

## Lessons Learned

*Bonita C. Jacobs*

Life is interesting. I, like you, spent the last month of the semester reflecting, evaluating, planning, creating, rushing, and eating a lot of chicken dinners at end-of-the-year banquets. We heard some excellent speeches, and some not so excellent ones, and we may have even given some ourselves, some excellent and some not. Currently, many of us are gearing up for another summer of orientation while also assessing retention and student satisfaction from the last freshman year experience.

As I was putting the journal together, a labor I greatly enjoy but also one of great time requirements, I was reminded that there are numerous people who worked long hours to accumulate the research, data, and information you'll find in this edition of the journal. Nonetheless, it's not all work and no play. The work is quite satisfying and it's always a unique joy to see one's name in print. (In addition, those of us on tenure track also understand how rewarding it can be!)

Since I work in Student Affairs and we are trained to reflect on things around us, perhaps it is timely to note how the accomplishments on the next few pages are "Lessons in Life" for us all.

First, there are no shortcuts in library research, effective data design, and revising texts. As Cawthorn and Ward-Roof explain in their article, "A Survey on the Skills Necessary for an Orientation Professional," the rewarding endeavor of helping students effectively transition to college is also a lot of hard work and skill development. Whether in our professional careers or our personal lives, paying attention is crucial. We will always have something more to learn.

Second, things aren't always what we think they will be, and that is part of the joys of life and of our work. Borland's article, "Parallels: First Semester of College US and First Semester of Study Abroad Transitions" explains adeptly how many students who are planning to study abroad may anticipate the experience quite differently from the way returning students describe it. Most of us have chosen higher education careers in part because not every day is a predictable routine; in short, it's not always what we think it will be. (Another obvious lesson is to be careful what you wish for!)

Third, we are all different with multiple views on the world and the people around us. We have different strengths and weaknesses and we can always learn more by understanding how those around us perceive their environments. Nadler and Miller's article, "Designing Transitional Programs to Meet the Needs of Multi-Ethnic First-Year Students" highlights this concept. Just as students are diverse in their needs, perceptions,

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and viewpoints, we are all different in our work environments and our personal values. These differing approaches are invaluable in building an environment that is rich in perceptions, acceptance, and competence.

The many hours that associate editors and authors put into each edition of the journal are time well spent. What each contributed will have an effect on others, many of whom they will never meet. But then, much of what we do greatly affects others, and often we don't realize the extent of that influence. Sometimes we need to relearn the lesson of how much everything we do affects those around us, and that's the greatest lesson of all.