

Vice Chair for Convention Experience

The Convention Experience team promotes professional development through leadership opportunities and networking connections for graduate students and new professionals within ACPA at the Annual Convention. By utilizing programming, scholarships, and recognition, the Convention Experience team will create a memorable experience for those involved and highlight the Community of Practice's mission and year-round work for other Convention attendees.

Candidates

Cole Verbeten

Gender Pronouns: he/him

Institution or Organization: UW-Stevens Point

Title/Position: Residence Hall Director

Classification: Graduate Student and New Professional

Please tell us about your interest in applying for a leadership position for the Graduate Students and New Professionals Community of Practice and elaborate on the vision and goals you have for the position(s) you're interested in and the areas they oversee.

First, I am interested in applying for a leadership position for the Graduate Students and New Professionals Community of Practice because I want to continue to give back to the CoP that has given me so much already. From the new connections I've made to the support and community I've felt, GSNP has provided me with so much. As Vice Chair for Convention Experience, I would love to see more ways for GSNP to be actively engaged in convention. Often times, graduate students and new professionals attend convention and feel a sense of revival for the student affairs profession. However, it can be HARD to be a new professional in student affairs. You may feel a sense of confusion for why you are doing what you do or even, sadly, begin to feel apathy for the profession and eventually leave. I truly believe that when we, as student affairs professionals, can be in community with others who are in a similar stage of our career as ourselves, we continue to do the work that we enjoy doing. With that, I believe a more robust experience of getting those graduate students and new professionals who are not involved with GSNP, but at convention to be involved in GSNP is something I envision for the Vice Chair for Convention Experience. This could be by holding more socials through our Convention Ambassadors coordinator(s), networking opportunities through the Special Events coordinator(s), or even partnering with the Foundation to help create more opportunities for graduate students and new professionals to attend convention through the Awards and Scholarships coordinator(s). Overall, I would love to encourage more graduate students and

new professionals at convention to become a part of GSNP. I truly believe GSNP is like cake because once you taste it once, you can't not have more of it in the future.

Please tell us about your previous leadership experience within the Graduate Students and New Professionals Community of Practice. How has this experience prepared you for the position(s) you are applying for? Feel welcome to also speak of leadership experience outside of the CoP and how it will prepare you for the position(s).

Currently, I serve as one of the Coordinators for Convention Ambassadors and previously I have been a Convention Intern for the International Office. These experiences alongside my current position as a Residence Hall Director prepared me to be Vice Chair for Convention Experience. As one of the Coordinator for Convention Ambassadors, I have had the opportunity to work on one of the various ways this area helps to engage graduate students and new professionals at convention. This position also works in conjunction with the other coordinators in Convention Experience to help provide a robust experience at convention. Overall, this had led me to formulate how each area in Convention Experience is separate, but also works with each other. As a Convention Intern, I gained experience in seeing how convention works behind the scenes. It allowed me to gain connections with IO staff as well as other graduate students and new professionals who have been, and can be, invaluable to a good convention experience for all. Lastly, as a Residence Hall Director, I currently oversee 14 student staff members and their job performance. This has given me skills to become an effective, adaptive leader which I would be able to use as Vice Chair in overseeing coordinators. Though, I would like to believe the coordinators would be better than my student staff in getting things done that they need to. Overall, these three experiences have given me skills that allow me to lead well and have strong knowledge about convention which is important to have as the Vice Chair for Convention Experience.

As you know, ACPA has a bold Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization. Please speak to what you know of the Imperative and how you see the work of the Graduate Students and New Professionals Community of Practice supporting the Imperative.

The Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization (SIRJD) is so important to use in our work of GSNP. Just like the SIRJD, I see the work of GSNP CoP being centered around love. Student affairs is not an easy field to be a part of; however, having love for some aspect of what you do is important. In GSNP, our work can be centered around the love for those entering the field of student affairs. The work we do should use the tenets of the SIRJD like watching out for each other, questioning the knowledge we use, and responsibility rather than compliance. I believe as graduate students and new professionals we do this already, yet it is still important to keep that going and then do some more. For example, it is important to know, when looking at developing a convention experience, what lens we are coming from and questioning why we want to do the things we do. Is there some way we could include the knowledge and experiences of those in minoritized cultures to be the convention experience? Most likely, yes! In addition to that, there is almost always a way for the ways we do things to become more

equitable and we must strive to do that as well. The work of GSNP must support the SIRJD because we are the future of student affairs, and if we don't, who will? If we don't now, what precedent are we setting for future generations to become better? In my opinion, it's not a matter of that our work should support the SIRJD, but it must.

These roles require advocacy for the field's graduate students and new professionals. Please tell us about your previous experience working with or advocating for graduate students and new professionals outside of the Graduate Students and New Professionals Community of Practice and how you would integrate these unique needs and experiences into work within the CoP.

Although it is not a singular experience, in my position as a Residence Hall Director I am continually advocating for the graduate students and new professionals that work in this role to have better working standards and respect. This has looked like advocating for an easier way for us to get across campus while we are on duty to make it more accessible for all. It has also looked like sharing my thoughts and opinions with those that can make change about the relationships we have with campus partners like our Dean of Students office. This has allowed us to improve processes as well as better our relationship between the two areas. Although I may not have a lot of experience in this area, this is an area I would love to grow in.

How would the role(s) you are interested in align with your professional goals?

The role of Vice Chair for Convention Experience aligns with my professional goals as I would like to eventually move into an Assistant Director position or a role that oversees other professionals. Although this position, and the positions it oversees, are voluntary, it would give me experience in developing my skills in becoming an effective leader of professional staff. In addition to that, I would like to continue to be involved in ACPA and one day serve on Leadership Council and possibly even as ACPA President one day. Being Vice Chair for Convention Experience would allow me to develop skills to be successful in positions on Leadership Council one day as well as allow me to continue to give back to the organization that means so much to me and has given me my professional home.

Please speak to your time and energy management, and project management skills and how you believe these will serve you within the position(s) you are applying for.

My time and energy management is something I take great pride in as a full-time professional and full-time graduate student. Speaking to time management, I use my Outlook calendar as the place to manage what I do when including my personal obligations. This allows me to get a complete look at my day and what time I have to do things that aren't scheduled but also need to get done. These items are kept in a to do list through Outlook as well. I also ensure to schedule myself time to do things I need for organizations like ACPA or grad school too. My energy management skills look a bit different than my time management. I truly believe that energy management is all about balance/opposites. For example, if one day I am very busy and do a lot, the next day possible I make sure I do the opposite by taking time for me to relax and

center myself. In addition to that, I also ensure this happens by communicating openly and honestly with those around me. People can not be aware of what you can and cannot do unless you tell them, so I try my best to communicate why I may be showing up the way I am in that moment. Lastly my project management skills involve creating a timeline of things that need to be done. After that is complete, I put those due dates in my calendar and set reminder events to ensure that they are complete. If it is a task that I do not need to complete, I still continue to do this to help others as well as remind them of it if needed. These skills will serve me within the Vice Chair for Convention Experience because it requires a lot of planning leading up to convention and then execution at convention. I will take the skills I currently do and apply to the Vice Chair role to ensure that everything goes smoothly and successfully.

Maddy Wilson

Gender Pronouns: she/her

Institution or Organization: Boise State University

Title/Position: Student Organizations Coordinator

Classification: New Professional

Please tell us about your interest in applying for a leadership position for the Graduate Students and New Professionals Community of Practice and elaborate on the vision and goals you have for the position(s) you're interested in and the areas they oversee.

I am applying for all three available leadership positions – Chair, Vice Chair for Networking, and Vice Chair for Convention Experience – within the Graduate Students and New Professionals Community of Practice. In the past three years, I have held directorate board positions within three different committees, each providing me with valuable knowledge and skills that would contribute to my leadership as a Chair or Vice Chair. ACPA is my professional home, and the GSNPCoP community is the reason I have felt belonging not only in the organization but also the field of student affairs, generally. My passion for this work and the connections I have made drive me to return to the directorate board each year. The leadership of this board has built my confidence and secured my value as an educator; I want to make other graduate students and new professionals feel the same.

Below I have created a proposal for how I would approach each available position in leadership. I wrote a vision statement that captures my aspirational approach to the role as well as specific goals I hope to achieve. The action items are examples of tasks or projects I would engage with in order to achieve my goals.

Vision Statement: As Vice Chair for Convention Experience I plan to support the Convention Experience Coordinators in developing collaborative relationships across the directorate board to improve programming efficiency. Further, as VC I hope to expand our recruitment and promotional efforts relating to convention programs.

Goal 1: Develop an outreach and involvement plan in coordination with the VC of Networking and Chair to recruit Convention Ambassadors from our network of graduate programs.

- Action Items:
 - Similar to my goals for each of the roles, I want to collaborate with all of the VCs to develop a system to collect and update a list of involved graduate programs. Then, I want to develop an outreach process that is overseen by one VC and can be utilized by all teams.
 - Encourage and assist the Ambassadors Coordinators to collaborate with the Coordinator for Communications to develop a social media outreach plan.
 - Encourage and assist the Ambassadors Coordinators to collaborate with the VC/team in charge of graduate program outreach to develop an email outreach plan.

- Encourage and assist the Ambassadors Coordinators to develop a directorate-led recruitment program where everyone is encouraged to outreach to their graduate programs and ask to speak to current students about the ambassadors program and GSNPCoP generally.

Goal 2: Expand the Convention Colleagues program to become a partnership between GSNPCoP, Mid-Level Community of Practice, and Senior-Level Community of Practice.

- Action Items:
 - Currently, people can sign up to participate in Convention Colleagues through convention registration. I want to meet with leadership from the two other CoPs to discuss opportunities for collaboration and cross-promotion.
 - Assist the Coordinators for Special Events on collaborating with the Coordinator for Communications in developing a communications plan with the CoPs.

Goal 3: Collaborate with the Ambassadors Coordinators and the Coordinator for Assessment to develop new assessment rubrics and methods for the Convention Ambassadors program.

- Action Items:
 - Review current assessment methods and brainstorm changes or improvements with the Ambassadors Coordinators.
 - Assist Coordinators with developing an assessment plan for individuals participating as ambassadors.
 - Assist Coordinators with developing an assessment plan for individuals participating in Ambassador 1:1 reflection meetings. Specifically, creating a method for collecting volunteer responses on themes from the meetings.
 - Work with the Ambassadors Coordinators and the Coordinator for Assessment to develop a rubric for assessing the participation and experience of ambassadors at convention.

Please tell us about your previous leadership experience within the Graduate Students and New Professionals Community of Practice. How has this experience prepared you for the position(s) you are applying for? Feel welcome to also speak of leadership experience outside of the CoP and how it will prepare you for the position(s).

During my three years on the GSNPCoP directorate board, I have held the following positions: Co-Coordinator for Special Events (Professional Development), Co-Coordinator for Cross-Org Involvement (Networking), and Coordinator for Communications (Operations). Each of these roles was within different teams, positioning me to have a broader perspective on how this community of practice functions. I have learned valuable knowledge from each of these roles that would contribute positively to a role in leadership.

To start, during my role of Co-Coordinator for Special Events, my perception of the value in task management was strengthened. I was working with a Co-Coordinator who relied on me to not only finish my share of the tasks but also contribute to idea generation and provide perspective when faced with challenges (of which there were many). If I did not contribute to the shared

responsibility of the role, our programming would not be executed to the best degree. This was an important lesson because as I continued to seek other roles in the directorate, my desire to contribute to a team grew, and I sought roles that required collaboration. If selected for a leadership role, I see this knowledge contributing to my management of coordinators. I will seek to understand the unique dynamics of the team and find opportunities to clearly communicate with my team how each of their roles is of value and when they are successful in their work, everyone benefits.

My role as Co-Coordinator for Cross-Org Involvement reminded me that change can be unpredictable, and when we lose leadership, our work must continue. Halfway through that year, my co-coordinator decided to step down from their position and our team lost the other coordinators shortly after. By spring, our team was myself and the Vice Chair. This was a challenging loss because our team went from five to two people, and there was still the work of five people to be done. Even though we could have given up on programming, my Vice Chair and I still hosted our first engagement panel, an event that required a lot of communication and collaboration. In my future roles with GSNPCoP, I want to channel that persevering attitude when faced with challenges. We may lose leadership, an event may not be successful, tasks might not be completed on time – but when you work with those you have and share the responsibility, we can still achieve what we originally set out to accomplish, just differently.

Most recently, the position of Coordinator for Communications taught me that you cannot just set boundaries and expectations but you must follow them to gain respect. A more challenging part of this role has been not allowing people to submit requests outside of my required timeframe. I am a natural people pleaser, and it is sometimes difficult for me to say ‘no’ when I am passionate about the success of this directorate board. However, I found that when I do not let people defy the requirements I set, they will course correct and do better the next time. This is a lesson I’m still working on today, even though I know there is a positive outcome. I have recognized that while we all have responsibilities outside of GSNP, if people hold me to a standard of my role, I also have to hold them to a standard, even when I want to say ‘yes’. By respecting my own boundaries, I am encouraging others to do the same. In future leadership roles, I want to be the person that can encourage coordinators to set boundaries and uphold them even in challenging situations. My Vice Chair and Chair provided me with that guidance, and I believe my experiences navigating those boundaries would help other coordinators do the same.

As you know, ACPA has a bold Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization. Please speak to what you know of the Imperative and how you see the work of the Graduate Students and New Professionals Community of Practice supporting the Imperative.

The Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization (SIRJD) serves as a starting point for ACPA and its members to address the influence of colonization in higher education work and take action to dismantle unjust systems as a result of settler colonialism. When I first

read the SIRJD in graduate school I thought that the application of it would be challenging, but I was wrong.

One of the most salient notes in this imperative is the concept that we should not be waiting for people to step up and be the change, but we can engage in work to become “the leaders we’ve been waiting for” (Quaye et al., 2019, p 10). GSNPCoP is in a position to shape the experience and messaging of ACPA to graduate students and new professionals through our programming and communication. We have a responsibility as an entity to not only educate our members about the framework in this imperative but also inspire and motivate our audience to be the people who can make the changes we want to see in higher education. Furthermore, everyone in our community has a shared responsibility to dismantle racial inequities and settler colonialism, but as leaders, we need to encourage our members to take personal responsibility for their role in these systems. This starts with conversation and authentic dialogue.

A core tenant of the SIRJD is to root the work we do in curiosity (Quaye et al., 2019). As leaders on this board, we can engage members in dialogue when we open the opportunity for genuine curiosity. One quote that resonates with me from the imperative that speaks to this concept is as follows: “While in dialogue on difficult topics, student affairs educators must be willing to listen to the contributions of others if they expect their voice to be heard,” (Quaye et al., 2019, p. 15). It can be challenging for some who have never explored their role in these harmful systems to address the ways their existence contributes to racial inequity. By encouraging thoughtful and respectful dialogue with our members, directorate leaders can show that we are committed to engaging in continual recognition of these topics and bringing a variety of voices into Conversation.

Beyond creating space for dialogue, our directorate board must make annual commitments to address the concepts posed in the imperative and conceptualize methods for taking action internally and externally of ACPA. The SIRJD points to the concept of “an always becoming” (Quaye, 2019), which I interpret as determining what we as a community and as individuals can do to help keep graduate students and new professionals motivated to engage in tough dialogues and take action while also recognizing that the SIRJD is not a final solution to addressing inequity. Our work does not have a foreseeable end point, so as leaders, we have to assess the ways we influence our audience to move beyond conversation to finding actionable changes that can be made in home communities to dismantle settler colonialism-based systems and address racial inequities.

These roles require advocacy for the field’s graduate students and new professionals. Please tell us about your previous experience working with or advocating for graduate students and new professionals outside of the Graduate Students and New Professionals Community of Practice and how you would integrate these unique needs and experiences into work within the CoP.

Through my work with the University of Iowa (UI), both as a graduate student and new professional, I engaged with opportunities to show representation of graduate students and new

professionals as well as experiences that advocated for their success.

To speak to my general support of graduate student success, I served as a Member of the Grants Committee for the Graduate and Professional Student Government at UI. In this role, I was a voting member on requests from graduate and professional students to fund travel, research, or service. The opportunity to serve on this board was afforded to graduate students, and I was the only member of the College of Education selected to be a part of the committee. This experience afforded me the opportunity to be a part of a team that made decisions on how to support graduate student development opportunities and allowed me to positively represent graduate education students.

Additionally, as both a graduate student and new professional, I was a mentor for the UI Educational Studies and Human Relations undergraduate mentorship program, run by two HESA graduate students, to support students in that program of study. For two years I was a mentor, and during this time, I assisted my mentee with developing their resume, cover letter, crafting emails to solicit letters of recommendation, and reviewing their materials to apply to an education graduate program. Further, this student is first-generation, and a lot of our mentoring sessions focused on how they navigate educational spaces and providing context for how the university functions. This role helped me learn how to articulate complex university processes to undergraduate students and by doing so, I assisted a future educator with the knowledge and advice for being successful in graduate school.

When I joined the GSNPCoP directorate board, I was between my first and second year of graduate school, looking for a community where I felt belonging. As I started my role and developed relationships with the board, I started internally articulating the challenges I faced in my graduate program that led to my lack of satisfaction with the connections I made. After talking with a mentor, I developed a presentation idea for the ACPA23 Convention, focusing on how HESA programs do or do not support graduate students. This proposal was accepted for convention, and I presented my session: "Graduate Student Success: Cultivating Care for Self and Community". To prepare, I interviewed multiple M.A., Ph.D., and new professionals regarding their experiences with support from their graduate programs. Coupled with research on best practices for aiding graduate student success, I presented on these experiences and engaged the audience in a reflective conversation on how support for HESA graduate students is a community effort that everyone can and should contribute to. I received positive feedback on this presentation, and specifically, from professionals working with graduate students who were seeking advice on how to better engage with them. By giving this presentation, I was able to use both individual testimonials and research to advocate for the graduate student experience.

One of the last experiences I want to include is a presentation I collaborated on with a HESA graduate student during my first year as a new professional. I had met this student through our association with the program, and both of our graduate internships were within academic support. She worked specifically with first-generation student advocacy programs, and I had worked with Supplemental Instruction leaders. A core tenant of the work done in that office was

to facilitate a growth mindset in the Iowa community. Later, when working as a new professional, I received an email soliciting presentation proposals for the Iowa LatinX Youth Summit that brought high schoolers to the university to learn new skills and explore higher education. I asked the graduate student (who had become a good friend) if she wanted to collaborate on a presentation, and even though she had never done something like this, she said yes. We created a proposal that was accepted and were invited to give our presentation: "Overcoming Self-Doubt Through a Growth Mindset". Through this experience, I was able to support a HESA graduate student in stepping outside their comfort zone in an educational setting while contributing to a university program planned primarily by new professionals.

Each of these opportunities have uniquely contributed to my experiences representing and advocating for graduate students and new professionals. As a leadership member in this CoP, I want to continue facilitating care for graduate students and find further opportunities to bolster professional development experiences within our community.

How would the role(s) you are interested in align with your professional goals?

The role of Vice Chair for Convention Experience would provide me with development opportunities directly related to both my goals within and outside of ACPA. To start, a long-term goal I have is to serve on a future ACPA convention planning committee. ACPA is my professional home, and I intend to continue serving the community even beyond my roles within GSNPCoP. Holding this Vice Chair role would allow me to have a broader scope of convention operations and better understand the roles of entity groups in convention planning.

Additionally, in my current role as Student Organizations Coordinator at Boise State University, I support student programming by helping students understand university policies and how those impact event planning timelines. As Vice Chair for Convention Experience, I would have a more intimate opportunity to support coordinators in the planning of events. From developing timelines to coordinating promotions and communications to planning event logistics – each of these experiences would translate to my professional role and assist in my responsibility of providing guidance to students' event planning.

Please speak to your time and energy management, and project management skills and how you believe these will serve you within the position(s) you are applying for.

A 50-50 work-life balance is not a goal that I strive for. When I was in graduate school we had conversations in class about how to leave your work at the office. We were encouraged to follow the normative balance of working 8-5 and then wiping our hands clean before we head home. This narrative does not suit me.

I work in Student Involvement; thus, my work schedule is never strictly 8-5. My first year as a new professional being involved in GSNPCoP, finishing graduate school full-time, being involved on-campus, and keeping up with a social life challenged me to reimagine what

work-life balance means to me. Now, I imagine it as a give and take. Some weeks I give more so that other weeks I can take more. This is a system that keeps my motivation levels steady and encourages me to manage my time more efficiently. I am not overworking myself without a break, and I am not giving all of my energy to work without taking it back for myself.

Specifically relating to managing time efficiently, my professional role demands a lot on a day-to-day basis. As is common in higher education, previously, my role was two full-time positions. But it is now one position where “half” of my time is intended to be spent supervising my 23 student media employees, and the other “half” is spent supporting 87 student organizations in event and program planning. Nevermind, the advising duties and other responsibilities that come with each of these roles. I am no stranger to the importance of time management; my days are dutifully planned to encourage efficiency and structure. However, I leave room for the inevitable interruptions induced from working directly with students. Sometimes my days are completely thrown off. But I am a planner, so at the start of the next day, I rethink my agenda to prioritize what needs to be done.

Project and time management is integral to my professional work. I have developed systems that have allowed me to be successful in my work even throughout my three years of directorate roles. If given the opportunity to be in a leadership role, I plan to set weekly and monthly goals to keep myself and my team on track. If there is a struggle or pain point, I want to work through that with the individual or team to ensure those on this board are supported but also held accountable for communicating when assistance is needed.