

APPENDIX E

Statement of Personal Philosophy of Higher Education

When I was on the graduate faculty of USC, I taught (often with Betsy Barefoot) a seminar once a year for students in the master's and doctoral program in higher education administration. We would ask them to write, as part of their final examination, their philosophy of higher education. For most all of them, they had never been asked to think or write anything of this nature. But, of course, they did have philosophies, just as you do. These are the basis of our daily actions on behalf of student success:

- I believe in the dignity and worth of all students, each student.
- I believe that what matters most is what we do for *all* students, not just some students.
- I believe that I can teach students to be successful.
- I believe that there is a demonstrable body of knowledge about teaching student success.
- I believe that what a student is today, in terms of prior achievement, predicted collegiate ability and high school rank in class, is not necessarily a valid predictor of what the student can become.
- I believe that these indicators do not measure students' basic intelligence or motivation, nor our ability to successfully intervene.
- I believe that all students are “developmental.”
- I believe that all students are potentially at risk.
- I believe that we have to focus on the big picture, what is best for our institutions and all students, not necessarily our own students or programs.
- I believe that the greatest influence on students during their time in college is the influence of other students, hence the need to intentionally put our very best students in positions of influence on their peers.

- I believe that it is the obligation and opportunity for government (and our public institutions) to intervene and to engineer opportunities for students; this is, I admit, a brand of old-fashioned liberalism.
- I believe in the value of holistic education that addresses the intellectual, personal, social, physical, spiritual, and safety needs of all students.
- I believe that educationally purposeful and meaningful learning experiences can and should take place anywhere that students, faculty, and staff come together.
- I believe that we must be advocates for what I coined in 1995 as “students in transition”: first-time college students; new students to your campus, be that the first time in college or transfer students; sophomores; and senior students preparing to leave higher education, at least for the time being.
- I believe in the value of faculty, academic administrator, and student affairs partnerships.

In conclusion, I am not suggesting that my philosophy should be yours, just that you should have one, and should share it with your students especially.

Reflect, Write, and Share

How about writing your own personal philosophy of education? If you already have one, look at it and see what revisions might now be in order. Then share it with others and get their feedback. Ideally, you should do this in a group where each member does this and receives feedback. Most importantly, if you have a statement or write one now, by all means, share it with your students. Put it in your syllabi. This philosophy is you, and students need to know what you value and where they fit in with that.