

AACUSS Talks—Fall 2010

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AACUSS: Still Relevant at Thirty-five?

Kris Trotter— UNB Saint John

Emerging from the “Association of Atlantic Universities Deans of Men and Women”, AACUSS was born in February 1975 as an organization which would provide all student service professionals with a regional coalition. Twenty years later, many of us are affiliated with international, national and/or role-specific student services groups such as CACUSS, CASA, CCPA, NAFSA, CBIE, CACEE, CASFAA, CAFCE, and CAUBO, to name just a few. In an era of narrow career specialization, is AACUSS - a broad, relatively informal regional association - becoming obsolete? I turned to the written feedback submitted by participants at the recent AACUSS annual conference (UNB Saint John May 30 -June 2) with this question in mind.

First-timers to an AACUSS conference, who may be surmised to be the newer student services professionals among us, had this to say about their experience:

“I was able to network with individuals from other institutions in my area of Student Services. We were able to talk about the strengths and weaknesses of the programs we offer. I was able to take some of the information I gathered from others to help implement new programs and ideas.”

“It absolutely exceeded my expectations! I came away with new ideas and energy. I felt very comfortable. A great balance of fun and professional development.”

“I had the opportunity to meet a wide range of student service professionals and made a large number of contacts who I know will help me out if I had questions or wanted to share best-practices. The programs were very interesting and covered a wide range of areas. The use of time was very efficient!”

“It met my expectations and then some!”

... (Continued on Page 3)

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Orientation Planning: Turning Lemons into Lemonade

Sandra Cook—Memorial University

At Memorial University of Newfoundland we are committed to change and growth. Our university motto is ‘Become,’ a concept that pairs well with our ever evolving Orientation program. However, after successfully implementing our New Student Orientation in the Fall of 2009, our evaluation results combined with a slight drop in attendance on the second day of orientation clearly indicated we needed to reevaluate our program. Although our original orientation had been effective in welcoming and transitioning our 2500 new students, the program had ‘become’ a little stale.

The feedback received from thousands of surveys administered showed a clear division between the needs and expectations of our new students. On one side, students expected orientation to provide them with a high level of social engagement and interaction with the university campus. On the other side, students expected their orientation program to provide them with the opportunity to access campus services and resources before they started classes the following day. ... (Continued on Page 2)

ORIENTATION PLANNING: TURNING LEMONS INTO LEMONADE (CONTINUED FROM PG. 1)



For the latter group, we were not adequately meeting their needs; these were our 'lemons.' In addition, evening and off-campus events were also experiencing low attendance rates. With this feedback in mind we began to do our research, reviewing and assessing others programs, as well as attending conferences and webinars. So off to the NODA conference we went with the mission of absorbing as many creative and fresh ideas as we could from our NODA family.

Overall, the information received in the many plenary and concurrent sessions our team attended undoubtedly contributed great value to the redesign of our orientation program. (Not to mention, the opportunity to talk with each other about nothing but orientation for five days.) A few sessions in particular were significant in

assisting us with a new program design and developing a fresh attitude towards the planning and execution of orientation. Firstly, the plenary session, *The Disney Institute* was exceptionally informative and useful. It provided new ideas about how to keep the facilitation of our program 'behind-the-scenes,' how to create a customer focused program, line management techniques, and my favorite lesson that we passed onto our student leaders, 'things are not our fault, but they are our problem.' Another session we attended was the University of Southern Indiana's *1-Day versus 2-Day Orientation Programs: Compare and Contrast*. We already had a two day program and were considering if this was the best approach. This session provided insight into how other campuses utilize two days of programming and inspired us to take risks later. In particular, from this session, arouse the idea of marketing orientation as two distinct days. Each day would now have its own purpose that could meet the different needs and expectations of our students; little did we know this would be our 'lemonade.' Upon our return from NODA we began to piece together this new orientation program proposal to pitch to our Dean of Student Affairs and Services.

Our new program would still be two days in length but these days would be very different. Day one orientation would focus on welcoming students and socially integrating them into the Memorial family. This day was completely programmed consisting of a lunch, group meetings, icebreakers, a presidential welcoming ceremony, and a varsity pep rally complete with break dancers, cheerleaders and drum line. We followed these events with two informative talks; one concerning Academics and another concerning university transition. Unlike day one, day two would not be programmed but more of a drop-in type day. Inspired by Disney's line management techniques and motivated to meet the expectations of our students, we set up over a dozen essential first year needs and services all in one central location, the heart of our campus, our University Centre. We marketed the second day of orientation as a checklist. Each student was mailed a postcard two weeks prior to orientation; on one side of the post card was an invitation to day one orientation and on the other side a check list to be completed on day two. The checklist items included:

- Get a campus tour.
- Get a locker.
- Get my fees paid
- Get connected at the fair.
- Get a campus card.
- Get info about my health and dental plan.
- Get supplies and calendar.
- Get a bus pass.
- Get answers.
- Get wireless.
- Get upstairs.



We realized how great of a success day two orientation had been by the high attendance at all checkpoints. The benefits of our new program structure were plentiful and varied. The program allowed first year students the chance to avoid standing in large line-ups with non-first year students on the first day of classes, as was the norm in past years. Instead, students could, on their own time, conveniently locate and choose which checklist items they wished to complete within a safe and friendly space. Also, the drop in concept enabled faculty orientations to be offered simultaneously with our campus-wide orientation. Students would not have to miss part of orientation to attend their faculty orientation as in the past, due to program times often overlapping. From a facilitation standpoint, the program model was not demanding on volunteers and so many of our trained orientation leaders were able to assist with their own faculties' orientation. Aside from these benefits, the most rewarding impact of this program was providing thousands of first year students the chance to begin their first day at Memorial University feeling more confident and prepared for their experience.

AACUSS: Still Relevant at Thirty-five? (CONTINUED FROM PG. 1)

Okay, so the newer members seem to be finding great value in AACUSS. What about the comments of those who have been around for awhile? Are they still happy with their AACUSS membership? Sample comments include:

"I met new people. You cannot get that through other means."

"I was pleased with the breadth of presentations. There was something in every time slot that was of interest to me."

"The sessions were of high quality and applicable to a wide array of Student Affairs employees."

"First, the caliber of the sessions was excellent. Second, it was fun. Not necessarily in that order!"

With feedback like that, who could conclude that a regional, general affiliation like AACUSS is no longer worthwhile? Just to be sure, I contacted a few colleagues who were not at the conference this year. Were they, perhaps, disaffected in some way? These comments reflect the thoughts of absent friends I spoke with:

"I enjoyed AACUSS when I attended and presented in the past. I appreciate connecting with colleagues at other educational institutions. Unfortunately, this year's AACUSS conference conflicted with the CCPA conference and a work related retreat. Sometimes I have to make difficult choices with my time and energy."

"I took a look at the agenda and would have loved to attend...Sadly for me this year, AACUSS fell during the week before our Convocation with so much to do in that week before, I couldn't get away for the conference. "

So is AACUSS perfect? Conference delegates cared enough to offer the following suggestions:

- Keep divisional meetings at the front of the conference – set up inter- and intra-divisional networking in the remaining days
- More time is needed for divisional meetings – goes by too fast
- Take advantage of the time in the divisional meeting by deciding the topics ahead of time
- Divisional reps can do more to get their members to sign up for this conference and to build a divisional agenda ahead of time
- Divisional reps/divisional members can arrange to bring in their own guest speakers so that they can't complain that there were no sessions in their field
- At the AGM, ask the members for open comments about AACUSS
- Presentations by individual universities on their suite of services

Such requests to do even more with the annual AACUSS divisional meetings is, I submit, a reflection of our sincere desire to continually develop our role-specific abilities. The beauty of AACUSS is that we can do this and network valuably with colleagues in all of the student services roles. AACUSS provides both within-group and between-group learning.

I started in Student Services at Mount Allison University in 1996. My boss, long-time Dean of Students Charlie Hunter, insisted that every member of his staff take an AACUSS membership and contribute in some way be it large or small. Looking back, I realize have presented, co-presented, been a divisional rep, contributed to AACUSS Talks, had project and travel sponsorship, shared ideas, formed friendships, learned, supported and have been supported professionally and personally. It doesn't seem long ago that Charlie was mentoring us to value and nurture AACUSS as a unique Atlantic entity. If we all share this pride in its strengths, and this sense of personal responsibility for its continual development, AACUSS will be something we can benefit from for another thirty-five years.

"First, the caliber of the sessions was excellent. Second, it was fun. Not necessarily in that order!"

AACUSS Trivia

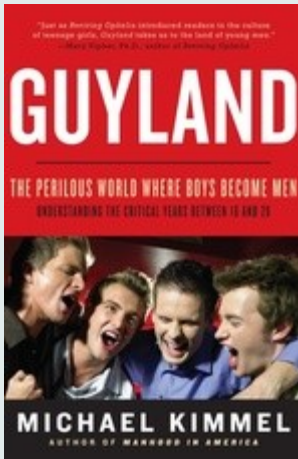
Which AACUSS member played mini-golf at the 2010 Executive Challenge in high heels?



BOOK REVIEW:

Guyland: The Perilous World where Boys become Men Understanding the Critical Years between 16 and 26 by Michael Kimmel (HarperCollins 2008)

Reviewed by: Anne Forrestall—University of New Brunswick



In the preface to Michael Kimmel's book *Guyland: The Perilous World where Boys become Men Understanding the Critical Years between 16 and 26*, he writes:

"I wrote this book to contribute to a conversation . . . about guys and about the world in which they live" (xv). Fittingly, the book is based on hundreds of conversations Kimmel had with young men—and women—across the US. Kimmel, a well-respected sociologist and a scholar in the area of gender studies, brings a wealth of insight to these conversations and while the terrain he maps in *Guyland* is rough and craggy and at times dangerous, he does come to some conclusions that those who work closely with this age group would find useful to their practice.

The *Guyland* Kimmel describes is one in which alcohol abuse, hazing, predatory sex, pornography, not to mention sophomoric humour and just plain bad behaviour abound. Kimmel doesn't draw a swath across the country's 16 to 26 aged population; he is clear that the population he is describing is *mostly* (though not exclusively) white, middle class and college bound. In fact, he talks about the American college campus as "Guyland Central."

Guyland is terrifying. In fact, it might be tempting to dismiss Kimmel's findings as being blow out of proportion, sensationalized or extreme examples. However representative the bad behaviour Kimmel describes is in Canadian universities, I wouldn't care to comment on. Instead, I was most interested in what conclusions Kimmel came to and how we might limit the negative impact of the behaviours he found in *Guyland*.

Some of the conversations Kimmel had were with young men who had successfully stood up against the bad behaviours they witnessed, perhaps took part in or saw others exposed to. They were not heroes, according to Kimmel they were "just guys" who decided they had had enough. Unlike most guys they did not just stand by and do nothing, implying support in their silence. Kimmel believes that

They—and we all—can do better. Guys who are "just guys" can become just guys—guys who are capable of acting ethically, of doing the right thing, of standing up against the centripetal pull of *Guyland*. Guys can be everyday heroes. They can actually become men. For some it just happens; others need a lot of help. (267)

"What sort of help do these young men need?" Kimmel asks and proceeds to respond. He discusses the role parents need to play, the role of "charismatic adults" in the lives of "guys" and the role of friends, but in addition to having positive role models, Kimmel puts forward some theory, as well as practical ideas on transforming *Guyland* by "breaking the silence" and limiting the influence of "bullies" and "big shots." In the end, Kimmel says:

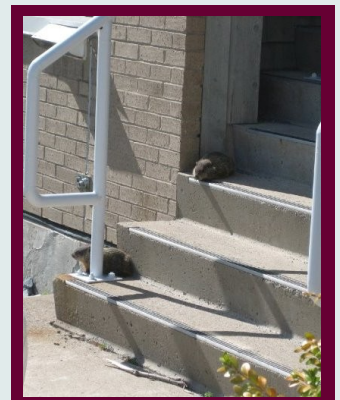
Guyland sells most guys a bill of goods telling them that a constellation of bad behaviours are the distilled essence of manhood, which could not be farther from the truth. We need, collectively and individually, in our relationships and families, schools and churches, shopping malls and freeways, to enable young guys to see through the façade and navigate a path toward adulthood. (23)

Guyland is a fascinating read for anyone who is involved with young men of this age group, in their personal or work lives, but it is also contains practical advice for helping young men become adults that would be of particular interest to student service professionals.



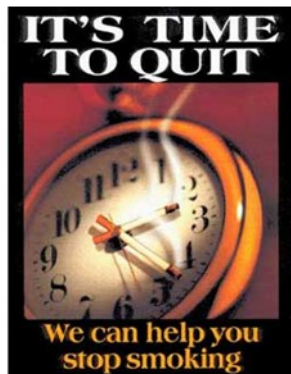
AACUSS Spring 2010 Conference Moment...

For those of us who were lucky enough to attend the Spring Conference at UNB Saint John, in addition to the wonderful hospitality, we were greeted by a family of furry critters on the walk from residence to breakfast, or morning yoga. This mother gopher, and little ones had made their home under some concrete steps.



A COLLABORATION PROJECT TO INTEGRATE SMOKING CESSATION INTO DAILY PRACTICE AT MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY

Cindy Crossman—Mount Allison University



The Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO) just released a document explaining how integrating smoking cessation interventions into Registered Nurses daily practice can have an impact on smoking cessation success. According to this document, tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of premature death and disease, and yet 18% of the population in Canada continues to smoke. In New Brunswick, the current smoking rate is higher than the national percentage at 20%.

At Mount Allison University, the smoking policy (as of effective January 1, 1990) is that there shall be no smoking at any time by anyone in any part of any University building, including student residence rooms and dons apartments. However, there are still a small percentage of students that continue to smoke.

As indicated in a study from the University of York in 1999, “brief advice from a health professional has been shown to decrease the proportion of people smoking by about two percent per year”. This year, Mount Allison University, health services area of the wellness Centre is pleased to be able to enter into a collaborative project with the community and the Regional Health Centre at Horizon Health to aim at addressing smoking cessation. The “ExTENDS Smoking Cessation Program” entails that each individual that the Registered Nurse /

Educator assess in the clinic at Mount Allison University be asked about their smoking status and engages in the conversation about smoking cessation and the ExTENDS program. Once the individual agrees to enter into the program, then they will be linked to the program facilitators in the community, who tailor the smoking cessation program and products to the needs and lifestyles of the individuals. The program works for the individual by providing the individual with a number of automated follow up phone calls that occur at day -7 quit date, 3 days post quit, then 14 days, 30 days, 60, 90, 120, 150 and 180 days post quit. So essentially, it's monthly follow up consultations for 6 months with the client. The automated calls take only a few minutes and it is an opportunity for a one on one follow up with individuals following the automatic calls based on the automated responses if there are any difficulties or struggles being encountered with the program. The other benefit of being in this program is that individuals are given a \$110.00 'smart card' to help them purchase smoking cessation products. They can use the “smart card” at any pharmacy all at once or in segments (but it does only go to smoking cessation products). This perk, obviously with the “smart card” might be a bit of incentive for those that are concerned with finances.



This collaboration project is a great fit with our current daily practice at the health services area of the Wellness Centre at Mount Allison University because each client receives a health record upon their first visit to the Centre which includes a health history and ongoing assessments at each visit so we feel that it is a good time to address smoking assessment status and a one on one consultation about the option of quitting smoking. As a component of general nursing practice, registered nurses, through their therapeutic relationship with the client, have the opportunity to discuss the care and treatment of those clients who still smoke. According to the RNAO document, titled, Integrating Smoking Cessation into Daily Practice: Nursing Knowledge in Action, 2010, if every registered nurse integrated a brief smoking cessation intervention with each client they see, the potential reach could impact greatly on smoking cessation outcomes.

In summary, integrating smoking cessation programs into daily practice by assessing smoking status of every client who opens a health record at health services sites is another generic way to combine a health and wellness strategies for the dissemination of wellness education and optimal wellness outcomes. Finally, as health care providers, and all student service providers, let's continue to be resourceful and bridge the links for referrals and community projects that may benefit our student's health and well being.

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Atlantic Association of College & University Student Services

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Andrew Harvey—Communications Officer

Hello everyone, and welcome to another edition of AACUSS talks.

This is my first edition of AACUSS Talks since becoming the Communications Officer at the Spring Conference at UNB Saint John. As many of you may recall (or not), I shook a lot of your hands, and made you promise me that you would submit something to AACUSS talks in the next year. I would like to thank the people for their fine submissions this time around, and the rest of you need to start writing! With technology these days, and AACUSS Talks now being digital, the possibilities are endless as to the type of content we can include. I would love to see more pictures, videos of your own programs or offices hard at work (or play), and anything you think might be of interest to fellow AACUSS colleagues.

AACUSS Talks is special to me for many reasons. I have had the wonderful opportunity of having several articles published in AACUSS Talks in the past four years of my young career in student services. This includes the first writing of mine to be published anywhere. This opportunity for the exposure, and experience of having an article published in a publication such as AACUSS Talks has been invaluable for a young professional such as myself. In addition to the added confidence of having your own work published, it looks great when your manager comes asking for a report on your activities!

So, please take the opportunity to share your work with others from around AACUSS. Young, and old, we should all be proud of the work we do at our institutions, and want to share it with our fellow AACUSS members. Through sharing our experiences, best-practices, and challenges, we all gain a better understanding of the diverse field of student services, and take something we can apply to our own job to make us even more fantastic than we were before.

To quote Aristotle: "*The whole is greater than the sum of its parts*". This is what AACUSS is to me. It is an amazing opportunity for people to come together to share themselves, and their work. When we share, we achieve things we never could individually. So, please consider sharing something for the next AACUSS Talks.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Harvey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.