



Podcast: Student Affairs One Thing

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Summary: We chat with Dr. Chris Moody, Executive Director of ACPA—College Student Educators International.

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

Stuart Brown: Welcome to 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, founder of StudentAffairs.com, one of the most accessed websites for 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.

I am very pleased to welcome Dr. Chris Moody who is the Executive Director of ACPA - College Student Educators International. He has also served in positions at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Appalachia State, American University and the University of Memphis. Welcome to the program, Chris.

Dr. Chris Moody: Thank you, thanks for having me.

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

Dr. Chris Moody: The one thing that keeps coming up in my career path has been the idea of never closing my own doors. You know, I often hear about it and I think in terms of a sports reference like you can't score if you don't shoot. I think Wayne Gretzky famously said that you miss 100% of the shots you don't take, but for me that's sort of come into play with this idea of never closing my own doors, never thinking about opportunities not being available to me and some, some stories that you know quickly come to mind when I moved in to my college first year residence hall at Wake Forest University. You know, I remember very vividly my RA saying, "Oh it's nice to meet you, I think you should be involved. I want to get you involved in hall council" and I thought me, wow, wow! What? He probably said that to every single person that checked in because he didn't know me, but at that moment it was, it was a door, it was an opening that I was like, wow, I hadn't thought about myself in a leadership role in that way. So let me let me apply, let me throw my name in the hat, you know, a few years down the road I'm applying for my first jobs after graduate school, you know, going into student affairs and higher education and through some of my networks had developed some relationships and you know did the job search process and applied for jobs that I thought were within my skill set. But I also applied for some jobs that were beyond my skill set. And I remember you mentioned I worked at UNC Chapel Hill, that job application very clearly said you needed three years of post-masters experience before you could apply. But I knew someone who was working there and I said I'm gonna throw my application in and see what happens, right? That idea of not closing my own doors fully expecting if I wasn't qualified, they would let me know, right, that they wouldn't offer an interview. But because of that network, I did get the interview and I did get the job. So it was really a moment of clarity for me of, gosh, you know, I if I do good work, establish networks, that the world is really open to me.

Fast forward again, a few years later, I decided to apply for a semester at sea. You know, basically university on a cruise ship. And they said, oh, there's a three year waiting period before you even get, you know, an interview. Well, it just so happened, that was the time period that the 9 11 attack was happening in, applications were down and I was on the next, the next voyage out of Piraeus, Greece. So this idea of the rules being broken, this idea of not limiting my own pathway has been really critical to my success and my experiences and student affairs. And I say all that, recognizing that my pathway is not the same as everybody else's and that I've always seen white males like myself in leadership roles. And so that's not, that's not the case for understand for, for people of color and for women who don't necessarily see opportunities and all the doors open for themselves. And so I think it's important for people like me, white male, when given an opportunity like this to share that we need to have more possibility models for women and people of color in leadership. So that, that idea of all the doors being open and seeing yourself take advantage of opportunities

that come your way, you're gonna miss some shots. Wayne Gretzky missed some shots. Michael Jordan's missed some shots, I've missed some shots, but I was willing to take those shots and I was strategic about the places that I wanted to engage because I think it's important that you'll be able to deliver once given those opportunities that you have to be able to not just walk through those doors or enter through those doors, but to be able to do your best. And if you if you go through every door, you can't perform with your best. You're not only going to give half of your efforts. So I think selectively choosing the doors you want to go in is also an equally critical part of pursuing opportunities and really choosing what feels right for you.

Stuart Brown: I think a couple of things there. You're going back to that experience when you were an incoming freshman at Wake Forest is that you might have that semester next year, the following year, you might have gravitated towards a leadership position, but you had someone and like you said, I agree with you that RA probably everyone that entered the door. Hi, I think you could do because...

Dr. Chris Moody: Part of the script. Yeah.

Stuart Brown: It's in his self-interest to have a good Res Hall council, but I think it's important that you have people, whether they're student leaders, staff, people that give others an opportunity or to help open that door for them. So it's not always you have to notice the door but that we can help people open the door and let them decide whether to come through. But I think another thing and maybe this wasn't necessarily for you but you might have people that are going to be very cautious, the door might be open. But do I really want to go through that door. That we can assist people, especially people that we know maybe on our staffs, we know they can do the job and we can maybe help them or give them a little push through that door.

Dr. Chris Moody: Absolutely. I completely agree with you. And that's why I think establishing a network within your campus community and beyond your campus community is so critically important with connecting through professional associations like a ACPA. Or even the local area because you want to focus on allies and mentors, people looking out for you on your own campus. But then there are examples of times where you might need to talk with someone or get some information or run something by someone outside of your campus. When your job security isn't at risk or when you're considering an opportunity that you know would be a conflict of interest, to talk through on your own campus. I think it's really important that you have folks in that network and then that mentor and groups like you're talking about two to be both inside and outside of your workplace.

Stuart Brown: I think also what you're saying is take chances. That whole is to take chances. So, the example you gave at Chapel Hill, looking at the job description, you could have just taken yourself out. Now if it said Dean of Students and, you know, you're only in the third year in your professional career, well maybe that would be a bit too much of a stretch, but that it's important for us to believe in ourselves. We can do this job, but we have to, like you said, we have to take that shot. So I think that's true with people and especially people starting off in their careers, maybe not knowing what to do and then that other component that you brought in having that network, so you're not out there on your own. Should I do this? Should I proceed? Is there someone from your graduate program, a faculty member or someone that if you're working on a campus that you can go to? I think it's very important to bounce ideas off of.

Dr. Chris Moody: And I think it requires a vulnerability and a willingness ahead of time to say I'm going to be told no, I'm gonna be told no more than I'm told yes. And that's okay, Right? That's a part of putting yourself out there and being vulnerable enough ahead of the process so that when you're told no, that it's not necessarily a statement about you more about yeah, this just wasn't the right opportunity for me. It leaves me open for the next thing that comes my way.

Stuart Brown: And that's another important point because we never know what's going on behind that closed door. And I've chaired many searches and there might be people that are qualified, but for whatever reason, that wasn't going to be the person and they were very qualified. And I remember when one of my first job opportunities and later on I when I got the job, my supervisor said, you know, Stu, there was you and this other person and you were, it was a dead, dead heat. And the reason you got the job is because you had some AV experience when you were in college and this person is going to have a little bit of an AV component to the position. So I easily could have been rejected for the position, but I would, I was still a strong candidate. It was just that little thing that put me over.

Dr. Chris Moody: And I think it's such a critical point, especially right now with what's happening on campuses. You know, we talked about the great resignation and the retirements happening in the vacant positions and people covering other jobs, you know, a good opportunity for people to look at what skill set they want to develop. You know, if people are covering jobs, why wait and have someone come to you and say, hey, I'd like for you to take on this interim job over here. You know, there's an opening. Why don't you go to a supervisor and say, hey, I can help with this, and this because it's gonna benefit me and my skill set and where I want to go. And so I think it's a really great window of time to think strategically to show interest in what's happening on campus. And if, if more work is coming your way anyway, be selective and have some voice and what comes to you.

Stuart Brown: So you might even be having that door opening way too far because all these things, but I think the key word there is strategically. There might be a lot, but working things out with your supervisor, with your own needs of what I can do to help position yourself for whatever that next door that opens is going to be.

Dr. Chris Moody: Absolutely has to. It has to be the right fit for you like and where you are now in the life circumstances and sort of alluding to what you were saying, you don't know what's going on behind the scenes of a hiring process, the search process and saying this is the way that I can contribute right now. It aligns with where I want to go in the future and being really forward with that. You know, if the supervisor of the institution says thanks, not right now, you still have shown a demonstrated interest in supporting and being loyal and being helpful in that moment in time and that's it. That's a muscle memory that is going to last. Beyond that one decision.

Stuart Brown: I want to thank you for sharing your one thing. I think that is very important, like you said unfortunately, especially nowadays but, but even so is to take chances, take risks, be a little vulnerable and go through that, that door because you don't know where it may lead you.

I've been speaking with Chris Moody, Executive Director of ACPA - College Student Educators International. 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've 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 the Student Affairs One Thing.

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