

## Cult of Convenience

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Fraternity/sorority advisors are having a difficult time exercising the grey matter between their ears. Why? Is it because we are less educated? Hardly. Is it because we are less competent? I don't believe that to be the case. Are we less passionate about our work? Far from it. I believe many fraternity/sorority advisors have used convenience as a crutch, and we are losing our ability think.

I wonder if you can identify with any of my following examples. On more than one occasion I have witnessed campus-based professionals using the UIFI facilitator manual as the basis of their own campus retreat. A quick browse through office websites and it is clear we often take another university's 5-Star accreditation, Pillars of Excellence program, or policy handbook and simply slap our own logo on it. Login and look for yourself, and you will find every single day our shared Facebook pages are filled with people seeking quick answers to complex problems. I even once saw a colleague try to give their own rendition of a very popular CAMPUSPEAK keynote.

Our copy-and-paste culture as a profession has many side effects, including the confusion between "best practices" and what are simply the most commonly replicated practices. Merriam-Webster's definition outlines that a best practice has been studied and researched to show exemplary results over time. A few examples are Dr. Kuh's High Impact Practices and the CollegeAIM alcohol interventions presented by National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. On the other a hand, commonly replicated practices are widely spread ideas, wrapped in hope, adopted with crossed fingers to be the fix to one of the many problems we face on our own campus. When we look at problems or solutions devoid of context, research, environment, and relationships we stop making good decisions because we are no longer challenging concepts and ideas. More importantly, we cheat our students, our institutions, and ourselves when we look for silver bullets rather than focus on the unique factors of our campus environment. Critical thinking and thoughtful inquiry need to be developed through practice and reflection, and it is my fear that as profession we are beginning to allow those skills and abilities to atrophy. Admittedly, both being proactive and reflective require time, a resource that is highly valued and often scarce within our field.

It goes without stating that fraternity/sorority advisors wear many hats and are expected to know the basics of many bodies of work, including risk management, organizational development, ethics, and basic business practices, to name a few. We should find knowledge

beyond our own field of work from the faculty and professional organizations that dedicate their full time to each of the hats we wear. We should be comfortable is saying, “My field does not have all the answers, and I need to seek out the experts.” It may also be helpful to derive inspiration from people beyond our field who share our same issues. To this point, I have recently found many great gems listening to the Camp Hacker podcast, which focuses on the tips-and-tricks to training college-aged summer camp counselors.

Many of our colleagues are doing outstanding work and they should absolutely inspire us. After inspiration should come thoughtful inquiry, where we challenge ourselves to learn about the factors that led to their success and determine if a similar opportunity exists within our own context. We should also be reminded that we role model the behavior we wish to see in our students, and if we enroll in the cult of convenience, we should not be surprised when they do too.

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