

Rafael A. Rodriguez, Ed. D.

Professional Summary

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15+ years as a highly effective executive-level Higher Learning professional with extensive experience providing strategic leadership and oversight and fostering a welcoming and inclusive campus climate. Collaborate with multiple departments to facilitate culturally competent programs and services.

Qualifications Summary

Serve as the University's primary point of contact on student matters, providing senior-level leadership and coordination across academic colleges and central administrative units, including Global Programs Office, NYU Abu Dhabi, NYU Shanghai, respective Deans and student affairs offices across our schools, Dining Services, University Communications, General Counsel, the Office of Equal Opportunity, Student Financial Services, and Admissions. Ensure alignment of institutional priorities with student needs, facilitate cross-functional collaboration, and guide the development and implementation of student-centered policies and practices across a complex, global environment.

- Provide strategic direction, establish clear performance expectations, and ensure effective execution across multiple functional areas. Lead with a focus on organizational effectiveness, inclusivity, and continuous improvement, while cultivating leadership capacity, deepening connection and community, and advancing a culture of shared accountability and belonging.
- Advance student success through sustained institutional advocacy and the design and implementation of integrated academic support, leadership development, and engagement initiatives. Champion opportunities for meaningful student involvement and dialogue, particularly around issues of inclusion, bridgebuilding, and community, ensuring alignment with best practices in student development and measurable outcomes related to retention, engagement, and overall student experience.

Career Experience

New York University | Division of Student Affairs

2021 - Present

Vice President for Student Engagement & Dean of Students

Lead as a relationship driven and student-centered Vice President and Dean focused on supporting student learning and development and addressing systemic and individual barriers to student success. Provide strategic vision and leadership for the Division of Student Affairs and organization and supervision for The Office of Student Conduct, Residential Life and Housing Services, and Student Outreach and Engagement.

- Serve as a strategic liaison and senior level representative for all student populations, identifying and addressing systemic barriers to access, persistence, and success. Function as a bridge between students and University leadership, leveraging insights from the student experience to inform policy, shape institutional priorities, and drive decisions that advance an inclusive, equitable, and high-performing campus environment.
- Provide executive leadership for a comprehensive student affairs portfolio, advancing a student-centered strategy that promotes learning, development, and holistic well-being across a global university system; set strategic direction across core functional areas including Student Life, Student Conduct, Residential Life and Housing, Community Based Centers, Spiritual Life, Accessibility Services, and the Office of the Dean of Students, ensuring alignment with institutional priorities and consistent delivery of high-quality services.

The University of Vermont | Division of Student Affairs

2016 - 2021

Executive Director - Department of Residential Life

Lead as the chief housing officer for a residential life program that supports approximately 5,700 undergraduate and graduate students. Develop theoretically informed training opportunities, establish systems, and identify resources that solidify the commitment to a departmental approach toward developing individual skills and capacity designed to increase all staff's intercultural competence. Facilitated staff supervision, human resource management, development of intercultural competence, strategic planning, budget and financial management, emergency management, and policy development and review. Advance initiative on student development and adjudication processes, publications and marketing, assessment and evaluation, academic integration, recruitment, selection, training and development, and facilities management.

- Recruited, developed, and lead a multigenerational and extremely diverse team of 80+ individuals through 3 significant reorganizations.
- Administered a \$48M annual budget (with reserves of \$9M+) and spearheaded capital projects ranging from \$2-\$70MM dollars.

ABINTUS | Diversity and Organizational Management
Managing Partner – Diversity and Talent Acquisition

2019 – Present

Lead the daily operations of this boutique consulting firm with a 4-member team specializing in educational and non-profit operations: offered intercultural competence and inclusion longitudinal training curriculum and assessment.

- Reviewed and developed systems and sustained organizational change to support the recruitment and retention and of diverse staff; presented and facilitated training sessions, which included departmental expectations, supervision, ethics, role modeling, and diversity awareness.
- Regularly facilitate educational training geared toward senior leaders, faculty, and students to develop a more complex understanding of bias, difference, power, privilege, and intercultural competence.

The Consortium for Inclusion & Equity

2015 – Present

Associate – Assessment and Diversity Specialist

Lead professional development sessions for 30 - 80 attendees to discuss diversity and restorative practices. Headed up organizational climate assessment projects and advised stakeholders of the relevancy of diversity practices. Advise organizations on the proven steps to become interculturally competent and achieving integrated diversity. Delineate initiatives that produce inclusive and equitable work environments based on experiential learning and the reality of the ever-changing landscape of diversity.

- Collaborated on 10 projects including facilitating diversity and inclusion training for Spanish speaking staff.
- Generated an organizational climate assessment for an entire school district; facilitated several restorative practices trainings across several institutions of higher learning.

The University of Vermont | Division of Student Affairs

Associate Director – Assessment & Strategic Initiatives

2014 – 2016

Defined high quality, outcomes-based, meaningful assessment instruments that prompted significant departmental changes and communication strategies.

- Utilized a Results-Based Accountability (RBA) to generate an assessment plan in collaboration with the Assessment Strategy Group and Education Advisory Board.

Assistant Director – Residential Education

2013 – 2014

Responsible for the inner workings of 3 resident halls including 12 buildings and housing 1,800 students. Drove the professional success professional development of 4 full-time professionals and 1 Higher Education Student Affairs Graduate Assistant Residence Director.

- Selected as an ambassador for the institution at the National Collegiate Health Improvement Program (NCHIP) stakeholders working group.

Bard College

Assistant Director for Bard Educational Opportunity Program

2012 – 2013

Responsible for the academic success of over 100 Posse and Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) scholars. Delivered strong academic success and retention outcomes through the use of intrusive and hands on advising approaches.

- Lead student peer academic mentors program to support other scholars and provided one on one student academic advising.

Additional Experience

Residence Director | The University of Vermont | 2009 – 2012

Education

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership & Policy Studies | 2019 | The University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont

Dissertation: Transformative Preparation: Measuring the Intercultural Competence Development of HESA Students and Exploring the Intercultural Learning Experience Across Assistantship Sites

Master of Education in Higher Education | 2009 | SUNY at Buffalo, Buffalo, New York

Bachelor of Arts in Politics of Race | 2007 | Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, New York

Certifications

- Restorative Practices Certified Trainer (IIRP)
- Certified Facilitator, Results-Based Accountability (RBA)
- Licensed Trainer, Restorative Practices
- Qualified Administrator, Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)
- Qualified Administrator, Intercultural Conflict Styles Inventory (ICS)

Affiliations & Service

- Trustee Emeriti: International Institute of Restorative Practices
- Faculty Member Institute on the Curricular Approach ACPA: College Student Educators International
- Mentor NUFP: NASPA Undergraduate Fellowship Program
- Committee Member Higher Education & Student Affairs (HESA) Graduate Admissions: The University of Vermont
- Conference Planning Coordinator SJT Student Experience: Social Justice Training Institute
- Member & Past President Afro Latino Alumni Association (ALAA): Hobart and William Smith Colleges
- Member at Large & Former Secretary Hobart Alumni Council: Hobart and William Smith Colleges
- Member ACPA: College Student Educators International
- Member NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
- Alumni SJTI: Social Justice Training Institute

Presentations

- Effective Staffing Practices: Cultivating Innovative Techniques and Streamlining Best Practices-2019 NASPA Webinar
- Restorative Practices: A Bridge Between Intercultural Competence and Social-2019 NASPA National Conference
- Building Relationships and Addressing Impact: Utilizing Restorative Practices in Social Justice Dialogue -2018 NASPA
- How do we Know Students Are Better Off? Results-Based Accountability-2015 NASPA Assessment and Persistence Conference
- Past Presentations: In the Spirit of Allyhood - More than Just a Label, The Challenges of Being First, Masculinity and Male Privilege in the Workplace

Awards & Recognition

Hobart College Young Alumnus Award | The Jackie Gribbons' Practicum Advisor of the Year Award HESA Graduate Program University of Vermont | Civilian Service Award Department of Residential Life University of Vermont | Community Response and Healing Award Department of Residential Life University of Vermont | Greek Advisor of the Year Department of Residential Life University of Vermont | Institutional Leadership Award NASPA Region 1