute the study on student personnel administrators. The team included:

Meryl Herr, Ph.D., served as Qualitative Researcher Lead. Dr. Herr is the principal and founder of The GoodWorks Group consulting firm in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Dr. Herr earned her M.Div. and Ph.D. (Educational Studies) at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and holds a B.S. from Vanderbilt University. She teaches at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Cornerstone University and has been consulting for five years. She brings over a decade of curriculum development work and research experience to her consulting practice. She is trained in both qualitative and quantitative research, has completed a graduate certificate in Educational Research Methods through the University of Illinois at Chicago, and teaches three doctoral-level research methods classes.

Shonda Jones, Ed.D., served as Role Advisor. Dr. Jones has worked in theological education as a student personnel administrator for over twenty years, and currently serves as Senior Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives and Integrative Learning at Wake Forest University School of Divinity in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Dr. Jones earned her Ed.D. in Higher Education (Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies) at the University of Alabama and holds an M.Div. (Brite Divinity School) and B.A. from Texas Christian University. She is also the founder and lead consultant for Communal Collective, LLC., a firm focused on increasing the capacity of human capital and community thriving by providing learning tools with intercultural practices, diversity and inclusion engagement interventions, including leading hiring and talent acquisition that aids in creating diverse work environments aimed at communal thriving with and among theological institutions, faith leaders, and faith communities.

David Wang, Ph.D., served as Quantitative Researcher Lead. Dr. Wang is Associate Professor of Psychology and Editor of the Journal of Psychology and Theology at Biola University. He is principal investigator of the Seminary Formation Assessment Project, a research program funded by the John Templeton Foundation conducting longitudinal empirical research on the human and spiritual formation of students enrolled in 18 North American Eastern Orthodox, Episcopal, Evangelical, Mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic seminaries. Dr. Wang's research interests include trauma and traumatic stress, mindfulness/self-compassion, spiritual theology (with special interest in the experience of the spiritual desert), and various topics related to multicultural psychology and social justice.

The research team was recruited and led by Deborah H.C. Gin, Ph.D., Director of Research and Faculty Development, and supported by Jo Ann Deasy, Ph.D., Director of Institutional Initiatives and Student Research at ATS.

Methods

The study used a mixed method design to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Therefore, this study included an online survey and individual in-depth interviews. Senior student personnel administrators who completed the survey were randomly selected to be invited for a follow-up interview.

The quantitative phase of the study included a total sample size of 309. Of those who participated in the online survey, 76% (234) identified themselves as senior student personnel administrators (SSPA). Additionally, the respondents included the following breakdown in primary work area: 32% student life (student services, housing, student affairs), 27% admissions, enrollment management, financial aid, 27% registrar, and 15% other. There were a larger number of females (58%) responded then males (43%), and most respondents were White/Caucasian (70%), with the next largest racial/ethnic group being Black/African American (13%) and Asian or Pacific Islander (9%). Respondents represented mainline protestant schools (43%), evangelical schools (42%), roman catholic (14%), and Jewish (>1%). Most respondents are stand-alone schools (72%) and 13% are at schools in Canada. [See Appendix for Representative quality of response set].

The qualitative phase of the study included individual in-depth interviews conducted virtually via Zoom. The sample size consisted of 31 senior personnel administrators representing 29 institutions. Interviews took place in February and March 2021. Additionally, the respondents included the following breakdown in primary work area: 48% admissions, enrollment management, financial aid, 29% student life (student services, housing, student affairs), and 23% registrar. Five of the institutions were in Canada (16%) and twenty-four in the United States (77%). Interview participants included fifteen administrators who work at evangelical institutions (48%), 11 at mainline institutions (35%), and five at Roman Catholic/Orthodox institutions (16%). Of the evangelical and mainline institutions, 15 were denominational and 11 were independent. Five of the institutions were classified as small, six as mid-sized, 11 as large, and nine as largest. Sixteen participants identified as female (52%), while 15 as male (48%). Five identified as Asian-descent or Pacific-Islander; three identified as Black or African American; three identified as Hispanic, Latino(a), Latin@; one identified as multiracial; and nineteen identified as White/Caucasian (61%). Of the 29 participants who shared the length of time they had been in their role at the time of the interview, 10 had been in their role less than two years, 10 had been in their role two to five years, six had been in their role six to 10 years, and three had been in their role more than two decades. [See Appendix for Representative quality of interview set].

Findings

The results from the research study will be analyzed and synthesized in this report. This research will be instrumental in adding to our knowledge about the profession, and the narratives of senior student personnel administrators will enhance our community of practice. The report is organized to respond to the eleven (11) research questions.

How has the role of senior student personnel administrators (SSPAs) changed?

SSPAs described changes they have experienced in their work as well as the changes they expect in the near future. For all categories of SSPAs, many surveyed reported an expansion of workload and responsibilities. The prevalent themes among their interview responses were (1) developing new procedures and systems, (2) moving their work online, (3) responding to institutional changes, and (4) experiencing a change, often an expansion, in their role responsibilities. Registrars and, to a lesser degree,

admissions personnel, have had to or will soon change vital software that supports their work—software like student information systems and customer relationship management tools.

This finding is consistent with my own experience. I would add that with the many changes afoot within theological schools, often SSPAs are expected to do more with fewer resources. For instance, many SSPAs are being expected to recruit more students with limited financial aid, offer increased student programming and support services for students with shrinking staffs and decreased budgets. In recent years, it has been my experience that as staffing decreases, they are less likely to be replaced. Rather, the duties of previous staff are shifted and absorbed by existing staff. Further, the pressure experienced by theological institutions amid declining enrollment and shifts in educational models, directly impacts SSPAs. I believe theological schools need to periodically review these increased expectations and ensure that strategic planning efforts account for the changing role of SSPAs with clear priorities outlined.

Developing New Procedures and Systems. To support students and reduce red tape, many of the student personnel administrators interviewed have streamlined procedures and developed new systems to maximize efficiency in their departments. Comments about these sorts of changes were more frequent among those in stand-alone institutions, and they were much more common among registrars and admissions personnel. Many participants developed new procedures and systems because they did not want to approach the role the way their predecessor had. One seasoned admissions professional recalled, "I was mentored by another enrollment director, and when I was hired, I said, 'I'm not going to be mini-you. I want to be bringing my gifts to the office.'" (Laura)

Some institutions have automated or digitized tasks, which has enhanced the work of administrators. For example, a registrar said,

> When I came on which was only three years ago, [the school was still] doing paper transcript requests. All of our forms were signed and a physical copy filled out, scanned to the registrar's office. Over the past few years, we've seen a really big migration towards digitizing our processes. We have digital transcripts now. We have DocuSign for our forms. Zoom, of course, has completely transformed how we work, you know, more collaboration and just access to things. I think just digitizing everything has really changed a lot. (Elizabeth)

Moving Work Online. Numerous interviewees described how their work has moved or will increasingly move online, including many having to work remotely. Prior to COVID, several institutions offered online or hybrid learning models that required student personnel administrators to think creatively about supporting students who are seldom or never on campus. Felix shared that his institution began offering services for non-residential students when he came into the role. The COVID-19 pandemic merely increased the number of remote students. He noted, "That has meant for me as far as student engagement trying to find ways to engage with students who aren't on campus. It's a lot easier when they're on campus." Student services personnel spoke about finding ways to build community online such as developing online programs or streaming chapel services. Many have experienced the increased use of online tools to support their work, with software like Microsoft Teams and Zoom to connect with colleagues and hold meetings. Notably, admissions personnel have not been able to travel to recruit students. Instead, they have attended online recruitment fairs and held online meetings with prospective students. Undoubtedly, this way of working adds to the professional toolkit for SSPA's and will serve our profession well as we imagine innovative ways to engage and serve students.

Responding to Institutional Changes. As broader institutional changes occur, so does the work student personnel administrators. Institutions can change program offerings and learning modalities; their relationship with a denomination can change; enrollment could dramatically increase or decrease; or the

type of students they attract could shift. Each of these broader changes can impact the nature and scope of the work, especially for student services personnel.

For example, Elizabeth noted that her institution's enrollment increased as the school moved to a high-flex model during the pandemic. As a result, the institution plans to continue offering this modality which will translate into changing work responsibilities for her and other colleagues. Susan wondered what it meant for her work "if we continue…with not all folks being in the same place at the same time." She added, "From a slightly selfish staff perspective, what that means for my time and my working hours. Also, just in general, how do you form community when people aren't in the same space, maybe don't even have even the physical memory of being in that space, haven't met people in person?"

Those working in schools affiliated with denominations-in-tumult such as The United Methodist Church wonder how a potential split will affect their recruitment processes. An admissions professional in a Roman Catholic seminary shared that previous scandals in the Catholic Church have increased the screening requirements for applicants. A Dean of Students wondered if their school will even retain their denominational affiliation moving forward. Changing that affiliation could drastically change the demographics and needs of students who enroll.

Role Responsibilities. Fourteen of the interview participants held other roles within their current institutions prior to coming into their current position. Some moved from a lower-level position into their current role. Others started out in a similar role and had more responsibilities added over time. As the examples below suggest, student services personnel and registrars tended to speak the most about changing role responsibilities. Further, these changes seemed more likely for those working in mid-sized, large, and largest institutions.

Elizabeth, a registrar, began working for the institution as an administrative assistant. When the registrar position opened, she approached her boss about taking the role. Then, three years into the role, she began overseeing academic services like student success. Jessica started as the registrar but began overseeing admissions when she "realized nobody was doing admission[s]." Esther, who works with international students, described how her role expanded from part-time to full-time as the institution's international student population increased substantially.

It is also the case that various government regulations can impact the work of some student personnel administrators. Two Title IX coordinators, Janice and Mark, described their work as having "evolved" or "morphed" in recent years as they respond to students' concerns. Caleb described, in detail, how Title IX responsibilities have mounted for him:

> …The federal government dumped…the brand-new regulations that went into effect in the fall. That was a hard scramble to get our training on task, to get individuals, the mandate required individuals trained within this that we didn't have in our system, investigators, and others, to try to get them all together and in place very quickly. We had a very limited time window in which to do that and to be able to accomplish quite a lot in terms of rewriting our policies and other pieces.

From my perspective, the need to be responsive and strategic to institutional and environmental shifts has and will inform so much of the work of SSPAs. It is for these reasons, I think it is important to have SSPAs at the cabinet-level to help articulate vulnerabilities and opportunities as it relates to student recruitment, admissions and enrollment, and student services. Changes of the sort previously mentioned fundamentally shifts the profession in significant ways and are evidenced variously in responsibilities of SSPAs. I also think that the more recent shifts, particularly with online/virtual modalities, has forced institutions, and thus SSPAs, to move quickly into the more contemporary reality of higher education. In

some ways, I believe this particular change in the way of working will have long lasting impact that is needed and necessary to reach more learners interested in theological education.

What are the pathways to this role?
While there is no *one* path for which senior student personnel administrators come to their positions, there are clear paths in which most student personnel administrators emerge. Some of the paths identified through the survey include them entering the profession after engaging in graduate theological education, higher education, and congregational ministry. Among those interviewed, 13% worked in K12 at some point in their career also. However, registrars rarely come from congregational ministries (See Tables 1 and 2).

Seven participants interviewed mentioned attending the institution at which they now work. Nearly half of the participants held another position in their institution prior to their current role. For some of them their current role is just an evolution of that previous role. Yet eight interviewees noted they were the first person to ever hold their current role. The survey revealed that nearly half of senior student personnel administrators did not apply for their role but were invited to take the position or were asked to be considered by a search committee. Another quarter was asked to apply and went through a formal application process, while yet a quarter felt that they knew the position was for them and applied.

Sector	CFOs	CDOs	CAOs	CEOs	SPAN
Graduate theological education	10.1%	0%	58.5%	44.4%	30.2%
Higher education (non-theological)	10.1%	30.3%	5.7%	11.9%	19.3%
Congregational ministry	3.8%	34.2%	15.4%	15.9%	14.6%
Undergraduate rel. ed./higher education	2.5%	6.6%	12.2%	6.3%	6.6%
Business	41.8%	44.7%	0.8%	2.4%	6.6%
Other	3.8%	19.7%	0.8%	6.3%	6.1%
Nonprofit sector	17.7%	53.9%	0.8%	3.2%	3.8%
Denominational leadership	1.3%	13.2%	3.3%	7.1%	2.8%
Non-congregational ministry	0%	11.8%	1.6%	2.4%	2.4%

Table 1 – Sector Prior to Current Position

Sector	Admissions/Enrollment/ Financial Aid	Student Life	Registrar
Graduate theological education	29.6%	35.2%	28.3%
Higher education (non-theological)	20.4%	19.7%	26.4%
Congregational ministry	13.0%	14.1%	1.9%
Undergraduate rel. ed./higher education	3.7%	8.5%	7.5%
Business	11.1%	0%	13.2%
Other Education	9.3%	5.6%	7.5%
Nonprofit sector	5.6%	1.4%	5.7%
Denominational leadership	3.7%	2.8%	1.9%
Non-congregational ministry	1.9%	2.8%	0%

Table 2 – Sector Prior to Current Position by SSPA Role

Most senior student personnel administrators worked full-time in student services for over six years before starting in their current role, and nearly three years in a senior role prior to working in that capacity. Numerous respondents attributed obtaining their role due to demonstrated leadership, education, growth in other key skills, innate abilities, and the advocacy and mentorship they have received (See Table 3). Additionally, 23% of those interviewed mentioned completing master's or doctoral-level work

in higher education, with two having earned a doctoral degree in a theological discipline. When asked about if they had completed a theological degree, 32% said they had no formal theological education.

Reasons	Admissions/Enrollment/ Financial Aid	Student Life	Registrar
Effectiveness in prior leadership role	51.6%	50.0%	29.0%
My education	41.9%	45.9%	35.5%
Growth and development of skills	33.9%	39.2%	45.2%
Someone who advocated on my behalf	25.8%	25.7%	30.6%
Innate abilities	24.2%	28.4%	24.2%
My networks	22.6%	20.3%	11.3%
Personal determination	19.4%	16.2%	19.4%
Support and mentoring I have received	16.1%	27.0%	21.0%
Recognized educational leader	8.1%	10.8%	14.5%
Effective and respected professor	3.2%	9.5%	1.6%
My family	1.6%	2.7%	4.8%
Position rotates among faculty	0%	1.4%	0%

Table 3 – Main Reasons that Helped Attain Current Role

What is the nature of work? How is it distributed?
The work of senior student personnel administrators is wide in scope yet targeted on serving students as they are considering theological education (prospective students) and providing support and services to those engaged in theological education (current students). For all SSPAs, the nature of their primary work centers around key activities. Those surveyed confirmed the following primary areas of responsibility:

Admissions/Enrollment/Financial Aid

1) Financial Aid/Scholarships
2) Recruitment
3) Admissions
4) Marketing
5) Customer Service/Student Advising and Student Retention/Student Success

Student Life

1) Student Services
2) Chapel/Pastoral Care/Spiritual Formation
3) Department/Program Leadership
4) Student/Community Care
5) Housing

Registrar

1) Course planning/Scheduling/Academic Calendar
2) Academic Records
3) Academic Advising
4) Compliance
5) Student Registration

Other areas of responsibility include general administration and leadership, complaint resolution/student discipline, strategic planning, Title IX, operations, assessment, and many more. Over 80% of SSPAs have

budget responsibilities, with the exception of registrars where only 46% have defined budgets. Further, most participate in the budget-making process.

It is not surprising that many report holding multiple positions within their institutions as increasingly there is more expected from fewer staff, given my own experiences in recent years. Most realize some benefits that are consistent with faculty with many participating in faculty meetings, teaching courses, and having access to professional development funds. More than any other role among SSPAs, those working in Student Life reported having access to sabbatical leaves, teaching courses, and participating in faculty meetings with nearly 40% having a vote in faculty meetings, as well as access to professional development funds. These indicators signal that more than any SSPA role, those working specifically in Student Life/Student Affairs are treated more like a faculty role. The range of work includes typical roles identified by categories at ATS for student personnel administrators, but also other specified roles like Alumni Officer, Director of Assessment, and Director of Field Education in addition to typical roles (See Table 4).

Theme	Admissions/Enrollment/ Financial Aid	Student Life	Registrar
VP/Dean/Director of Admissions or Recruitment	37.1%	8.1%	0%
Admissions Officer	37.1%	6.8%	9.7%
Financial Aid Officer	37.1%	4.1%	11.3%
VP/Dean of Enrollment Management	27.4%	4.1%	3.2%
Recruitment Officer	25.8%	4.1%	1.6%
Director of Student Services	9.7%	27.0%	14.5%
Director of Housing/Student Life	6.5%	17.6%	1.6%
Director of Assessment	6.5%	0%	11.3%
VP/Dean of Student Services or Student Affairs	4.8%	36.5%	3.2%
Alumni Officer	4.8%	1.4%	0%
Registrar/Dean of Academic Administration	3.2%	4.1%	74.2%
Director of Career/Placement Services	3.2%	12.2%	1.6%
Dean of Students	1.6%	60.8%	0%
Director of Field Education	0%	8.1%	1.6%
Director of Formation	0%	12.2%	0%
Other (Specify; see below)	38.7%	43.2%	32.3%

Table 4 – Roles held by Participants Surveyed

These designations are all matters that help us better understand the nature and the scope of work that student personnel administrators engage. The distribution of work depends on the role, institution, and operative leader models. This study demonstrates that most participants have an expansive portfolio of responsibilities that require unique gifts, talents, and skills that can be cultivated and enhanced.

What is the relationship of the role to other roles in the institution?
About a third of senior student personnel administrators serving in admissions, enrollment management, financial aid, and registrars indicated they sit on their school's cabinet for senior-level leadership, according to the survey data. However, 61% of those serving in student life positions sit on their school's cabinet. Most have individuals who report directly to them.

Because of how SSPAs are situated within institutions, in addition to direct reports, they also regularly interact with directors, deans, and vice presidents in various program areas and departments. Both those working in student life and registrars report having more interaction with faculty and the

president/president's office. In their interviews, SSPAs specifically mentioned the organizational relationships they have with their supervisor, executive leadership, and faculty.

Supervisors. The SSPAs differ in terms of the persons to whom they report in their institutions. During interviews, nearly half indicated reporting directly to the CEO of their institution. Most of these individuals are admissions and student services professionals and are predominately in stand-alone institutions. Nearly 39% of those interviewed report to the CAO. Most of these individuals are registrars or student services professionals and are predominately in related institutions. Nearly 13%, all working in free-standing schools, report to other senior administrators such as the CDO or COO.

Executive Leadership. When discussing leadership during interviews, 35% SSPAs reported serving on their institution's executive leadership team. Among those interviewed, the majority of these individuals have a senior-level VP/Dean role, according to ATS classifications. The survey provided more details, confirming that nearly 61% of student life professionals sit on their school's senior-level leadership team. The number of admissions, enrollment, and financial aid persons who are on their school's cabinet is much lower at 34%, with registrars being even less represented at 32%. The interviews, however, revealed that some SSPAs, particularly admissions personnel and registrars, present reports to the board on occasion.

Faculty. SSPAs who work in admissions sometimes serve on admissions committees with the CEO and/or faculty. Registrars and those who work in student success often meet with faculty on how best to support students. Natalie, a registrar, described her work as serving "mostly students and faculty, serving as that bridge also between the two being able to at times, be that that ombudsperson and help facilitate communication between a student and a faculty member."

My experience is consistent with the data, specifically with having reported to the CEO my entire career and serving in executive leadership. However, in some cases, those in student services are not afforded the opportunity to share regular space with the CEO or executive leadership beyond providing reports and presentations.

Additional information about how SSPAs related to other roles include their involvement in strategic planning and sharing ideas with supervisors and/or executive leadership. Elizabeth described how she shares suggestions with her boss. He's encouraged her by saying, "'Yeah. Go ahead. Create a model. Let's put it together. Let's do it.'" Janice, who oversees DEI efforts in her institution, reported feeling quite comfortable emailing her supervisor and shared that she has felt like she could easily approach the President with a concern. SSPAs often hold the responsibility of bringing the student perspective before the rest of the administration. Mark described how he advocates for students when working with other administrators:

> When I do lead up, it's really just articulating what I think the priorities are in our area. That might be changing our financial aid philosophy, or it might be articulating a stance on an issue like when we moved into COVID. I suggested that we move to a per-course billing arrangement so that students who needed to draw back their enrollment could do so and have that be financially advantageous to them. That might be an example. I might advocate for growing or shrinking a degree program a little bit, or for funding a conference that's really valuable or some other set of student activities that are really valuable. Mostly when I'm leading up, it's in my lane.

Susan believes she can play a valuable role in bringing the student perspective to her institution:

> I'm always trying to make sure I'm looking at it from all those ways. To think about it through a disability services lens, to think about it through an antiracism lens. I think it is a strength, though it's not always at the right tables, to just say, "If we say these things about this institution, how are we really living them out? How is a regular student who shows up once a week experiencing that? How is a local community member experiencing that?"

Unfortunately, Susan doesn't always have a seat at the table. She added, "I think when given the opportunity, I'm able to have positive inputs, but it definitely feels like those opportunities are not always given at all or actually open if they are given." On the other hand, the interviews did reveal that 39% of SSPAs are involved in strategic planning within their institutions. However, when asked to what extent they had been part of ongoing conversations to ensure resources are used to fulfill the school's mission in interviews, over half of SSPAs said minimally or not at all. Several people responded by talking about their department's budget, which is often handed down from senior leadership.

While there has been some demonstrated improvement with SSPAs being a part of executive leadership teams, these realities are far too common among some SSPAs who do not have a seat at the table to share ideas and participate in the decision-making process.

What recruitment/retention models are most effective?
It appears that the most effective model for recruiting and retaining SSPAs in theology schools is to engage in targeting hiring, internally or externally. Many SSPAs surveyed indicated that they did not apply for the position but were invited to take the position or were asked to apply (Table 5).

	Admissions/Enrollment/ Financial Aid	**Student Life**	**Registrar**
I did not apply but was invited to take the position.	37.0%	53.5%	42.6%
I was asked to apply and went through the application process.	33.3%	19.7%	25.9%
I knew the position was for me and applied	25.9%	22.5%	31.5%
I did not apply but agreed to be considered by a search committee.	3.7%	4.2%	0%
I decided "Well, someone has to do it" and applied	0%	0%	0%

Table 5 – SSPA Recruitment Inquiry

When SSPAs were asked in the survey about the level of difficulty in hiring particular student services personnel, Admission/Enrollment/Financial Aid roles found it most difficult to fill/hire for positions in admissions and registrar roles, while Student Life reported more difficulty with hiring in financial aid, academic services, and registrar. Registrars reported most challenge with hiring someone else in the registrar's office, admissions personnel, and academic services personnel. I think this survey response reveals only slight differences based on role and likely speaks to SSPAs limited knowledge and experience with hiring in certain areas, rather than hiring models.

When asked about retention of individuals in particular roles, SSPAs surveyed generally did not report difficulty with retaining personnel. However, those reporting certain roles as "somewhat difficult" are noted in Table 6.

	Admissions/Enrollment/ Financial Aid	**Std Life**	**Registrar**
Admissions personnel	1.47	1.09	1.20
Financial aid officer	1.04	0.84	0.75
Registrar	0.68	0.88	0.83
Student life personnel	0.60	1.13	0.51
Title IX officer	0.60	0.51	0.52
Housing coordinator	0.59	0.58	0.34
Academic services personnel	0.55	0.74	1.09
International student services personnel	0.48	0.80	0.52
Career services personnel	0.24	0.57	0.24

Table 6 – Difficulty in Employee Retention
Very difficult (3), Difficult (2), Somewhat difficult (1), Not at all difficult (0)

Another area of inquiry related to recruitment and retention of SSPAs is related to mentoring and whether there were mentoring models that could yield positive outcomes. Among the surveyed SSPAs in Admission/Enrollment/Financial Aid roles, only 26% reported having a mentor who influenced them professionally; the percentages were lowest among Hispanic (17%) and White (19%). There is no significant difference between women and men. Of those who have received mentorship professionally, most were Asian/AAPI (50%), Multiracial (50%), or Black (44%). Among Student Life SSPAs, 24% reported having a mentor with 19% of women and 28% of men in that group having mentors; it is significant to note that 100% of Hispanic Student Life professionals reported not having a mentor. The story is similar among Registrars with only 30% indicating having a mentor. I believe the data suggest that mentorship has not been a significant model among SSPAs in theological education. However, my experience being mentored and mentoring others, formally and informally, suggest that there are opportunities to creatively build mentoring models that will have a direct impact on recruitment and retention of a diverse and talented pool of student services personnel administrators.

What predicts longevity in the role?
The study found that SSPAs have served in their role an average of about seven years. There are several factors that we found contributed to longevity in the role. Feeling satisfied in the role, having a sense of call, and having the opportunity for upward mobility within the institution are some examples. Some noted the only place to move up was to CEO, and they did not want that position. Some cannot move up without a terminal degree. When asked about future career plans in interviews, participants responded in the following ways:

- 14 indicated having no clear plans or goals at the time of the interview.
- 8 have considered other roles in higher education.
- 5 intend to retire in their roles.
- 2 have considered returning to congregational ministry.
- 1 would like to be a CEO someday.

Two-thirds of senior student personnel administrators indicated no intention of transitioning out of their role in the next year. This reality did not vary significantly across SSPAs roles, institutions, or demographics (institutional size, ecclesial family, relatedness, gender, etc.). Table 7 shows a far higher percentage of CAOs and CEOs with no intention of leaving, suggesting that there is more uncertain

among SSPAs about their future intentions or the institution's intentions in them retaining their job long-term. For instance, CEOs typically have a date-based contract, some with tenure options, that provide more clarity about when and if they will transition from their current position.

	CFOs	CDOs	CAOs	CEOs	SSPAs
No	50 (60.2%)	49 (64.5%)	87 (71.9%)	96 (76.8%)	141 (67.5%)
Yes	9 (10.6%)	8 (10.5%)	18 (14.9%)	17 (13.6%)	51 (24.4%)
Not Sure	19 (22.9%)	19 (25.0%)	16 (13.2%)	12 (9.6%)	17 (8.1%)

Table 7 – Intention to Leave/Transition from Current Position

My own observation that was confirmed through the survey data is that longevity is related to work-related stress. For many senior student personnel administrators, having to solve enrollment challenges, balancing demanding work hours with other responsibilities, dealing with difficult colleagues, lack of competitive compensation, working in an under-resourced environment, and dealing with change and innovation are all major causes of work-related stress.

What predicts satisfaction in the role?
In general, SSPAs surveyed are satisfied with their jobs with not much difference between SPAN roles. Further, when asked in interviews to rank their level of satisfaction on a scale of one to 10, over half responded with an eight of higher. The lowest level of satisfaction given was a six. Many participants even indicated that their overall level of satisfaction had dropped a point or two because of the COVID-19 pandemic. They miss their colleagues and their students.

Five themes emerged in participants' interview responses about what contributes to their satisfaction:

- enjoying the work/ having a sense of mission
- having a sense of autonomy or agency
- having a good supervisor
- working in a collegial environment.

A few participants experience both institutional and personal barriers that diminish their satisfaction in their role. Very few have experienced burnout in their role, many noting that their supervisors regularly encourage them to take vacation. Nearly a third of participants commented on their compensation when asked about their satisfaction or plans to remain in their role. The sections that follow explain these interview themes in more detail.

Enjoying the Work/Having a Sense of Mission. Generally, the SSPAs interviewed love their jobs. Tyler said, "I do very much enjoy my job; it fits who I am." Teresa said about her job, "I just love it." Laura exclaimed, "I love what I do. It energizes me." Some SSPAs derive satisfaction from having a sense of mission. They love the mission of their school and are committed to it. They see their role as helping their institutions meet their goals. One Dean of Students spoke about his sense of mission as it relates to him staying in his role long-term: "If I can still see students being formed and I can still feel like I can be a change agent at the seminary to truly become that safe and healthy and hospitable learning community, then I can justify my being here" (Felix).

Having a Sense of Autonomy or Agency. The idea that SSPAs derive satisfaction from having a sense of autonomy or agency in their work came out often when they described their supervisors or the type of leadership under which they flourish. Related words that came up in the interviews were "freedom," "flexibility," "independence," and "latitude." Their supervisors value their competence and trust them

enough to give them space to do their work. Charlotte put it this way: "I want people to leave me alone until I ask for help….I've been doing this a long time, so I want people to trust my judgment and give me free rein. I report regularly to everybody. It's not like they don't know what I'm doing, right, but to trust my judgment and to know that I'm gonna ask them for help when I need help."

Having a Good Supervisor. Closely related to having a sense of autonomy or agency in one's role is having a good supervisor. Good supervisors not only give SSPAs space and freedom to do their work but also care for them. Allison said, "I'm very thankful that I have a wonderful supervisor who always reminds me to take time for self-care." Elizabeth, a female working in an evangelical institution, commented on how wonderful her male boss has been. She shared,

> I'm grateful because my boss is a male and I know not all female leaders have opportunities to work with a man who opens doors for females in leadership. That's been really just such a blessing to have a boss who says, "Yep. You're a leader. Go ahead. Here's some ideas it. Run with it. Flourish. Let me know how I can support, what doors I can open for you."

Mark also spoke of his supervisor fondly, "Even though the leadership style is a little strange, I love our dean. He's a very ethical person who's a great role model and great leader and great human being and great scholar."

Working in a Collegial Environment. Working in a collegial environment also contributed to SSPAs' satisfaction. Mark described his colleagues saying, "I certainly appreciate working with so many talented people, on my team and across the board." Sarah said of her colleagues and supervisors: "The nice thing about having good colleagues and good supervisors is that they actually do listen, even if they don't necessarily change patterns." Sharon summed up what she loves about her job this way: "I like my job. I like what I do. I love how I'm able to serve and I have some pretty awesome co-workers and an awesome boss who make working in this type of environment easy."

The survey results confirmed other areas that SSPAs are most satisfied with including: the work they do, personal relationships with colleagues, teamwork, relationship with faculty, salary, supervisory relationship, board relationships, and the relationship with the CEO.

Work Features	**Admissions/Enrollment/ Financial Aid**	**Student Life**	**Registrar**
The work you do	3.71	3.43	3.79
Your salary	2.94	3.04	3.02
Promotion opportunities	2.34	2.83	2.55
Professional development opportunities	2.75	2.97	2.96
Personal relationships with your coworkers	3.54	3.60	3.81
The functioning of your work team	3.42	3.44	3.53
The supervision/oversight you receive	3.21	3.09	3.56
Relationship with board/advisory committee	3.02	3.11	3.33
Relationship with faculty	3.29	3.44	3.63
Relationship with CEO	3.42	3.30	3.55
Resources available for the work	2.90	2.85	3.11

Table 9 – Importance of Work Features
Unimportant (1), Slightly important (2), moderately important (3), very important (4)

Because SSPAs are representative of many different roles, satisfaction differed in some areas. For example, for Admissions/Enrollment/Financial Aid administrators, satisfaction with work significantly differed across different sized institutions. More specifically, those in that role from large and largest institutions reported being more satisfied with the work they do. Similarly, satisfaction with supervision

and the board differed across gender. Among Admissions/Enrollment/Financial Aid personnel, women were generally more satisfied with their supervision and satisfaction with the board, than their male peers. Other examples of differences in satisfaction are among Student Life administrators whose satisfaction with salary and professional development differed depending on whether they were at a related or stand-alone institution. Those in stand-alone schools reported being more dissatisfied with their salary than those in embedded institutions.

I expected that SSPAs would report being generally satisfied in their roles. My experience with colleagues across various schools confirms a great deal of passion and enthusiasm about the work, mission, and impact our contributions have for our institutions, theological education, and the church, academy, and world. It is not surprising that SSPAs interviewed expressed lament over how the COVID-19 pandemic has had some negative impact on their sense of satisfaction in their role

What predicts effectiveness in the role?
Different institutions have various measures for effectiveness. For the purposes of this study, we asked participants to mark their level of agreement with each of the following statements. The top four items by rank (all agree or strongly agree) were:

- I have adapted well to the challenges in my role.
- I have helped my institution innovate and apply novel ideas to more effectively achieve its goals
- I have led my institution through significant change.
- Prior to starting my current role, I felt equipped to look at problems from a systemic/institutional perspective.

Findings from the interviews suggest that effectiveness is tied to training, management and administrative skills, interpersonal skills, the ability to be creative and innovative, willingness to be open and adaptive, and ministry skills. Additionally, several reported the need for theological education and technological skills required to be effective in their roles. For SSPAs working in embedded institutions, most reported their relationship with the institution has helped their work a great deal. The following unpacks each area further, as found in the interviews.

Learning the Role. Interviewees reflected on the type of training needed to be effective in the role. A few people, admissions professionals and registrars, said that no formal training was needed for their role. Six people said they learned on-the-job. But nine participants had the opportunity to learn from a predecessor. One registrar recalled training that she received at a previous position: “The registrar I replaced at SCHOOL was retiring, and so, we knew well in advance when she was gonna be leaving, and I was already on staff there. For a period of, I wanna say, two to three months, I sat with her for half hour to an hour every day. That was irreplaceably helpful….an apprenticeship is, in some ways, really, the most valuable.” Even though they may want to work differently from their predecessor, new administrators would not mind some training from them prior to their exit.

Management and Administrative Skills. Student personnel professionals described the need for management and administrative skills. Those with direct reports manage individuals and teams, but all of these individuals at some point have to administrate large projects and oversee systems and processes. Sandra observed that theological schools sometimes hire people who lack these skills: “I think in theological education, the thing I've seen over the years is we have a lot of people who have the people skills or have been good pastors, who end up in administrative roles but don’t know the admissions or recruiting language or the administrative needs for a dean of student's role.”

Interpersonal Relationship Skills. Participants also talked about the importance of interpersonal relationship skills for doing effective work. This includes emotional and cultural intelligence that was described by some respondents as needed skills to excel in their roles. There was emphasis on listening skills, and an ability to understand cultural differences. One individual who works with international students said, "Another aspect is just cultural awareness, just someone who would have had exposure to or have a genuine interest in learning about and interacting with people from different life experiences, from different cultures, would be a huge asset."

Innovation. Participants also asserted the need to be innovative, creative, or entrepreneurial in their work. Jamie described how innovation helps admissions work: "We're gonna get 20 students a year, whether I show up or not, but it's like getting those next 10 to 20 is really like, you have to figure out stuff that's interesting and dynamic to get those students." Elizabeth described an effective registrar as "someone who's innovative and really willing to look at new possibilities and not just how we've done things always but looking for other opportunities." Catherine shared, "The pandemic has forced a lot of us to be very innovative in the way that we relate to the students, in the way that we do our work, and I can see some of those innovations continuing." She described how she now regularly convenes international students via Zoom so that she can care for them.

Openness and Approachability. Registrars, in particular, noted that they need to be open and approachable in order to be effective. Catherine noted that openness and approachability is more than having good communication skills: the goals are "to be understood and also, being open and accept[ing], understanding concerns, being compassionate." Ana described why approachability matters from a systems perspective: "Another piece of success is being an approachable resource for students and faculty and other staff so that people come to you, which helps you stop problems before they become bigger problems. I think those are the two main components of success." Numerous participants also spoke about their open-door policy: they want to welcome students into their offices so that they can support them in their educational journey.

"Ministry of Presence." Some admissions and student services personnel described how ministry skills help them be effective in their roles. For Susan and Rick, this begins with an ability to cultivate trusting relationships with students. Rick, a Roman Catholic priest, shared an anecdote to illustrate the fruit of this trust-building work. He said, "Guys will say, 'Father, I came in here not intending to tell you all these things, but the way it just goes, I just wanna share these things with you.'" Felix, who previously worked as a pastor, said that he believed ministry skills were vital to his role—"pastoral presence, pastoral skill set, whether that's you've been a pastor or not, but to have that kind of ability to mentor, nurture, coach, spiritually guide, pray with, discern calls with students. You need that pastoral presence coming alongside of the students." But Susan noted that one does not need a seminary training or ministry experience to offer "that ministry of presence" to students. She added that skills like that "are just harder to show up on a document like a resume." These ministry skills make sense for admissions professionals, especially those who have described their work as helping prospective students discern their next steps. Should they enroll here or not? The ministry skills are also valuable for student services professionals who work with enrolled students to help form them for their future work in ministry.

Adaptability. Some student services professionals and registrars described the need to be adaptable, flexible, open to change. When describing what it takes to be a successful student services professional, Caleb stated:

> I think adaptability and flexibility are exactly where that's at. I was joking with someone actually just the other day, that probably one of the things that helped shape me for my role more than anything was serving in different missions' context. Because in missions, no matter where you

> are, you're always being thrown something that's not what you plan for, always. It never fails, anytime I'm working short-term, long-term, doesn't matter. You're always having to adapt. That I think is exactly what I see on a day-to-day basis is, 'Okay, here's a new wrinkle. How do we adapt? Here's a new thing that we weren't thinking how do we adapt and how do we make that work? Then how do we get people on board and then how do we move?' That's my life.

Two registrars described how being adaptable or flexible helps them to do their jobs effectively. Both Elizabeth and Ana, who described their role as "keeper of the policies" talked about their need to be flexible and extend grace on occasion. Elizabeth said,

> I think as registrar—our previous registrar was hard with people and very rigid. I think a lot of flexibility is needed to be able to be successful as a registrar because we are the keeper of the policies and regulations and all of that, but really we have to look at the spirit of the law and working towards the best interests of the student in all cases.

Technology and Data Analysis Skills. A handful of registrars and a few admissions professionals described beyond-the-basics computer skills required for their work. These individuals use complex databases, student information systems, and customer relationship management software. Many also have to generate reports using these tools. A few admissions professionals stated that data analysis skills are necessary for them to be effective their roles. Sharon described it as "Excel and spreadsheets and the ability to pull down reports and dive into the data and pull out what is meaningful." Sarah, who leaves the more complex analysis to statisticians on her campus, agrees that one needs "an ability to just look at the numbers…an ability to do spreadsheets, data modeling, and all of that…being able to look at that and just sort information quickly." As shifts have been made in many schools to online operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, those surveyed reported being completely prepared or mostly prepared. Across all roles, most SSPAs believe, and I concur, that having good technology skills translated to positive outcomes related to their work.

Education. When it comes to the training needed to be effective in the role, participants shared their opinions about the necessity of theological education. As previously reported, ten participants said they had no formal theological education. Two said they started a program but did not complete it. The consensus was that theological education can be helpful, but it's not necessary. Admissions professionals in particular thought that completing a theological degree gave them credibility with prospective students who had questions about the seminary experience. A student services professional said that the theological degree helped him be able to share a common vocabulary with the students in his institution's seminary (Nick). A couple of participants who had no theological training maintained that they did not need a theological degree to do their roles because they could defer to colleagues who did have formal theological education to support students who had questions relating to the seminary experience. One VP in Student Services added that he believed people in his role needed to have a terminal degree, specifically a Ph.D., as opposed to an Ed.D. In his mind, the research-focused Ph.D. gives him more "street cred" with faculty. He added that it also helps administrators like him and faculty speak the same language: "we have to speak a common language, whether we're going to Bolivia to do missionary work, or whether we're going to go into a faculty meeting and speak with faculty" (Nick).

What leadership models have been most effective?

Leadership and the type of leadership that facilitates flourishing was an explicit theme in the interviews. SSPAs described the leadership at their institutions and the type of leadership under which they flourish. Instead of micromanaging, they want collaborative leadership. A few would also prefer working within a flatter institutional structure. Student personnel administrators also wanted to work for compelling leaders who invest in their personal lives and value others' voices. Some participants simply want consistent steady leadership.

Collaborative Leadership. A dominant theme was the preference of collaborative leadership models in their work and work distribution. In fact, 25 participants either specified "collaborative leadership" explicitly in their interview or described it. They want collaborative leadership within their departments, across their departments, and from the administration. Esther, who wouldn't call herself a leader, described collaborative leadership this way: "When I'm working with colleagues and we're collaborating, I see it as a very much across kind of a horizontal kind of relationship where we are respectfully collaborating and engaging and working together. I don't necessarily see us leading one another." Susan believes that collaborative models are the remedy to working in "traditional silos." For example, she wants more collaboration with faculty as they work together to support students. Nathaniel described interdepartmental collaboration at his institution this way:

> I think it's a very collaborative group, because we're a small enough organization that everything impacts another department. It's not as if you're working in a vacuum. I think it's been very deliberate to make sure people aren't operating in silos, and to understand the relationship between your actions in other departments or even identifying how other departments can assist, how you can assist them, where those overlaps are, and things of that nature. I feel like it's a very collaborative working group.

Like Susan, Nathaniel sees a relationship between collaborative leadership and the dismantling of silos within an institution. Peter offered an example of collaborative leadership at his institution during the COVID-19 pandemic: "[O]ver the summertime, the faculty and the staff really brainstormed to see how we could innovate and be able to still offer classes and services to the students, and I think some of the things that we did were really helpful and useful for the students to be able to still have as much flexibility in their schooling as possible." Instead of working in their traditional silos, faculty and staff collaborated for the sake of their students.

Not Micromanagement. Thirteen participants declared that they did not want to be micromanaged. In fact, 10 said some version of "not micromanagement" when responding to a question about the type of leadership under which they flourish. Rick said that he flourishes under leadership that trusts that he knows what he's doing and then labeled that "not micromanaging." His comment brings together the themes of a supervisor's willingness to offer autonomy and agency and the supervisor's leadership style. In fact, the concept of trust or working in a high-trust environment came up in a handful of interviews. Paul described how his CEO is moving away from micromanaging toward a more collaborative leadership model: "Yeah, but our president knows that—in the past he has taken on too much personally himself micromanaging things, and he's now—with the establishment of this cabinet, he is taking progressive effort to delegate tasks to us, and he's working on decentralizing, I guess, to a greater degree." The SSPAs who spoke about micromanagement did so in a way that demonstrates they know how to recognize it and what the opposite of it is. I am cognizant that this descriptor has to do with being enabled to work with a high level of autonomy and recognition of the SSPA's abilities and contributions.

Compelling Leadership. Some of the SSPAs interviewed said they flourish under compelling or inspiring leadership. They want their leaders to have a vision for the institution. Caleb remarked:

> I usually love to work in a system or a structure where we've got a president who is casting a vision that's strong and compelling, and then we're empowered to do our roles working together to accomplish that together. That to me is always the most exciting way to operate and work.

Robert described loving to work for "big-idea thinkers." He continued, "I feel like it drives me—it drives me in that it excites me." Sandra said she felt stifled in some of her work because she lacked clarity of vision for her institution. Nick and Sharon have also enjoyed working for leaders who can make difficult decisions. Sharon said that she hasn't always agreed with those difficult decisions. She spoke specifically about her institution's decision to right-size their staff. Even though it was difficult, she has seen its fruit.

Investing in Their Personal Lives. Participants appreciate leaders who invest in their personal lives, and those who supervise large staffs want to invest in the lives of their direct reports. They appreciate regular check-ins on how they are doing and the encouragement to take breaks and vacations. When Janice described the type of leadership under which she flourishes, she said, "I would say that I need to know the person, and I need them to know me personally, a little bit. We don't have to go super in depth, but just to know that a person cares about me more than my role as TITLE concerns. That is very meaningful to me." Allison offered a recent of example of how her supervisor cared for her. When asked if she had experienced burnout in her role, she replied that she hadn't and offered this explanation: "… [O]ur PTO is so generous, and my supervisor is really good about just caring about my personal well-being. There are times where—we had a meeting last week, and I just told 'em, I'm like, 'I've hit that pandemic wall.' He's like, 'Do we need to stop this meeting, and do you need to take the rest of the day off like now because I care about you as a person?'"

Valuing Their Voices. SSPAs appreciate working with leaders who value their voices, who are interested in hearing and considering diverse perspectives when making decisions about the institution. Nathaniel admirably described his CEO's willingness to solicit input from others: "I think that open and honest conversation is something that the president wants to see happen. It's not like he rules with an iron fist. He wants input about what makes sense, what doesn't make sense. He does ask for input." Peter also appreciates working in a place that values everyone's perspectives: "By all means, we don't always agree on things, but everyone's voice is heard, and I really do trust the wisdom and the discernment of our president to be able to take all of these perspectives and put it towards the betterment of the school."

Stability and Transitions. A few of the SSPAs interviewed described recent turnover among the executive leadership at their institution. For some of them, this turnover is particularly disruptive. Due to the turnover in her institution, Janice has had three different supervisors in the three years she has been in her role. Laura considered quitting when her school brought in a new CEO. Jonathan described how a recent CEO transition has affected his work:

> …I'm still mourning the loss of the old president. We really clicked and we really worked really, really well together. Still trying to figure out our new president. Not that there's issues or problems; it's just that we don't have the relationship that I once had. If there was an area of dissatisfaction, that's not meant in a pejorative way. It's just simply we haven't had the time to develop a relationship yet and we've been doing it on a screen.

These sorts of transitions, while they may be necessary, affect others' work. One admissions professional touted the benefits of having little turnover among his school's leadership. Peter noted that three members of the executive leadership team have been working together for years. He said, "[T]he trust that is there makes it very conducive to be able to bring forth new ideas for voicing opinions, concerns, etc." In his mind, their longevity in their roles contributed to a high-trust environment.

How adequate is compensation?

The mean salary, not including benefits, of those surveyed is approximately $70,000 with the maximum actual compensation being reported at $159,000. Among SSPAs, those serving in student life have higher

annual salaries compared to other roles. When speaking about factors that contribute to their satisfaction or staying in the role a long-time, nine interviewees mentioned compensation. While she appreciates the paid time off she receives, Allison would like guaranteed raises:

> Just having some kind of guaranteed raises or cost-of-living adjustment. We do have very generous paid time off. I realistically cannot take any more days off and get the work done that I need to. That's just been the solution from our board because of budgetary concerns, but in the five years I've been here, between the two positions, we've gotten one cost-of-living adjustment, and it was ones where you just didn't even notice on your paycheck 'cause it maybe went up a dollar or two each paycheck.

Jamie also commented that his benefits were "great" but thought that the pay was not, especially for living in a major metropolis. Susan would also like a raise—even two percent—and better benefits, a gesture from the institution that they care about their employees. She shared this about the insurance plan offered by her employer: "I ended up dropping our health insurance and going coverage-less because of the cost on the employee was so great with the deductible being so great that it was such a significant chunk of my income that it was just unsustainable."

Most surveyed reported receiving annual cost-of-living increases with a significantly smaller group reporting receiving a merit-based raise. Some confirmed never receiving a cost-of-living raise and that some institutions do not offer merit-based increases (See Table 10 and Table 11). It is also important to note that many SSPAs surveyed indicated that they have never been promoted, especially among those working in admissions/enrollment/financial aid and registrars.

Over the years, I have received a modest merit salary increase annually along with other faculty/staff. At various significant points of promotion for myself, salary increases were more substantial. I would also add that in order for some in the profession to realize a more substantial salary, they would need to consider a move to another institution. This is typically due to limited opportunities to excel within small organizations and limited resources. As I have accelerated through the ranks from entry, mid-management, to senior level administration, salary for my direct reports have not substantially increased.

	Admissions/Enrollment/ Financial Aid	**Student Life**	**Registrar**
Every year	45.1%	35.4%	29.6%
Every 2-3 years	19.6%	10.3%	22.2%
Irregularly	19.6%	33.8%	31.5%
Never	15.7%	20.5%	16.7%

Table 10 – Frequency of Cost-of-Living Raises

	Admissions/Enrollment/ Financial Aid	**Student Life**	**Registrar**
Every year	13.7%	10.1%	13.2%
Every 2-3 years	9.8%	14.5%	17.0%
4 or more years	11.8%	4.3%	9.4%
Never	39.2%	27.5%	15.1%
School doesn't offer	25.5%	43.6%	45.3%

Table 11 – Frequency of Merit-Based Raises

Where are the preparation gaps? How should ATS change its programming in order for it to be the "go to" resource for you?

Professional development has long been a point of conversation among student personnel professionals. For some, professional development has been attending various conferences, including but not limited to an ATS SPAN conference. Others have received training internal to their institution based on the role, processes, and technology available. As mentioned previously, when the COVID-19 pandemic realities emerged, many institutions had to shift to online operations with most senior student personnel being prepared with the needed technology skills to do their job well (see Table 11).

	Admissions/Enrollment/ Financial Aid	**Student Life**	**Registrar**
Completely prepared	33.3%	21.7%	31.5%
Mostly prepared	47.1%	53.6%	53.7%
Somewhat prepared	17.6%	21.8%	3.7%
Slightly prepared	2.0%	2.9%	9.2%
Not at all prepared	0%	0%	1.9%

Table 11 – Percentage prepared with technology skills

Many of the participants interviewed have never attended an ATS SPAN conference, though most surveyed indicate ATS programming as an important source of professional development (78%). Some have not had the opportunity due to the short time they have been in their role. Several had plans to attend their first conference in 2020, but that conference was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. One registrar who had been serving in his role for decades said he felt like he could never get away from his work to attend. It's a challenge for him to find people who can cover his responsibilities while he is away. This notion was also that of many SSPAs surveyed with nearly 40% indicating they had no time to attend and 38% responding that they do not have enough funds to attend. The survey results also shed light on which ATS program SSPAs would be most interested in attending, including the SPAN Conference (See Table 12).

ATS Programs	**Admission/Enrollment/ Financial Aid**	**Student Life**	**Registrar**
Student Personnel Administrators' Conference	59.7%	63.5%	67.7%
Women in Leadership event	32.3%	35.1%	38.7%
Committee on Race and Ethnicity event	32.3%	51.4%	12.9%
Organizational Models Study and Research Group	30.6%	32.4%	17.7%
Financial Officers' Conference	12.9%	5.4%	1.6%
Adaptive Educational Work Study and Research Group	11.3%	13.5%	11.3%
Formation Study and Research Group	6.5%	29.7%	8.1%
Technology Officers' Conference	3.2%	4.1%	4.8%
New Faculty Conference	3.2%	4.1%	1.6%
Faculty Study and Research Group	3.2%	13.5%	1.6%
Midcareer Faculty Conference	0%	5.4%	0%

Others have not attended SPAN events because SPAN does not provide the type of professional development they seek. Jonathan, who is a seasoned SSPA, said, "I don't want to sound arrogant, but I've been doing this long enough that I just—I need different kind of input than what ATS has been providing." Esther, who works with international students, shared, "I know that that's not my first go-to-place when I wanna engage conversations related to my work."

SSPAs have attended a number of conferences for professional development, including but not limited to:

- American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)
- American School Counselor Association (ASCA)
- Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)
- Association of Academic Divinity Schools
- Association of Biblical Higher Education
- Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA)
- Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU)
- Higher Learning Commission (HLC)
- International Association for Intercultural Education (IAIE)
- North American Coalition for Christian Admissions Professionals (NACCAP)
- Association of International Educators (NAFSA)
- Association for Graduate Enrollment Management (NAGAP)
- Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA)
- Noel Levitz
- Student Conduct Administrator Association

An interview participant described the benefits of being part of a Higher Learning Commission (HLC) study group with other institutions working on student success. His institution is the only seminary in the group. This multi-year study group has benefited his team, and they are beginning to implement some of their learnings within the institution. He said of this sort of training:

> It has been one of the best trainings overall. It's one of those places where you just—it's accreditors doing what accreditors should really be thriving with is helping us be better. They've just hit a home run on this one. (Caleb)

When asked if he could envision ATS facilitate similar study groups, he enthusiastically said, "yes." His detailed description of this study group is included in the Appendix.

Format. Participants dreamed about what ATS training for professionals in their roles could be like. Many thought that ATS should continue with conferences because of how much they appreciate the opportunity to be away from work and to network with colleagues from other schools. In the past, Natalie has appreciated the "substantive downtime" at SPAN conferences. She added, "I've heard so many times from participants of the SPAN conference that it's almost like a retreat. There's prayer. You're well fed, but you're nourished with professional development and time with colleagues…." Natalie also mentioned that the SPAN conference has been a space where SSPAs can express difficult emotions about their work. Additionally, those surveyed confirmed that they would not likely attend an ATS in-person event if it included people in roles other than other student personnel administrators (73%), with approximately 27% indicating they would be more likely to attend with people in other roles.

When they gather, interview participants said they want the ability to network and the opportunity to hear stories from one another. Several people mentioned that they want to learn from people in similar roles, and several want more specific connections: They want to learn from people at similar institutions in terms of denomination, size, and structure. A few want to learn from colleagues at a similar place in the organizational structure. For example, could a registrar, who's not a member of the cabinet, in a one-person shop at a large, related institution connect with a colleague in a practically identical situation?

Survey results also confirmed that SSPAs across roles would like content to be presented in cohorts comprised of colleagues from similar schools and includes featured presenters from schools like their own. It's important to note that Student Life personnel were more interest in an ATS program being fewer

than 3 days per event and that there be opportunities for one-on-one mentoring meetings. There also is interest among Student Life and Registrar colleagues for ATS to offer single webinars (See Table 13).

	Admissions/ Enrollment/ Financial Aid	**Student Life**	**Registrar**
Featured presenters from schools like my own	35.5%	29.7%	24.2%
Was presented in cohorts comprised of persons from similar schools	30.6%	32.4%	32.3%
Featured experts from outside theological education	25.8%	23.0%	16.1%
Had topics that applied more directly to my work	24.2%	10.8%	22.6%
Was offered as a single webinar	16.1%	27.0%	33.9%
Was fewer than 3 days long (per event)	14.5%	27.0%	16.1%
Provided more opportunity to connect or network with colleagues	12.9%	14.9%	12.9%
Was offered as a series of online "courses"	12.9%	18.9%	24.2%
Took place in a high-value location (e.g., beautiful retreat locale, place where my family could also vacation)	11.3%	20.3%	12.9%
Provided one-on-one meetings with a mentor (e.g., long-serving or retired person in my role)	9.7%	27.0%	9.7%
Was geographically closer to my school	4.8%	10.8%	12.9%
Was longer than 3 days long (per event)	3.2%	1.4%	0%
Was scheduled back-to-back with another ATS event or biennial meeting	1.6%	6.8%	6.5%

Table 13 – Top Format Options for Increased SSPAs Participation by Subgroup

Topics. While many value the opportunity to learn from peers, especially in informal times such as meals, a few participants would like ATS to bring national experts in as speakers. Mark shared, "I think if I were to design it, I would call on the folks who are the national experts in XYZ topic, not necessarily look within ATS or within SPAN, and who's willing to present on that topic within that small subset of practitioners." Janet, who has experience programming professional development events within higher education also wanted to "bring in the best practice people" whether they be educators or pastors. Janet reflected on past events she oversaw as she imagined what SPAN could be. She suggested, "Get a venue where people wanna be, because [this city] was a huge draw. People wanted to be here. Get the best hotels, just really make it a special event, because people like that are working really hard at the grassroots. They need all of the support, even if it's once a year." For some SSPAs, the quality of the speakers and the quality of the location are a huge draw.

In the survey, SSPAs also confirmed that they would be most interested in ATS offering programming and resources that focus on change management, strategic planning, conflict management, and facilitating uncomfortable conversations. Some of the survey participants identified role-specific areas in which they would like more training. Admissions professionals wanted to learn more about how to leverage software and technology in their work. In particular, some mentioned wanting to know how to enhance their school's online presence to aid in recruitment. Admissions professionals also wanted additional training in recruiting and enrollment. What are the nuts and bolts? What are the strategies? How should they evaluate applications? Those who work with international students want more training around that. A couple of registrars wanted to know more about legal issues such as FERPA. Several participants wanted

to learn more about seminary students. How are seminary students different from other graduate students? What are the needs of today's seminary students? What are the trends in enrollment?

One suggestion for learning about students came from a participant's experience at a conference on disability services. She shared:

> I think one of the biggest components of both of those events is hearing from the people most directly related. Lots of folks who have a whole range of disabilities themselves and, not that these are mutually exclusive, and folks who are tackling design and helpfulness and accommodations from all different angles. A lot of, in both of those, a lot of different modes. It might be watching a documentary that a disabled activist has put together and then having a talkback with them. It might be really seeing somebody who uses a high level of assisted technology leading a presentation and reflecting back, "Is that even possible on my campus?"… we don't hear from students at SPAN necessarily. We don't bring in some different perspectives. I think that might be an area that is just helpful 'cause it's oftentimes perspectives you don't necessarily have in front of you on your own campus but potentially could at any moment. (Susan)

Participants in this study also identified some gaps in preparation that are critical to highlight. These include a combination of leadership skills and other skills that prepare SSPAs to do student personnel work. The survey data highlighted the particular gaps in skills for the various roles:

Leadership Skills	**Student Personnel Skills**
Admissions/Enrollment/Financial Aid ▪ Grant writing/Fundraising ▪ Board leadership ▪ Navigating organizational leadership ▪ Self-Care ▪ Mediation	*Admissions/Enrollment/Financial Aid* ▪ Interfaith training ▪ Diversity training – race, ethnicity, culture ▪ Dealing with mental health issues ▪ Sexual harassment training ▪ Legal regulations (Title IV, Title IX, etc.)
Student Life ▪ Grant writing/Fundraising ▪ Board leadership ▪ Budgeting/financial management ▪ Self-Care ▪ Mediation	*Student Life* ▪ Interfaith training ▪ Records management ▪ Legal regulations (Title IV, Title IX, etc.) ▪ Campus safety issues ▪ Diversity training – race, ethnicity, culture
Registrar ▪ Grant writing/Fundraising ▪ Board leadership ▪ Networking/building social capital ▪ Budgeting/financial management ▪ Mediation	*Registrar* ▪ Interfaith training ▪ Dealing with mental health issues ▪ Campus safety issues ▪ Diversity training – race, ethnicity, culture ▪ Sexual harassment training

Knowing these gaps can inform and enhance future ATS programming for this group of professionals into the future. It is important to note that the interest in ATS programming on interfaith training differed significantly across ecclesial family. Specifically, most Roman Catholic/Orthodox (60%), and a little less than half of evangelicals surveyed indicated that they are not at all interested in interfaith training. There was also significance across gender, with more men (56%) indicating they have no interest in interfaith

training. Also, small schools reported being less interested in interfaith training. These differences are completely understandable given the varied contexts of our institutions. However, reasons for the significant difference across gender are not clear to me.

Conclusion

Given the variety of roles and positions of senior student personnel administrators, findings were not always completely comparable among the various subgroups. However, the research study provides important insight into the profession generally while also noting distinctions among SSPAs.

There are two major considerations for the future that emerged:

1) Increasing capacity and effectiveness of senior student personnel administrators (SSPAs).

   Expansive Responsibilities. This study demonstrated that most senior student personnel administrators have an expansive portfolio of responsibilities that require unique gifts, talents, and skills that can be cultivated and enhanced. With the growth in workload and responsibilities, it is crucial that institutions continue to build capacity to enable the streamlining of processes and maximizing efficiencies. Additionally, institutional changes have a direct impact on the nature of the work of student personnel administrators. Institutions are encouraged to build more awareness of how institutional changes translate to workload, effectiveness, and desired outcomes among student personnel administrators. With only 61% of senior student personnel administrators positioned to serve at the cabinet level of their institutions, it may be a continuing challenge for some institutions to be fully aware of how institutional decision-making impacts the work and responsibilities of this group.

   Complexity of Skills. Many senior student personnel administrators have adapted well to the challenges that arise in their context. Their effectiveness is tied to the skills they brought with them to their current role, as well as training, development, and management and administrative skills that are continuously enhanced through experience. However, technological skills are among the areas requiring more discovery and attention. Virtual and online realities have increased more swiftly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and are likely to continue in some form beyond the pandemic in more robust fashion. With shifts in course modalities and course offerings, there is a need to increase the capacity of student personnel administrators to be effective in innovative recruitment strategies and thriving in virtual and online learning environments. Creating online work models to support and engage students is essential moving forward. Further, student personnel administrators are often contributors in the ideating and executing of creative solutions. Increasing capacity and effectiveness means to further enhance skills in the area of innovation, design-thinking, leadership skill development, and cultural intelligence. Additionally, SSPAs noted the need for building capacity in the areas of change management, strategic planning, conflict management, and facilitating uncomfortable conversations. I believe the skill gap in grant writing and fundraising is directly related to change management and strategic planning in so much that SSPAs will likely need to do more to financially resource their work and programming with students.

   Barriers. SSPAs have adapted well to the evolving changes and challenges of theological education, and they are generally very satisfied with their work. However, some experience work-related stress and have concerns about compensation. For many senior student personnel administrators, having to solve enrollment challenges, balancing demanding work hours with other responsibilities, dealing with difficult colleagues, lack of competitive compensation, working in an under-resourced environment, and dealing with change and innovation are all major causes of work-related stress. Providing compensation commensurate with expanding duties and securing the needed resources is critical to overcome barriers to success and flourishing in the many roles that SSPAs take on or absorb.

2) Implications for ATS programming for these groups (professional development).
ATS is an important source of professional development for senior student personnel administrators. This study discovered helpful insight to enhancing professional development opportunities for this group.

Format. It is evident that SSPAs prefer to engage in professional development with their colleagues serving in similar roles. They would also prefer opportunities to engage with people in their roles from similar institutional types. Given that many confirmed a preference of attending the Student Personnel Administrators Network (SPAN) Conference, it would be helpful to develop opportunities for cohort/affinity group engagement in any conference format. Several SSPAs indicated that networking and learning from colleagues by hearing their stories is among the reasons to retain a conference model. While there is preference for conference convening in-person, there are a number of SSPAs who would benefit from virtual professional development opportunities offered by ATS. A hybrid-format for professional development that includes in-person convening and opportunities for meaningful engagement online could be an attractive solution. It may be that cohort opportunities that are fully online, time-bound (6 month learning groups around particular topics) and offers certificates of completion.

Topics. There are several offerings that could greatly contribute to the community of practice of student personnel administrators. Consider how topics for professional development can emerge from the kind of skills needed and desired by SSPAs that were noted above: management and administrative skills, technological skills, innovation, design-thinking, leadership skill development, and cultural intelligence. Additional topics that would be useful for SSPAs in their current roles, and also to enhance their capacity for future roles include fundraising/grant writing, interacting with board leadership, budget/financial management, mediation, diversity training, interfaith training, mental health, legal/government affairs, change management, strategic planning, conflict management, and facilitating uncomfortable conversations. With the increase of responsibilities of SSPAs, it is not surprising that there is an expansion of professional tools needed to be successful in their roles.

The content development of offerings from ATS should include national experts and those who can offer best practices in the field. Many SSPAs indicated that this should not be limited to theological educators. Rather, there is a sense that SSPAs can benefit from voices outside of theological education who are student affairs professionals in higher education or other graduate/professional disciplines. This is evidenced also in some SSPAs attending a number of other professional development opportunities outside of ATS.

Barriers. While a good number of senior student personnel administrators identify the ATS SPAN Conference as being an important source of professional development, a number indicated they have never attended. Those who have not attended either do not have the time or funding necessary to engage this ATS offering. Developing multiple opportunities annually that are compelling and in varied formats and costs levels would be an invaluable resource.

Excursus

Sustainable Economic Model

Because of ATS's interest in institutions' ability to operate within a sustainable economic model, participants responded to a series of questions about the topic. Approximately two-thirds of participants had at least a basic understanding of the concept of "sustainable economic model." Four participants, three admissions professionals and one registrar, stated essentially that they had no clue what it meant. Five participants referenced their administration of their departmental budget when asked how they understood a sustainable economic model. For the most part, those with cabinet-level positions or advanced degrees in higher education understood the concept with more depth and nuance. One admissions professional, who admitted no understanding of sustainable economic models, stated that he wanted to learn more and was encouraged to speak with a cabinet-level administrator for more information.

Eight participants, mostly individuals serving on their institution's cabinet, mentioned being engaged in ongoing conversations about the school's ability to operate within a sustainable economic model. A couple of people have been invited into informal strategic planning conversations that touch on sustainability, and some have been asked to give input from time-to-time. Still, even though they understand what it means to operate within a sustainable economic model, most participants haven't been invited into ongoing conversations. Some, like Felix, said that their eyes glaze over when they think about budgets. Yet, some of the individuals remain untapped, like Ana and Susan, who understand higher education and economic models and could speak into their school's economic future.

Seven participants said that their schools are actively working on their ability to operate within a sustainable economic model; the conversations are live and ongoing. Based on data provided to ATS, only one of their institutions has a positive financial outlook.[1] Around the time of the interview, that institution with the positive financial outlook adopted a subscription tuition model.

Three participants lauded their executive leadership—CEOs, COOs, and CFOs—for their acumen and skill in leading their schools toward sustainability. Each of their schools reported a negative financial outlook. One participant claimed that his institution—a large, related mainline independent institution—because of its old age and large endowment, has not felt the pressure to have questions about operating under a sustainable economic model. Interestingly, the financial data reported by his institution indicates a negative financial outlook.

Two schools described creative sources of revenue that their schools use to help them be more sustainable. One, which has a positive financial outlook, rents parking spaces on some of its property. Another, which has a negative financial outlook, has an income-generating farm on its property.

HLC Study Group

[1] Schools provided ATS with data on their primary reserve ratio (PRR), ratio of expenditures to full time enrollment (Exp/FTE), and number of years they ran surpluses over the past five years. Some related schools did not provide PRR data. ATS coded the data, reverse coding Exp/FTE so that lower scores on all three metrics indicated a poor financial outlook. The scores on the metrics provided were averaged. For the purposes of this report, average scores between 1 and 2 indicate a negative financial outlook and scores between 2 and 3 indicate a positive financial outlook.

One participant described an HLC study group of which his institution is a part. His description follows.

"I have a select team of individuals, one from admissions, one from our institutional effectiveness, one from student life, myself, and two for student life. We contracted with a Higher Learning Commission. You join in with this group and you commit to a three-year process where they help us look through our data to find the best ways for us to serve students through multiple facets.

Everything from what are the sticking points in your academic process. How do you identify the classes that everybody fails at, or everybody gets stuck at, or you're doing good with your retention numbers until everyone takes that one professor, that one class, how do we identify what those are? Not that we're wanting to eliminate those, but how do we help prepare people for those better? How do we structurally work to make sure that they're in a good space to be able to take these?

Trying to identify those as well as looking at your data and finding all of the silos where we put data. Oftentimes we will find that— we've definitely found in our case, I've got an undergraduate arm, a graduate arm, and a doctoral arm. They're all keeping different sets of data and they're all keeping it internally. Then when we come together corporately that data doesn't always match. We have our own corporate data measures that we pull on a regular basis as a cabinet.

Then when we're trying to have a conversation with an individual level, it doesn't always match. How do we get the data cleaned up in there? How do we understand who our students are? What their backgrounds are? How background contributes to student success? How do we help them be able to think through that? What does it look like to be different online and on-campus? Anyway, they're helping us pull all that through.

Again, we're in year two and so we've spent lots of projects, lots of other pieces. Every year has two big meetings where we're joining with other people in our cohort, and we're working through this at all of our institutions. Then we turn around in this as we go into year three, we'll have a major project. That's a proof of concept project that just deals with one aspect that we've been talking about. That's what we're moving quickly towards." (Caleb)

Appendix

Representative Quality of Samples

Survey Sample Size: 309 total; 234 senior student personnel administrator

Adm/Enr/Fin (N=62)	ATS/COA Database
11.3% Canada	15% Canada
43.5% EV 46.8% ML 9.7% RC/O 0% Jewish	44% EV 33% ML 22% RC/O 1% Jewish
32.3% Related	41% Related
11.3% Small (1-75 HC) 25.8% Mid-sized (76-150 HC) 33.9% Large (151-300 HC) 29.0% Largest (300+ HC)	22% Small 29% Mid-sized 27% Large 21% Largest
64.5% Denominational 25.8% Independent 9.7% Roman Catholic / Orthodox 0% Jewish	54% Denominational 23% Independent 22% Roman Catholic / Orthodox 1% Jewish
11.3% Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity 17.7% Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity 22.6% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Larger 24.2% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Smaller 14.5% Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs 9.7% Master's Colleges & Universities: Smaller Programs	5% Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity 15% Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity 20% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Larger 25% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Smaller 17% Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs 18% Master's Colleges & Universities: Smaller Programs
51.6% Female 46.8% Male	12% Female 88% Male
8.1% Asian or Pacific Islander 17.7% Black, African American 0% Native American, First Nation 9.7% Hispanic, Latino(a) 58.1% White, Caucasian 3.2% Multiracial 3.2% Other	6% Asian or Pacific Islander 6% Black, African American 1% Native American, First Nation 2% Hispanic, Latino(a) 85% White, Caucasian

Student Life (N=74)	ATS/COA Database
9.5% Canada	15% Canada
45.9% EV 44.6% ML 8.1% RC/O 1.4% Jewish	44% EV 33% ML 22% RC/O 1% Jewish
28.4% Related	41% Related
9.5% Small (1-75 HC) 17.6% Mid-sized (76-150 HC) 37.8% Large (151-300 HC) 35.1% Largest (300+ HC)	22% Small 29% Mid-sized 27% Large 21% Largest
64.9% Denominational 25.7% Independent 8.1% Roman Catholic / Orthodox 1.4% Jewish	54% Denominational 23% Independent 22% Roman Catholic / Orthodox 1% Jewish
10.8% Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity 28.4% Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity 23.0% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Larger 18.9% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Smaller 9.5% Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs 9.5% Master's Colleges & Universities: Smaller Programs	5% Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity 15% Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity 20% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Larger 25% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Smaller 17% Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs 18% Master's Colleges & Universities: Smaller Programs
45.2% Female 54.8% Male	12% Female 88% Male
10.8% Asian or Pacific Islander 14.9% Black, African American 0% Native American, First Nation 1.4% Hispanic, Latino(a) 71.6% White, Caucasian 1.4% Other	6% Asian or Pacific Islander 6% Black, African American 1% Native American, First Nation 2% Hispanic, Latino(a) 85% White, Caucasian

Registrar (N=62)	ATS/COA Database
19.4% Canada	15% Canada
35.5% EV 37.1% ML 25.8% RC/O 1.6% Jewish	44% EV 33% ML 22% RC/O 1% Jewish
24.2% Related	41% Related
16.1% Small (1-75 HC) 27.4% Mid-sized (76-150 HC) 25.8% Large (151-300 HC) 30.6% Largest (300+ HC)	22% Small 29% Mid-sized 27% Large 21% Largest
51.6% Denominational 21.0% Independent 25.8% Roman Catholic / Orthodox 1.6% Jewish	54% Denominational 23% Independent 22% Roman Catholic / Orthodox 1% Jewish
4.8% Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity 14.5% Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity 22.6% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Larger 24.2% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Smaller 19.4% Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs 14.5% Master's Colleges & Universities: Smaller Programs	5% Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity 15% Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity 20% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Larger 25% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Smaller 17% Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs 18% Master's Colleges & Universities: Smaller Programs
78.5% Female 21.5% Male	12% Female 88% Male
8.1% Asian or Pacific Islander 4.8% Black, African American 4.8% Multiracial 0% Native American, First Nation 0% Hispanic, Latino(a) 80.6% White, Caucasian 1.6% Other	6% Asian or Pacific Islander 6% Black, African American 1% Native American, First Nation 2% Hispanic, Latino(a) 85% White, Caucasian

Scheduled/Inter x

Column Label					
%		Count		Total %	Total Count
Related	Stand Alone	Related	Stand Alone		
29%	71%	9	22	100%	31

Scheduled/Inter x

Column Label						
%			Count			Total %
Evangelical	Mainline	Roman Catho	Evangelical	Mainline	Roman Catholic	/ Orthodox
48%	35%	16%	15	11	5	100%

Scheduled/Inter x

Column Label						
%			Count			Total %
Denominational	Independent	Roman Catho	Denominatio	Independent	Roman Catholic	/ Orthodox
48%	35%	16%	15	11	5	100%

Scheduled/Inter x

Column Label					
%		Count		Total %	Total Count
CANADA	USA	CANADA	USA		
16%	84%	5	26	100%	31

Scheduled/Inter x

Column Label						
%				Count		
Small	Mid	Large	Largest	Small	Mid	Large
16%	19%	35%	29%	5	6	11

Scheduled/Inter x

Column Label						
%						Count
15	16	17	18	19	20	15
10%	19%	19%	16%	19%	16%	3

Scheduled/Inter x

Column Label					
%		Count		Total %	Total Count
Female	Male	Female	Male		
52%	48%	16	15	100%	31

Scheduled/Inter x

Column Label						
%					Count	
Asian-descent o	Black, African Ar	Hispanic, Lati	Multiracial	White, Cauca	Asian-descen	Black, African
16%	10%	10%	3%	61%	5	3

Scheduled/Inter x

Column Label						
%					Count	
29	30s	40s	50s	60s	29	30s
3%	19%	39%	19%	19%	1	6

Scheduled/Inter x

Row Labels	%	Count		Population
Admissions/Fi	48%	15		31%
Student Servic	32%	10		38%
Registrar	19%	6		31%
Grand Total	100%	31		

Student Personnel Administrators Interview Protocol

Introduction and Consent

Thank you for your decision to participate in this one-on-one interview. I am Meryl Herr, research consultant for The Association of Theological Schools. I will begin with a description of the process, then get your consent recorded and proceed with interview questions.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about your experiences in your role at your institution. Your perspectives will help The Association of Theological Schools understand the kind of leadership that will be needed for the future of theological education, and how to support you in your role. The responses you provide will be kept confidential and will only be seen by the research team conducting the study.

To ensure confidentiality, all interview data will be de-identified, meaning your name and the name of the school will not be linked to any disaggregated data on any report. Where excerpts are used, your name will be redacted with "NAME" and your school, with "SCHOOL".

The interview will be video and audio recorded through Zoom for the purpose of data analysis, but as mentioned earlier, your name will not be used in any part of the process of data analysis and reporting. You were previously emailed the Informed Consent Form and provided consent by email. By this consent, you agree to the given information on the form. This includes your rights, responsibilities of you and the researcher, confidentiality, recording, and freedom to leave at any time during the interview. Feel free not to answer any question you find embarrassing or uncomfortable, and remember you can discontinue your participation anytime. Do you have any questions?

[Respond to any questions, then begin recording.]
Please state your full name.

Do you consent to participate in the interview, and to be video and audio-recorded for this interview?

We appreciate your time and willingness to participate in this interview.

Introductory/Grand-Tour Question (3 min)

- [RQ 3] Let's say I want to create a documentary called "A Day in the Life of a TITLE." My camera crew and I would follow you around for a day. What might we see? Please give me a brief picture.

RQ 1 – Role change (5 min)

- As you think about the role you are currently in, to what extent has the nature of the work in that role changed at your institution in recent years? [Clarification: responsibilities, focus, strategy; Draw out Prior to COVID-19/Since COVID-19?]
- What has that change required of you?
- How do you think the nature of the work in your role in your institution might change in the next 5 years? [Follow-up: What will stay the same?]

RQ 4 – Relationship of role to others in the institution/RQ 9 – Leadership Models (15 min)

Transition: Let's talk about your role in Student Personnel Administration it relates to the institution broadly.

- In what ways does your work serve the institution's mission?
- How do you understand the concept "sustainable economic model"? What does that look like at your institution?
- To what extent have you been given opportunities to collaboratively contribute in institutional planning necessary for the school to accomplish its mission within a sustainable economic model?
    - Can you describe a particular time in which you engaged in this sort of collaborative planning with others?
    - What was your role in the process?
- To what extent have you been part of ongoing conversations to ensure resources are used to fulfill the school's mission.
    - Tell me about those conversations. Who initiates them? Who contributes to the dialogue?
    - What is your sense of the effectiveness of these conversations?
- To what extent have you led your institution through significant change? [IF they have not: What about your department? To what extent have you led it through significant change?]
    - Can you describe the change?
    - How did you lead the change?
    - What, if any, obstacles did you encounter?
- Under what types of leadership do you tend to flourish?
- TRANSITION: One administrator shared with me about how he leads up, leads across, and leads down within his university. Let's use this framework to understand more about your work. In what ways do you have opportunities to lead up, lead across, and lead down in your role?
    - [Definitions, if necessary] Leading up can be defined as working with and seeking to influence more senior administrators.
    - Leading across can be defined as working with and seeking to influence other peer-level administrators, staff, and faculty. In what ways do you lead across?

- Leading down can be defined as working with and seeking to influence your team or department. What does that look like for you? How would you describe your leadership style?

RQ 8 – Effectiveness (5 min)

- How would you define success for someone in your role?
- In your opinion, how should your effectiveness be evaluated?
- What sorts of soft skills are needed for your role?
- What sorts of hard skills are needed?
- What sort of education or training does someone need to be effective in your role?

RQ 2 – Pathways to the role (5 min)

Transition: I'd like to begin by learning more about how you came to your role.

- [RQ 11] What were some of the biggest challenges you faced when you came into your new role?

RQ 7 – Satisfaction (10 min)

Transition: Now I would like to ask you about your satisfaction with your role.

- What do you think has contributed to your current level of satisfaction?
- What sorts of institutional barriers, if any, have hindered your flourishing in your role?
- To what extent have you experienced burnout in your role?
- What do you think contributed to your burnout?
- To what extent has the COVID-19 crisis affected your level of satisfaction? burnout?
- [Confidentiality reminder] In the survey, you indicated that you report to _____. What would satisfactory supervision look like in your role?

RQ 6 – Longevity (5-10 min)

- What factors do you believe contribute to someone staying in your role for a considerable amount of time?
- What are your long-term career goals?
- To what extent has your institution's confession, policies, or practices limited you in your role? To what extent has your institution's confession, policies, or practices limited your ability to advance in your career? [NOTE: Listen for barriers related to confession, gender, race, and sexuality.]

RQ 11 – Training (5 min)

Transition: Let's explore what training and professional development might look like for SSPA's in ATS schools.

- If you could design a training/professional development event for personnel in your role at ATS schools, what would it look like?
    - Where? When? Speakers? Topics? [What would really excite you?]
    - What would you hope to get out of it?
- What other professional events have you attended that are relevant to your work as a SSPA?
    - What about those events has been beneficial to you?
    - What could it look like for ATS to offer something like that?