

EDITORIAL

Preface by journal patron

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I recall the day the journal planners came to discuss the possibility of this journal with me. I welcomed it, because I was, and still am, convinced that this initiative will serve as a platform for student affairs in contemporary higher education to write about the scope, mandate and its focus, the idea being to look at the intersection between the curricular and co-curricular in the context of student learning and development. In Africa, there is still an opportunity for developing and sustaining a student affairs profession, and this idea whose time has come should be welcomed as part of the contribution to human development. Globally, this is a fully-fledged field where students pursue either a masters degree or doctoral studies. I would imagine that even though the journal's title is *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, this is not at the exclusion of others who might have valuable contributions to make as student affairs professionals in other countries.

As the journal infers, there is a dearth of student affairs professionalisation in Africa, as most student affairs leaders on the continent have come to this area through other professional routes and, if they have a qualification in student affairs, they have acquired such training from countries such as the US or through other training.

Some student affairs professional groups have sought to collaborate with US counterparts in developing student affairs capacity through lifelong learning short courses at given intervals, as well as sharing knowledge through conferences. There are also universities in the South, such as the University of the Western Cape (UWC), whose collaboration with California State University, Fullerton culminated in the introduction of the first PhD programme in student affairs at UWC since 2010, driven by the division of Student Development and Support, with academic coordination from the Faculty of Education.

Looking at contributions in this inaugural journal, it is worth noting that the theme is "the professionalisation of student affairs in Africa". This should serve as part of knowledge creation, addressing some complex challenges and engaging in discussions about student affairs, its place in higher education and its contribution to a wider society. It is appropriate for the continent to examine its own position in light of the diverse population of African students who access higher education.

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This journal should provide a space for conversations on matters relevant to student affairs – for example, how different African regions respond to their contextual realities – and reflect on those lessons for others to learn from. It would be interesting, for example, to read about how policy influences higher education, specifically student affairs, and what students’ experiences are on the African continent. As citizens of this continent, there is a general awareness that resources are stretched very thin among each country’s priorities. And despite this reality, students show resilience towards their studies.

It is envisaged that this journal will contribute to a further development of theoretical frameworks that are informed by an African reality and an understanding of the myriad challenges facing students. The role of student affairs is to create spaces of enabling development and support, to produce a graduate capable of functioning globally without losing a sense of local and national realities and perspectives, specific to the advancement of the African continent.

The space for this journal in the theatre of ideas is long overdue, and its potential for growth in the intellectual space is immense. Planners and the executive committees are encouraged to move forward unafraid of any challenge.

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