



Podcast: Student Affairs One Thing

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Episode Title: 17. Dr. Laura De Veau

Summary: We chat with Dr. Laura De Veau, Founder of Fortify Associates and former VP of Student Affairs at Mt. Ida College.

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B E G I N T R A N S C R I P T

Stuart Brown: Welcome to the Student Affairs One thing, a podcast that asks a simple question of seasoned student affairs professionals - what is one thing you have learned that has helped shape your professional career. I'm your host, Stuart Brown, the developer of StudentAffairs.com, one of the most accessed websites by student affairs professionals. On our pages, we have the most cost effective job posting board, listing hundreds of open student services positions, a wide range of webinars and a virtual exhibit hall.

On today's program, I am very happy to have Dr. Laura De Veau. She is the founder of the boutique consulting firm, Fortify Associates. She is the former Vice President of Student Affairs at Mount Ida College and is currently an instructor in the Higher Ed programs at Boston College and Boston University.

Welcome to the program, Laura.

Dr. Laura De Veau: Nice to be here, Stu. Thank you for having me.

Stuart Brown: So Laura, what is your one thing?

Dr. Laura De Veau: My one thing is process. The important thing is the process. The reason I say that is you can talk a good game, but unless you actually make things happen, people aren't going to trust you. They're not going to trust your organization. They're not going to trust the division of student affairs for doing what they're supposed to be doing. It's really up to the process and sound process matters more than anything.

Stuart Brown: Is there a story or is there something that occurred in your professional career where you had that epiphany.

Dr. Laura De Veau: It actually happened when I was interviewing to be the Director of Residents life at Mount Ida College. So this was the Summer of 2008 and in student affairs, we have this really ridiculous thing called the community interview and you show up and there's could be, I've had a community of users where there's been three people, when there's been close to 300 people.

And in this particular case there was probably about 50 people in the room. And one of the people asked me, well, what defines you from other candidates for this job. And I said, well, I believe that process matters and that how you actually do your work matters and you have to have good processes. And I said that I've been fortunate enough in my career that I've learned from institutions that had sound processes, I've been able to augment these processes and I've become better at it. And I think that that's something I bring to the table and then the Vice President for Enrollment Services said, well then, you know, this is a small institution. We don't really care about process. We care about relationships. So we're very relationship driven here. And me being me, Stu, and you've known me long enough, I said, well then I'm not your girl. Like I'm not the person you want for this job. But I went on to say based on my visit to your institution, based on me speaking to your students, I actually think I actually disagree is that the fact of the matter is you have students here who think that relationships are actually what gets you up in line, that get you the work to get done for you.

If someone is saying not the work study student for the Vice President for Enrollment Services, they don't have access to power and therefore they don't have access to process. They don't get access to the things getting

done for them. That shouldn't happen. Sound process means people will start to trust in your organization and will start to trust in the work you do and then when you want to try to do something aspirational, well then proof's in the pudding. You've done good work, they say this office, this part of our campus has done good stuff. Why don't we give them a try? Why don't we give it a shot? And that's where it really kind of came to me, especially after talking to these students who said, you know, the office of residents life, I don't trust them because they don't do things for everybody. They do stuff for the people they know and that really kind of lit it up in my head. I already knew that I was process oriented. But then that idea of taking what's process oriented and the student process and the student experience and being student centered. You can be process oriented and student centered at the same time, which a lot of people may not understand. There's a connection there.

Stuart Brown: I'm assuming you got the job?

Dr. Laura De Veau: Yeah.

Stuart Brown: I think what you said is important. That you can have the process and the relationship.

Dr. Laura De Veau: They're not mutually exclusive. You know, we always talk about you need this, you need this, not this. And I said how about this and this. You need this and. We need to be better about this and statement rather than that this or. And when it comes to process, I think process is, it's not sexy. Process isn't sexy. Relationships like, oh that person is so great. I love that person. That person is off the chain. That person is amazing. I'm not saying you can't have all that, but you can't just be relationship driven without having processed alongside it. I've worked in very large universities and I've worked in very tiny ones and I've worked in various things in between and I know the process and going back to my point that process is important. Good process should be scalable. Good process, if it works in a teeny tiny campus, scaling up should be something that can be done without a lot of drama and trauma.

And the same thing is if it's a well done process, you should be able to scale down and be able to implement it on a small campus with limited, maybe human resources, to actually get the work done.

Stuart Brown: Laura, I want to thank you for sharing your one thing, I think it's so important that people, especially maybe grad students, new professionals, that are coming in and maybe looking more towards the relationship, collegiality and pushing process to the side. Maybe focus on the process because the relationships can come later. Let's get everything down pat first and then we can proceed.

Dr. Laura De Veau: I firmly believe that once the process is fine-tuned and does as well, it creates a sense of trust and trust builds relationships,

Stuart Brown: Laura again, thank you. I've been speaking with Dr. Laura De Veau, the founder of the boutique consulting firm Fortify Associates, also former Vice President of Student Affairs at Mount Ida College ,instructor at both BC and BU. You have been listening to the Student affairs One thing, a podcast that asks a simple question of seasoned student affairs professionals - what is one thing you have learned that has helped shape your professional career?

I have been your host, Stuart Brown, the developer of StudentAffairs.com, one of the most accessed websites by student affairs professionals. I hope you will join us next time for another episode of Student Affairs One Thing.

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