

*The authors of this article have reviewed and completed a qualitative analysis of the first five years of the Colorado State University Journal of Student Affairs. The analysis included identifying key characteristics of authors, the types of themes and focus of the articles, and topics or issues in the field that have not been addressed by the authors writing for the Journal.*

# Themes of the First Five Years: A Qualitative Analysis of the Colorado State University Journal of Student Affairs

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## INTRODUCTION

Many, if not most, academic and professional journals publish articles that review and examine some aspect of the journal itself. The review is often on the content of the articles, authorship of the articles (Boisoneau, 1989) and other issues of interest to the journal and its audience. This year, the Colorado State University Journal of Student Affairs celebrates its sixth year of publication. The Journal's purpose is to publish articles "...for the student affairs generalist who has a broad responsibility for educational leadership, policy, staff development, and management ..." (Colorado State University Journal of Student Affairs, 1996). The purpose of this article is to review and examine the first five years of the Journal by providing a descriptive analysis of the Journal's authorship characteristics and content areas. More specifically, we asked the questions: Who are the authors of the Journal and what are their

professional roles, institutional affiliations, and genders? What are the topics being covered in the Journal? Which topics are associated with which author characteristics? And finally, what topics remain uncovered in the Journal that would be helpful to the student affairs generalist?

## METHOD

A qualitative approach was used to answer the above questions. For each article the author(s), the article title, and abstract (when available) was examined using the qualitative software HyperRESEARCH. In order to answer the questions of who are the authors and what are their characteristics, tallies were kept for the following major demographic variables: alumnus, faculty, staff, student, single or multiple authors, male, female, and Colorado State University affiliation at the time of submission. Yearly trends of author characteristics were examined by looking at the data on a volume by volume basis. In addition, each journal article title was given a descriptive code or topic code (i.e., gay career development) and then all topical codes were analyzed by using the process of constant comparative analysis (Glaser, 1978). A cross tabulation procedure was used to examine the authorship characteristics and topical categories. Finally, the list of student affairs topics addressed in the Journal was compared to the suggested topic list given to prospective writers by the Journal's editors.

## RESULTS

Authorship. Over the first five years, 64 different authors have contributed to the Journal (See Table 1). The authors represent four major university groups: students, staff, faculty, and alumni of Colorado State's Student Affairs in Higher Education program. As indicated in Table 1 some authors held multiple roles at the time of publication. The category of students as authors is the largest group, contributing 43.2 % of the articles. Alumni are the next largest group of contributors to the Journal (25.6%). Faculty and staff have contributed 16.2% and 14.8% of the articles, respectively. A majority of these authors (75%) are Colorado State University affiliates belonging to one or more of

the previously mentioned groups. With the exception of year 1996, gender representation has been relatively equal during the first five years of publication. Overall, females have authorship for 52% and males 48% of the articles. Of the 55 articles, a majority (76.4%) are written by single authors. Generally, the categories of gender, CSU vs. non-CSU affiliation, and single vs. multiple authorship remain consistent throughout the five years with only an occasional variation. In the university groups, however, there is a slight increase in student authorship and slight decrease in faculty authorship.

Topics. Over the first five years, the Journal has published 55 articles addressing nine topical themes (See Table 2). Approximately two-fifths (40%) of the articles focused on Issues of Diversity. Diversity issues covered a broad spectrum of concerns including: ethnic identity development, minority retention, multicultural awareness and training, international students, needs of at-risk black students, feminist perspectives, gender relations, men's issues, single-sex colleges, gay career development, Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual (GLB) identity development, and GLB student needs.

The second most common theme, Student Development Theory, was discussed in 20% of the articles. Authors addressed several different student development theories including: identity development, intellectual development, personal development, spiritual development, transition theory, and involvement theory.

The next three most common thematic categories were Student Affairs Administrative Issues, Student Affairs Programmatic Issues, and Selection, Preparation and On-Going Training of Student Affairs Personnel. Each of these categories constituted 13% of the articles. Administrative issues covered concerns such as student activism, legal issues, academic dishonesty, AIDS policy, and political correctness. In addition to student orientation, Student Affairs Programmatic issues included discussions related to study abroad, community development, and ropes courses. The last category of Selection, Preparation, and On-Going Training of Student Affairs Personnel addressed staff selection, staff training, and resident assistant burnout.

The remaining articles addressed four category themes: Need for Change, Ethics, Mental Health Issues, and Student Affairs Research Priorities.

Topics by Author Type. In response to the question of what topics are being addressed by what authors, it should be noted that most topics had a variety of author characteristics associated with them; however, one clear pattern did emerge. Except for two, the authors of the articles on Issues of Diversity were all students or recent graduates. One of two exceptions included a faculty member as only the third author in a multiple authorship article and the other diversity article not by a student was by a faculty member who wrote about feminist leadership. In addition, the majority of the diversity articles were written by students representative of the article's specific diversity category.

Topics Not Addressed by Journal Authors. As we reviewed the list of suggested topics of interest that the Journal makes available to prospective authors, we discovered that there are a number of areas (27 topics) that have not been addressed. Despite the large number of articles focusing on diversity, several groups have not received attention, for example, disabled students, first generation students, graduate students, and athletes. Articles relating to the community college setting have been absent. In addition, topics concerning student affairs administrative matters such as budgets, finances, policy development, and federal regulations have not attracted authors. Some of the missing topics seem more timely than others based on current campus issues. For example, articles concerning freedom of speech, campus morals, individual rights, community needs, and human relations practices in student affairs would seem to be timely articles for the campus community. These are topics that impact the work of student affairs professionals on a daily basis.

## **SUMMARY**

During the first five years, the Colorado State University Journal of Student Affairs has published a wide array of topics important to the student affairs generalist. In addition, the Journal is providing a forum for authors who represent different backgrounds and roles on campus and an opportunity for the development of new researchers and scholars in the field of student affairs. The Journal is not only managed by students, but students make up the largest

group of contributing authors. The student affairs field benefits both from the content of the articles published in the Journal as well as from the development of new scholars and researchers coming into the profession.

**REFERENCES**

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Table 2  
Themes of Colorado State University Journal of Student Affairs

<u>Topical Themes</u>	<u>Percentage of articles</u>	<u>Number of articles with</u>
	<u>with theme</u>	<u>theme</u>
Diversity		
Ethnic Diversity (11 articles)	40%	22
Gender Diversity (8 articles)		
Sexual Orientation (3 articles)		
Student Development Theory	20%	11
Student Affairs Administrative Issues	13%	7
Student Affairs Programmatic Issues	13%	7
Selection, Preparation, and On-Going Training of	13%	7
Student Affairs Personnel		
Need for Change	7%	4
Ethics	5%	3
Mental Health Issues	4%	2
Research Priorities in Student Affairs	2%	1

Note: Several articles expressed more than one theme; therefore, the total number of articles indicated in Table 2 exceed 55. Percentages of total articles, however, is based on the 55 total articles found in volumes I through IV.

Table 1  
Authors' Characteristics

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	TOTAL
ALUMNUS *						
FACULTY *	5	5	4	2	3	19
	1	3	3	3	2	12
STAFF *	1	4	2	2	2	11
	5	5	5	7	10	32
STUDENT *						

MALE	7	9	7	5	5	33
FEMALE	5	8	7	7	9	36
CSU AFFILIATION						
NON-CSU AFFILIATION	8	9	9	9	13	48
	4	8	5	3	1	21
SINGLE AUTHOR	10	7	8	10	10	45
	1	6	3	1	2	13
MULTIPLE AUTHOR						

\* Note: Some authors have more than one role (i.e., alumnus/staff).