



Podcast: One Thing - New Professional

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Summary: We chat with Spe'shall Coleman, a Community Director at Georgetown University.

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Stuart Brown: Welcome to the Student Affairs One Thing - New Professional, a podcast that asks a simple question of new professionals in the field - what is one thing you've learned you feel will help you as you move forward in your career. I'm your host Stuart Brown, the developer of StudentAffairs.com, one of the most accessed websites by student affair professionals. On our pages, we have the most cost effective job posting board, listing hundreds of open student services positions and a wide range of webinars.

On today's episode. I am very pleased to have Spe'shall Coleman, a Community Director at Georgetown University. Welcome to the program.

Spe'shall Coleman: Thank you so much. I'm very excited to be here.

Stuart Brown: So Spe'shall, What is your one thing?

Spe'shall Coleman: I would say my one thing is actually having to do the job in higher education before making a decision on whether higher education is for you. It seems all fun and dandy on the outside and you think you can make an informed decision by looking at everyone doing the job until you actually get into it. And I talked to my students about this as well because they're always saying, oh, I want to be a community director, just like you. You live on campus, you go to all the events and I'm always like, it is fun, but there are other things that go with the position and I didn't know if I can handle it until I started doing it.

Stuart Brown: Is there a story behind that, where you were, I don't know, an undergraduate and you were exploring or when you were a grad student or something where you had that epiphany, like, oh, you know, it's a good thing. I tried things out or I explored it before just jumping right in.

Spe'shall Coleman: Yes, so I was an R. A. as an undergrad and I was also in R.H.A., which is resident housing association and they handled the bigger programs that res living put on and I enjoyed being an R. A. I also enjoyed being a student and I also enjoyed being on the college campus, so I told myself you have to go back and work in higher ed because you liked it so much during your undergrad. And I can tell you that the first year I actually worked in higher ed, I was struggling with the long hours, being on call, being responsible for not only just myself but 300 students that parents have dropped off and so willingly gave to me and put in my building. So that was also a surprise and for a minute and I was thinking to myself, this is too much, this is too stressful, I don't get enough me time, I don't get enough sleep, I'm always worried about the next thing. But as the years went on, I just learned how to manage my time correctly, I learned how to believe in myself and I started to actually do to work with intention rather than just doing it for the check. And then I realized that this is my one thing now. I don't know if I'm gonna be in res living forever. But I do know that higher education is my thing. I'm good at it. I enjoy it. It puts a smile on my face. Sometimes not all smiles, but for 99% of the time I'm smiling. The 1% is mostly during move-in that I am not smiling.

Stuart Brown: So you had mentioned that the one thing as trying out in a sense the profession. If you were not an R. A., you weren't that involved in the residence hall governance, where do you think that would have put you and maybe also for students or individuals listening to this thinking, oh I want to do this but they haven't really done it. What perspective did that give you by really being part of the, we'll call it the junior core of student affairs professionals before you got your degree and started working?

Spe'shall Coleman: I would say it gave me a very surface level view of what adults in Res Life actually do. As an R.A. you are on call. but there are some stipulations to you being on call as academics come first. You're more than welcome to have a social life as well. And so your duty doesn't start until after classes in. For most schools duty starts around eight p.m. And R.A.s get off duty the next morning around nine a.m. So you have a

bit more flexibility and you're not on call 24 7. So I got an outlook with that. Also programming and being responsible for my residents. It's also a surface level outlook because yes, you are responsible for the residents on your floor, but you always have your community director or director to go to if you can't handle a situation. And in this situation, I am the hall director that they come to if they cannot handle it. So my perspective would be, even if you're not an R.A., even if you have baby sat, your brothers or your sisters or you worked at a summer camp res living can still be for you, is we're just here to make sure that the students have a good year, that they are living in safe housing, that the programming is fun and educational that they're doing more than just academics, that they're well a rounded person.

Stuart Brown: I think you can also expand where it's not just getting that experience within the residence halls as an undergraduate, but there's so many leadership opportunities within student clubs and organizations, maybe working for the orientation office. But I think the key part of your one thing is getting your feet wet when you're an undergraduate to experience that as opposed to you graduate, you're not really sure and you say, oh, you know what, I enjoyed college. I'm going into student personnel, but you haven't really experienced it. Not that if you experience it, you're going to run away, but at least it gives you some background as you move forward.

Spe'shall Coleman: Exactly. I do think everyone should take a leap of faith just because you haven't done anything doesn't mean you're not going to be great at it or you're going to love it, but it's very important for you to do it before you make a final decision about it.

Stuart Brown: Spe'shall, I want to thank you for sharing your one thing. You know, you really can take what you're talking about and really for any position. If you wanted to be an elementary school teacher, you want to do some. maybe substitute teaching before you get your degree. So you don't graduate, you go into a school system and you say I don't like teaching. Well, you just kind of spent your four years looking for that. So to get as much experience and there are so many opportunities at college campuses. You just have to step forward.

Spe'shall Coleman: Also, I want to add that everyone goes to college for one thing, but I know a lot of people who have graduated and they're not doing anything connected to what they went to college for for four years because they realize that that's not something that they are passionate about and want to do for the rest of their life. So they go and try something new. I never want to deter anyone away from trying something new, whether it goes with your degree or it goes with your skill set. If you want to try it, you should try it again.

Stuart Brown: Spe'shall, thank you for sharing.

You have been listening to the Student Affairs One Thing, New Professional, a podcast that asks a simple question of new professionals in the field - what is one thing you have learned you feel will help you as you move forward in your career? My guest today has been Spe'shall Coleman, a Community Director at Georgetown University. I'm your host, Stuart Brown, the developer of StudentAffairs.com, one of the most accessed websites by student affairs professionals. I hope you'll join us next time for another episode of Student Affairs One Thing - New Professional.

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