

## **SACSA Conversations Keynote Speech from the November 2008 Annual Conference\***

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I have been attending SACSA since 1981. I haven't made it to all conferences, but to most of them. So I have had a lot of "SACSA Conversations." In the interest of full disclosure, I need to tell you how many of my SACSA Conversations have started – with questions like: "Have you found the outlet malls?" "Did you bring a car?" "Did you do something different with your hair?" "Where did you get those shoes?" "When can we go somewhere for a drink?" "When can we go to the outlet mall?"

In today's speech, I am going to focus on three sets of SACSA Conversations: conversations from the last few days, conversations from SACSA's history, and recent conversations among SACSA's elected leaders. I will conclude with a brief discussion of the unique pressures facing SACSA today. As you listen, I would ask that you think about three questions: What does SACSA mean to you? Why do you choose SACSA? What should SACSA focus on for the future?

### Topic One: SACSA Conversations From the Last Few Days

In the last couple of weeks, I was already engaged in SACSA conversations. I received several e-mails saying "I'm hoping to see you at SACSA" or "I'm looking forward to seeing you at SACSA." Unfortunately, because of the economy this year, I received more e-mails saying "I'm sorry I won't be able to be at SACSA this year, so let me bring you up to date on what's happening in my life."

Because of Georgia's budget cutbacks, I missed the first two days of the conference, but with 27 years behind me, I can guess how a lot of SACSA conversations started: "How's the job?" "Is the situation with your boss any better?" "How's your family?" "How was the wedding?" "Did you bring pictures?" "How's the dissertation going?" "How's the job search going?" Or maybe, they started out with, "I'm sorry to hear about the job loss – or the death – or the divorce – or the campus tragedy." I imagine that some conversations have just been pure gossip, but fun. I am sure there have been important conversations - about how to solve a campus problem, or how to solve an office problem, or how to implement a new program. This brings me to my second topic.

### Topic Two: Conversations from SACSA's History

We will have to imagine most of these conversations. Fortunately we have some good source materials. I am most grateful to Garth Jenkins for his 1972 dissertation that captured much of the detail from the first 22 years of SACSA's history. I also found helpful articles by Barbara Mann and Robert Schwartz, Francis Pearson and Robert Bowman, and Phyllis McCluskey-Titus. Finally, B.J. Mann's 2007 dissertation captured recent SACSA conversations. And, because I wanted to give you a context for conversations in the world around SACSA, I owe a debt of gratitude to Google for various facts and trivia.

So, come back with me to the days of yesteryear. Pretend like you're on the *Life on Mars* television show, but rather than waking up in 1973, you've woken up in 1949. What is happening in the world around you? You're listening to music by Doris Day, Bing Crosby, Miles Davis, Frank Sinatra, and Fats Domino. The first Emmy Awards are held that year. In Washington, Joseph McCarthy is branding celebrities as communists. In two important pieces of Southern history, the Charlotte Motor Speedway holds its first NASCAR race; and in Drew, Mississippi, Archie Manning is born, which does not make headlines, but bodes well for the futures of Oxford and Knoxville.

The GI Bill is five years old. Two years earlier, the Truman Commission released a report called Higher Education for American Democracy that called for expanding access and affordability of higher education. The American Council on Education has just released an update of the 1937 *Student Personnel Point of View*.

And what is happening on the campus of Alabama Polytechnic Institute (also known as Auburn)? A graduate student named Stanley Jones sent 50 postcards to ACPA members in the South, asking if they were interested in establishing a "Southern Regional ACPA." He got 20 positive responses to his postcards, and at the 1950 ACPA in Atlantic City, New Jersey, there was an organizational meeting for this association. That means that, technically, SACSA was founded in New Jersey, which is hard to envision. Thirty-four people attended the organizational meeting, and they created a steering committee of 10 people. It is significant to note that the steering committee included one black member and three women.

Now many of you probably assumed that SACSA originated from NASPA, not ACPA, right? Well, if it had, one thing would have been different – there would have been no women on that steering committee. Why? Because in 1950, NASPA was still the National Association of Deans of Men.

The first couple of years, the association was called *Southern Regional ACPA* or *Southern ACPA*. In 1952, the association settled into the name of *Southern College Personnel Association*, or SCPA, which it would keep for 30 years. The first conference was held at Vanderbilt University on November 6 & 7, 1950, with 72 members in attendance, including 12 from historically black colleges. Lysle Croft of the University of Kentucky was elected as president.

It appears that the first constitution was adopted in 1952. It had three committees – Nominating, Program, and Membership. The dues were \$1.00 per year. The initial objectives included the promotion of regional conferences, the formulation and maintenance of professional standards, the promotion of research, and the dissemination among all educational workers of the *Student Personnel Point of View*.

Let's skip ahead a couple of years to 1954: In Washington, the Supreme Court heard *Brown v. Board of Education* and ruled that laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students were unconstitutional. At the conference that year, although most sessions were about specific functional areas, the 1954 conference had the first interest session that discussed whether or not student personnel was a profession. That year association leaders sent surveys to 72 college presidents, requesting information about how student personnel services were organized on their campuses, what kind of training student personnel staff had, and what portion of the budget was devoted to student personnel services.

1955 was significant for two reasons: First, SCPA elected its first woman president, Melvene Hardee of Florida State University. This was many years before our national professional associations had women presidents. Dr. Hardee was a major force in SCPA, and I could do a whole speech about her, but time does not permit. Second, 1955 was a turning point in race relations for SCPA. The conference was held in Atlanta. Until that time blacks and whites met together for the conference, which was highly unusual in the region, but they were housed separately. According to Jenkins:

Mills reported that, at the Atlanta meeting, a black member of SCPA, Samuel L. Gandy of Dillard University, was stranded late one night on the streets of downtown Atlanta. On several occasions, he was refused service by taxis driven by white men. This incident so incensed those participating in the conference that the commitment was made at that point to meet only where all SCPA members would be housed together. (1972, pp. 56-57)

It was a couple of years before they were actually able to fulfill that commitment, in 1957, in Miami Beach, at the Delano Hotel.

1956 brought about the first test of *Brown v. Board* in higher education, when the University of Alabama was forced to admit Autherine Lucy, a black student. Ms. Lucy actually enrolled, but lasted only three days because of the hostility on campus. It would be five years before the major Southern flagship institutions admitted blacks again, and seven years before Alabama did.

In 1958, the keynote address was on “The Changing South.” At the 1959 conference, SCPA formalized the commitment to racially integrated housing – the minutes cite the commitment made at the 1955 Atlanta meeting and adopt a policy of full inclusion in housing all SCPA members at future meetings. This commitment was mentioned in the minutes of the meetings for the next 10 years.

As the decade closed, the conversations were about how to improve the association. In 1959, SCPA celebrated its tenth anniversary in Gatlinburg. The Executive Council thought it was time to re-evaluate the association’s purposes and goals. Members were asked to contact officers and give them their ideas, and a one-day meeting was held after the conference. What were the topics of those conversations? Concerns of large and small schools, research, redefining the original goals and objectives of the association, the size of membership, communication with members, the organizational structure of association, summer workshops, and relationships with other organizations were part of the discussions. Listen carefully to the rest of this speech, because you will hear some of these topics come up again and again.

Let’s move out of the 1950’s and into the 1960’s and hit a few highlights. In 1960, the number one song was *Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?* by the Shirelles. That was also the year the Beatles were formed. Not surprisingly, the decade of the 1960’s saw a big increase in interest sessions about student behavior. The decade would be marked by campus turmoil, the sexual revolution, major federal legislation and court cases, and the demise of *in loco parentis*. Fortunately, our colleagues in the 1960’s had great music to help them cope.

In 1960, the SCPA conference made history beyond the organization, when they met at the Motor House Hotel in Williamsburg, Virginia. It was the first organization to ever hold a racially integrated meeting in Williamsburg. The conference theme was *Changing Perspectives of Student Personnel Administration*.

What were some news stories that might have been the subjects of SCPA conversations at the 1960 conference? On October 29, in Louisville, Kentucky, Cassius Clay wins his first professional fight. On October 30, Michael Woodruff performs the first successful kidney transplant in the United Kingdom. On November 8, John Kennedy defeats Richard Nixon for President.

In 1961, in the landmark case, *Dixon v Alabama State Board of Education*, the Fifth Circuit Court first recognized the due process rights of students. Other court cases followed recognizing student rights as adults. Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes enrolled as the first black students at University of Georgia.

In 1962 James Meredith integrated the University of Mississippi. The 1962 conference theme was *New Directions: A Climate of Change* and the keynote was: "The Emerging South" Just days before the conference, the Cuban Missile crisis occurs, reminding Americans of our vulnerability.

In 1963, Harvey Gantt enrolled as the first black student at Clemson. That same year, a second attempt was made to integrate the University of Alabama. George Wallace made his famous stand in the schoolhouse door at Foster Auditorium. It was largely symbolic and choreographed, and Wallace stepped aside and James Hood and Vivian Malone enrolled. On that same day, with no fanfare, Robert Muckel enrolled as the first white student at Alabama A & M. The 1963 conference keynote was "The South Faces the Future."

In 1964, the *Civil Rights Act* became law. We were also solidly into the Vietnam War, which would dominate the news until 1973. 1964 wins my award for the best conference theme, *This is the Week that was in the Year that is for the Tomorrow that may be*.

In 1965, the *Higher Education Act* became law. In Starkville, Richard Holmes enrolled as Mississippi State's first black student. Maybe our members were feeling battered by all the changes around them, because the 1965 conference theme seems more introspective than previous years: *The Four I's: Information, Improvement, Inspiration, and Me*.

Just weeks before the 1966 conference, Charles Whitman climbed onto the observation deck at the University of Texas, and opened fire, killing 14 and wounding 31. In 1966, amidst continuing demonstrations on campuses, the American Association of University Professors published a draft *Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students*. At the conference, SCPA discussed the Joint

Statement, and offered support, stating that “rights of faculty and administrators are inseparable and interrelated with rights of students (Jenkins, 1972, p. 90).” The 1966 program theme was *Ferment and Issues in Student Personnel Work*. That was the first year there was a conference interest session about drugs, and the year when SCPA first began posting jobs in the newsletter.

The 1968 conference theme was *Power Perspective on the College Campus*, and there were five different sessions about power issues between students and administrators. Also, in 1968, William Perry published his theory of intellectual development.

That was followed in 1969, by Chickering’s theory of psychosocial development, published in *Education and Identity*. The association seems grateful to have survived the drama and trauma of the decade, with the calm 1969 conference theme of *Environment for Growth, Prospect, and Retrospect*.

As another decade drew to a close, the Executive Council decided it was time to re-examine the Association. They surveyed SCPA members, with responses from 199 of 500 members. When asked why they were members, 80% indicated it was to keep informed in the profession, 71% said to maintain contacts with colleagues and friends, and 65% said to develop expertise. When asked why they attended the conference, 68% responded that it was because of an interesting program, and 50% said it was to see friends and colleagues. So, I’m guessing that, despite all the turmoil in the surrounding world, some conversations in 1969 started out like the ones in 2008: “How’s the job?” “How’s your family?” “I have a problem on my campus I could use some help with.” “I’m doing something on my campus that I want to share.”

Let’s move into the 1970’s where Vietnam finally ended, the Beatles broke up, and college students were accused of being apathetic. This was the generation described by Arthur Levine in *When Dreams and Heroes Died*. In 1970 the number one song was *Layla* by Derek & the Dominoes, and that was the year that the *Doonsebury* comic strip debuted. Student unrest had not stopped yet – during a protest in 1970, two students at Jackson State University were killed by police. As SCPA members prepared for the 1970 conference, they continued to read about Vietnam in their newspapers, although the war was slowly drawing to a close.

The 1970 conference theme was *Student Personnel Work: Profession in Process*. That was the first time there was a placement service at the conference. Four days after the 1970 conference, a fatal airplane accident claims the lives of 37 players

and five coaches from the Marshall University football team. And I am betting that SCPA members reached out to comfort their colleagues at Marshall, as we always do in times of campus tragedy.

In 1971, SCPA elected its first black president, Joseph A. Payne, Jr., Dean of Students at Tennessee State University. Again, it would be several years before our national counterparts had a black president.

In 1972, *Title IX of the Education Amendments* became law. The conference theme was *Student Development: A Challenge to Academia*. That is also the year that Garth Jenkins completed his excellent dissertation at Auburn, which allowed me to present such a rich history of our association's early years to you. His dissertation included recommendations about better about preserving our history, broadening the financial base to include exhibits and advertising, more involvement in contemporary issues of postsecondary education student development as a profession, greater national exposure in national publications, incorporating the Research Committee into the bylaws, more contact between SCPA and its members, and better affiliation with graduate preparation programs. The recommendations concluded with the statement, "Given the presently great demands on a professional organization, the feasibility of paid, administrative support on a full or part-time basis should be studied."

Unfortunately, Dr. Jenkins' dissertation ended with the year 1972, so I do not have as much detail for the next 37 years. I reconstructed it mostly from *The College Student Affairs Journal* (originally the *Southern College Personnel Association Journal*) which began seven years later. We know that in the 1970's student behavior issues continued to be popular conference program topics. We also saw an increase in programs on management issues. And the concept of diversity seemed to be expanding, with more programs on diverse populations, including programs on nontraditional students, veterans, women, married students, graduate students, and students with disabilities.

In 1973, SCPA created a "Blue Ribbon Task Force" on the future of the association. Recommendations included raising dues, sending a monthly mimeographed "press-o-gram" to members, extending placement services, providing more opportunities for member involvement, and continuing discussion of establishing a central office.

Members at the 1974 conference were likely talking about the nation, as Nixon had resigned 11 weeks earlier. The energy crisis of the mid-1970's probably led to conversations among association leaders about whether delegates could find

gas to get to the conference – but they did. In 1977, the first interest session was held on the concerns of gay/lesbian students, as was the first session on alcohol. I find it interesting that the first session on alcohol was 11 years after the first session on drugs. On Nov. 4, 1979, Iran took 52 U.S. diplomats hostage, again reminding our nation of our vulnerability.

In the 1970s NASPA Region 3 started having “Update” meetings just prior to SCPA, partly in an effort to reach out to chief student affairs officers. The hope was that it would increase CSAO participation in SCPA, but that did not always happen, as many CSAOs did not stay for all or part of the SCPA Conference.

As the 1970’s came to a close, SCPA reached another landmark – in 1979, they published the first issue of the *Southern College Personnel Association Journal*, as a result, the *College Student Affairs Journal* celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary at this conference. The front cover had the motto, “The Future Is Now.” It included mostly short (3-4 pages) articles.

Let’s move into the 1980’s. As we begin the decade, the top five songs are by Pink Floyd, Diana Ross, Barbra Streisand, Lipps Inc., and John Lennon. What are the headlines SCPA members are likely discussing at the conference? They are probably discussing the Presidential election: Iran is still holding the hostages, and Reagan defeated Carter that week. They might be talking about the TV show *Dallas*, as it was just two weeks before the season finale that left us wondering who shot J.R.

The decade of the 1980’s continued to see an increase in programs about diversity, and for the first time we began seeing presentations on personal issues such as wellness, stress management, and personal financial management. In 1982, the name was changed from the Southern College Personnel Association to the Southern Association of Student Affairs Professionals, to make it clear that we were student affairs professionals. That gave us the unfortunate acronym of SACSAP, so the P was dropped and we became SACSA – the Southern Association for College Student Affairs.

The journal name was changed to the *College Student Affairs Journal*. The journal published a wide range of articles throughout the decade, on topics including housing, counseling, placement office, student characteristics, CSAOs, staff development, law enforcement, health services, student academic success, alcohol, student development, student governments, managing budget restrictions, gender roles, working with business officers, salary surveys, fundraising, adult students, wellness, student death, campus design, mediation,



discipline systems, personality types, athletes, the student hook-up culture, and learning disabilities.

As we moved into the 1990's the top five songs were by Sinéad O'Connor, Madonna, Vanilla Ice, MC Hammer, and Enigma. This would be when I stopped listening to popular music and started looking for classic rock stations. *The College Student Affairs Journal* began to publish more complex articles in the 1990's, on topics such as sexual harassment, the CAS standards, diversity, international students, graduate students, rape, gender issues, the First Amendment, doctoral programs, sexual orientation, African American identity development, AIDS, Greek students, violence against women, developmental theories, eating disorders, professional burnout, community service, partnering with faculty, family disintegration, staff development, legal issues, and technology.

In the weeks before the 1990 conference, the *Americans with Disabilities Act* passed, and the United States entered the Gulf War. In 1991, we came into the conference talking about the Atlanta Braves, who had gone from "worst to first" to make it to the World Series. I actually remember many conversations about another topic – on November 7, while we were at the conference, Magic Johnson announced he had AIDS. It challenged our stereotypes about AIDS, made us admire his courage, and helped our campus programs about safe sex because it got students' attention. The 1991 conference also had the first session about technology.

By the 1993 conference, the web was just becoming widely available and changing the way we communicated, although I do not think many of us could imagine today's communication environment. In 1994, the American College Personnel Association adopted the *Student Learning Imperative*.

In 1997, NASPA Region III discontinued the annual Update meeting prior to the SACSA Conference. It would be seven years before the two associations would renew their partnership for the November conference.

In 2000, I continued to listen to classic rock, as the top artists of the year were Eminem, Faith Hill, N Sync, Santana, and Britney Spears. As we left the 2000 conference, we assumed we would know by the time we got home whether Bush or Gore would be our next President, but that was before we knew about hanging chads and that all that Electoral College discussion in Political Science class really was important.

Also in 2000 Jim Conneely chaired a Blue Ribbon Task Force on SACSA's future. The group completed a long and complex document. One outcome was SACSA's Core Values – diversity, dedication, networking, participation/volunteerism, expertise, collegiality, affordability, history, fun-loving, rituals, professional development, inclusiveness, regional pride, and stewardship. The Task Force had conversations about our strengths of collegiality, professional development, service, the annual conference, our rich history, affordability, good senior leaders, preparation program support, inclusiveness, and members; and about weaknesses of members, history (either we forget it, or we pay it too much attention), finances, conference programs, mission and planning, leadership concerns, structural issues, lack of technology usage, and communication with members. They recommended that we restructure the Executive Council to create more of a career ladder; employ an Executive Director; develop a marketing plan and financial plan; and develop a comprehensive technology plan. The report led to appointing Joe Buck as our part-time Executive Director.

In this decade we have seen more special issues of *The College Student Affairs Journal*, on topics such as staffing, building community; faith, spirituality, and religion on campus; balancing personal and professional lives; and difficult dialogues. We have seen an explosion of technology that has changed the way we communicate. At the SACSA conference, that means you can sit in the back row of the opening session and do e-mail or keep up with a football game on your telephone screen, but it has much more profound implications about how we respond to each other and our students.

Less than two months before the 2001 conference, 9/11 happened. SACSA members did not have time to grieve, because we were busy taking care of our campuses. I was in charge of the program booklet that year, and this is what I wrote on the inside cover:

As this program booklet goes to press the nation is still struggling with the aftermath of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and United Flight 93. Student affairs professionals continue to work with students and campus leaders to respond to many issues related to these tragedies. Whether helping organize blood drives, fundraisers, prayer and remembrance services, and educational forums; responding to the psychological and spiritual needs of students; helping create safer campus climates for students who feel vulnerable; clarifying withdrawal and refund policies for students associated with the military; responding to legal challenges related to increased security measures; or contemplating budget cuts

related to economic uncertainty - student affairs professionals from throughout the region and nation have relied on our invaluable network of professional colleagues during these challenging times. As we mourn those who died, grieve with those who lost loved ones, celebrate those who emerged as heroes, and wonder about our future, we continue to draw strength from our enduring friendships.

SACSA leaders were concerned that 9-11 would affect conference attendance, and thought it could wipe us out financially. The conference was a bit smaller than normal, but turned out fine. And it was actually a great place for us to all re-connect and get some respite from our weeks of worry and caregiving.

Bob Glenn chaired a Task Force on our relationship with NASPA Region III, that resulted in an agreement that brought them back into the conference in 2004 in Myrtle Beach.

Two months before the 2005 conference, Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast and New Orleans and damaged several member institutions. The strength of our profession again became clear, as we jumped in to help displaced students, colleagues, and families. Many of us eagerly anticipated coming to the conference to talk with each other. And our colleagues whose campuses were hit wasted no time educating us about what they had learned from their experiences.

And last year, we discussed what we had learned from the Virginia Tech tragedy.

In 2007, BJ Mann completed her dissertation at Mississippi State University. As part of that she conducted focus groups with conference participants. When asked why they joined SACSA, they indicated it had been when they began their graduate program or started a new position and were influenced by professors and supervisors. When asked about the positive aspects of affiliation with SACSA, they cited networking, close-knit group that develops close friendships, and SACSA's supportive and nurturing environment. When asked about negative aspects, they discussed the difficulty in breaking in to the association, that it is sometimes cliquish, and that there is some haziness about how you move up. Senior level staff indicated that they do not find programs useful to them.

Today's headlines are about the troubled economy and a historic presidential election. This brings me to the third topic.

### Topic Three: Recent Conversations by SACSA's Elected Leaders

I asked some current and past Executive Council members about SACSA conversations, past, present and future, and here are some things I heard: They were very open and honest, and raised a few provocative questions. Most comments were about SACSA itself. They are proud of our heritage of diversity, our development of young professionals, how we enhance our profession, networking, our support for each other, and SACSA's values. They are concerned about membership numbers and how we can address that. They ask, as a generalist organization, how do we compete with the more specific organizations? How do we attract more sponsors and partners?

They express concern about how we can engage members in the way they say they want to be involved. They continue to discuss the conversations that SACSA is a great family, but sometimes acts like a clique. One person expressed concern that there is less commitment to SACSA among younger members – that perhaps they love the conference but don't love the association. They are concerned about recruiting and developing leaders of the association.

Several believe that we need to continue to discuss our partnership with NASPA Region III. Some wonder if it is time we merged. We have a unique situation with an independent regional association that shares the same geography as a NASPA region, which creates confusion at times.

They believe that we need to make a decision about our executive structure when Joe Buck retires, whether to hire another person or hire a management firm. There is concern that we do not have the resources to do either. You will recall that over and over in our history, we have had discussions about whether it is time to go with paid association staff. Related to that, they are asking questions about whether we should increase or re-structure dues, or whether it is time for SACSA to "go away" permanently, become just a conference, restructure, or expand the region? There is continued concern about the recruitment and involvement of senior student affairs officers. There is concern that we are over-emphasizing new professionals and losing mid-level and senior members.

A couple of leaders responded with a different approach, stating that the conversations SACSA should be having are not about SACSA, but about the profession. One person thinks we should be talking about our role in the national conversations about student learning, and how we create and disseminate knowledge in this dramatically changing world. Another believes

that SACSA should serve as a catalyst to encourage the profession to fully focus on our respective institutional missions, and that we need to encourage people to understand the value of collaborative approaches with academic affairs in working with students.

I will conclude with a brief discussion of what I think are the unique pressures facing SACSA today. There are many, but I will mention three:

The first pressure I would identify is technology. Yes, technology has made information sharing much more convenient. The fact that I could Google things like the news headlines of 1949 or the number one song in 1960, speaks to the amazing powers of technology. But, because all of our members live in such technologically sophisticated worlds, they expect much more of a professional association than we expected even just a few years ago. They get irritated if they can't go to the website and find a member's name and contact information, or the conference schedule, or statistics about membership, or whatever other question is on their mind. They want immediate answers to questions that we once would have been happy to wait a few weeks for. Also, because of e-mail, we can keep in touch with distant professional colleagues daily. Whereas there was a time we caught up with each other's lives at the annual conference, now we are able to do that sitting in our own desks at opposite ends of the region. So, is the networking aspect of the SACSA conference obsolete? Or, is it more important than ever, to get us away from our computers and face to face with our colleagues?

The second pressure is related to technology - the time pressures on our members. In this world of the internet, pagers, cell phones, and blackberries, we are bombarded with information and reachable 24/7/365. What does this mean for SACSA? It probably means that professionals have less time to attend to the needs of running a professional association. And it may mean that we have less time to be thoughtful about things - about the issues of the day, about the issues of SACSA. On the other hand, it may mean that SACSA has an even more important role than ever in our lives. Several years ago at the Mid Managers Institute, Fred Rhodes introduced us to the book *Sabbath*, by Wayne Muller. Muller discusses the concept of applying the concept of Sabbath beyond its religious meanings, of attending to our need to honor life's rhythms of rest and work, and taking regular time to disconnect from the world and return refreshed - Sabbath minutes, or Sabbath days, or Sabbath weeks. The SACSA conference has always been one of my own Sabbaths, a time to disconnect from the office a few days and re-connect with friends and colleagues, a time to reflect on my life and my profession. And, because it's regional, I almost always drive, which gives me extra reflection time.

Finally, a pressure facing SACSA is competition from other sources. Whereas once there were a handful of sources of professional information and development, now we are deluged with offers. There has always been competition with ACPA, NASPA, and various specialty associations. Now there are also private, for-profit ventures. In the last week alone, I received 15 web communications offering me opportunities for professional development – through conferences, webcasts, and publications – on topics including law and policy, threat assessment and risk management, campus safety, FERPA, the Clery Act, college student values, managing campus crises, helping sophomores find their way, transfer students, students with disabilities, nontraditional students, and social justice. And that’s not counting the latest issues of *About Campus*, *Leadership Exchange*, the *Pavela Report*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* still sitting unread, or the daily news update I get from NACUBO. I get more opportunities for professional development in most weeks than Stanley Jones probably had in a full year in 1949. I wish I could say that all of this makes me feel more enlightened, but some days it just feels like so much clutter. So, how does SACSA cut through the clutter to get our attention? What does SACSA have to offer that we can’t get from all these other mechanisms? What is our niche? Who is our audience? Do we need to be a big association of 1,000 members, or a great association for 500 members?

At the beginning of this speech, I asked you to think about what SACSA should focus on for the future. I think it may be time for SACSA to make some difficult choices.

I have taped on my wall an excerpt from an article by Richard Borden in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*:

My first position after graduate school was a postdoctoral fellowship in psychology at Ohio State University, with Bibb Latane’. . . One day as we were discussing long-range research goals, he asked if I ever played the game 20 Questions. “Yes,” I said. “Then you know, he replied, “that by asking questions judiciously, you can narrow down the whole universe and get the answer. Or you can ask them in an unconnected way and get nowhere.” He continued, “That’s how it is with life. Essentially, we have time to do 20 or so things well. If we choose our questions carefully, they can be parlayed into much more – or we can piddle around in separate puddles.” Bibb’s analogy has been a reminder ever since to stay focused on major initiatives and mindful of how diverse accomplishments can add up. (page B9, July 8, 2005)

As we think about SACSA's future, I suggest that we think about the things that we can do really well – and focus our efforts on those. And 20 are probably too many for a regional, volunteer association. It may be three or five or seven things.

Today, SACSA's leaders are having conversations about the financial health of the association, how to involve members and develop leaders, and the purpose and future of the association. Today, SACSA members are having conversations about how to do our jobs and stay sane in a dramatically changing world, job security, how to chart our personal and professional lives, and how to make our campuses better for students and staff. We have struggled with these difficult issues for almost six decades. And we have handled them with grace, thoughtfulness, courage, and good spirits. I have faith that we will continue to do so. We frequently have difficult dialogues on our campuses with our students. Let us use those same skills to have difficult dialogues with one another about SACSA's future.

Below is a partial list of references to documents used in this speech. Since this was delivered as a speech rather than as a research article no efforts were made to assure that all documents noted in the body were cited in the reference list below. Please contact the Author if you are unable to find a reference referred to in the text

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\* (Because this was provided as a conference speech rather than as a research article strict adherence to APA style was not used as a requirement)