



**Podcast:** Student Affairs One Thing

**Release Date:** January 9, 2023

**Episode Title:** 29. Dr. Gourjoine M. Wade

**Summary:** Host Stuart Brown chats with Dr. Gourjoine M. Wade, Vice President of Student Affairs at Texas Lutheran University.

» [studentaffairs.com/podcast/onething](https://studentaffairs.com/podcast/onething)

## 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, 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 and a wide range of webinars.

On today's episode. I am very pleased to have Dr. Gourjoine Wade, Vice President of Student Affairs at Texas Lutheran University. Welcome to the program.

**Dr. Gourjoine M. Wade:** Thank you so much. I appreciate the opportunity to chat with you today.

**Stuart Brown:** So Gourjoine, what is your one thing?

**Dr. Gourjoine M. Wade:** For me, it has been realizing that the power of social media is so much more prevalent now than I think anybody ever thought it could be in regards to how we impact, serve and support our students. So that's my one thing. That social media and all these different avenues has really been a powerful tool for us to help our students.

**Stuart Brown:** Is there a story behind that one thing? Where social media, you realize that it is so important and so effective and so powerful?

**Dr. Gourjoine M. Wade:** That's a great question. So I will reflect back a few years on instagram. I was working in housing and res life and, you know, we would always send these emails to students and we would always knock on doors, that whole traditional model connecting with students in those spaces and the response rate was just kind of hit or miss. I was on instagram in a personal capacity, really not engaged with students much there. But I had a student that tracked me down there and sent a message and said, hey, I got a note on my door, can you answer this for me because I'm confused? And it kind of set out this lightbulb moment. There was like, this is an opportunity for us to open additional doors of engagement and connect with students then why don't we kind of take it to the next level? So for me that's when it was like, aha, so it started there and I haven't looked back since. But I think it's, it's a tool that if we use it right, it really does support student success. So it's, it's something I think we all, as far as colleagues in our profession, should do better about connecting with students.

**Stuart Brown:** I always find that social media, instagram, now TikTok, a lot of administrators are afraid of it because they don't really know what it's about and really how to harness the power behind it.

**Dr. Gourjoine M. Wade:** I would agree. I think it's a very delicate balancing act. I see a lot of colleagues that will talk behind the scenes and say they want to do those things. I think that the landscape that we're dealing with now makes it very tricky where some folks are like, I don't want to deal with it, where others are like, I'm gonna go full fledge in and make it part of the brand, but I think ultimately it comes back to the core essence of what do we use it for? Right? How do we find additional avenues to engage and support students and parents and family members as well? So I think it's an opportunity to shoot our shot and we just see how it goes.

**Stuart Brown:** When you were developing your social media abilities, was this something that you were doing on your own? Did you have other colleagues or even undergraduates that pulled you aside or that you pulled them aside and said, hey, can you kind of help me with this?

**Dr. Gourjoine M. Wade:** Yes, and in the initial phases, I was just, it was just me trying to figure it out as best as I could. Don't know if I always did it right, but as it kind of established itself and became a positive tool, other colleagues kind of caught on. And you saw there was like this network of student affairs Higher Ed pros that were using this medium to engage with students, and then it became a community almost. I also want to shout out to Dr. Josie Ahlquist, who kind of pulled some of us together in a space to say, how can we kind of cultivate this and make it into something more than what it is? I want to shout out to her, but it's a lot of folks in our world who are doing that work who start from the bottom and out of here, so to speak. And I think it's really helped.

**Stuart Brown:** So if you have colleagues listening to this and they're scratching their heads about how to get started, what would you give them as advice?

**Dr. Gourjoine M. Wade:** I think the first step is to kind of assess the landscape, to know your audience, your institutional audience. You know, some schools, their students are heavy social media users. Other schools, it's kind of hit or miss, I would think. Some institutions, they're big in the twitter world. That's what their students are engaging in. Other's, it's instagram. So I think you gotta know your landscape and then carve out that lane, have a conversation with leadership depending on what your role is to say, hey, what's your feeling of comfort with me kind of using this medium to work with our students and making sure you establish some very clear ground rules on what that's gonna look like because some institutional leaders, they frown upon it. They don't want their leaders out there, representing the institution in those medians. So I think you've got to know your landscape, establish some ground rules and then if you've got a good foundation of support from there, then you just jump in and then let the natural essence of who you are flow through social media.

**Stuart Brown:** You mentioned that you had that Aha moment in real life when a student contacted you about that flyer that was taped to their door. Has there been a more recent episode where you really felt the power of social media from whatever type of resource it was? Again instagram, twitter.

**Dr. Gourjoine M. Wade:** Yeah, for me it's been an ongoing affirmation of what this can be. At my current institution, I've had a lot of students that will reach out via DM and say, hey, can I come by your office? I just want to meet you. I saw you on instagram. I want to know if I can come by. They come into the space. We make that connection. We pull back the layers of how can I continue to support? How can I connect them to additional layers supporting the institution and they will usually leave the conversation and say, hey, you know, I think it's kind of cool that we can kind of find and connect with you where we are. So for me, that's that additional keep doing that moment. But sometimes it can be a lot, especially if it's established and students seek you out in that avenue. So you've got to continue to stay present in that space. I've got a colleague, I want to shout out again, Dr. Gabe Willis, I think Gabe does a tremendous job of using multiple platforms to navigate student support. He does it really, really well, but I think once we're in that you can't really turn it off because then you create that void and again it comes back that we're doing it for students. So you got to stay present.

**Stuart Brown:** It must also be a balancing act because you're now giving students that direct access and you can't just turn them off because they're reaching out in a platform that they feel comfortable with.

**Dr. Gourjoine M. Wade:** You're right. You can't turn it off and it's about balance. You know, for me, I try to use it two ways, I try to use it to humanize the role and colleagues see that, you know, even at my level as an executive on a campus, I can be accessible and flexible to the needs of my students in the social media atmosphere. But I also have a wif. I have kids, we go out, we do stuff like real people, like we're like we actually go shopping and we go to restaurants and we have fun. So I think that allows, also a level of vulnerability to come down where people feel like you're approachable and that helps us do the work that we need to do. So I would agree with you. It is a balancing act and I think once you get into a good rhythm of what it looks like, you carve out whether that's going to look the same for instagram versus what looks like on Facebook and I think from there it can really work.

**Stuart Brown:** Gourjoine, I want to thank you for sharing your one thing. In today's world, it's kind of hard to ignore social media. And, like you said, we're always trying to reach out to the students. What's the best way to reach out and for a lot of them it is social media, so we really need to adopt it to further the needs of various offices and for the institution.

You have been listening 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 want to thank today's guest Dr Gourjoine Wade, Vice President of Student Affairs at Texas Lutheran University. 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'll join us next time for another episode of Student Affairs One Thing.

E N D T R A N S C R I P T