Wow!

What a great last week we’ve had as a profession. For those of you who were fortunate enough to travel to NIRSA 2019 in Boston, I think we can all agree that we’re part of something bigger than Recreation and Well-Being. The supportive and innovative professionals in our field continue to challenge the status quo and push our boundaries in difficult conversations, diverse programming, and holistic well-being. It truly is an exciting time to be part of a progressive organization. I cannot speak for the entirety of NoCRSA and/or other professionals who attended but I personally find this conference to be rejuvenating, informative and crucial to our growth as professionals, but even more so as people. With that said, I believe that we are all aware of the rising cost of our annual conference. I had a great opportunity to attend a NIRSA town hall where recreational legends provided historical reference into the latest decisions, current leaders provided transparency of cost, all while engaging in strong civil, respectful, thought provoking conversations; many which are crucial to our success as an organization. At the forefront of this conversation were 3 main themes I took away that I would like to reflect with you now:

1- Governance works: for the first time ever, the people struck down a bylaw to our amendments in reference to our recent voting opportunity on increasing cost in relation to CPI and budgeting for the NIRSA in years to come. Our NIRSA leaders took the time to add an impromptu session and discuss and share the thought rationale behind a “standardized” CPI for futuristic and strategic planning in relation to financial aspects. Through conversations with our NIRSA headquarter leaders in this session, they admitted to mistakes, were sincere in listening to feedback, and were eager to work together to decide the future of our success together.

B- Our students/rising leaders play a vital role in our organization, yet it was continually brought to the attention of everyone that these leaders hold second tier statuses in our organization as they are still not allowed to vote in NIRSA governing decisions; even though many of these students could be impacted by these decisions if they desire to enter this field. When this topic came to the forefront I took the opportunity to take the mic. It is in my humble opinion, that our intentionality of everything we do must first be aligned with our values. NIRSAs values are: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, Global Perspective, Health & Wellbeing, Leadership, Service, and Sustainable communities. How can we set these core values and not include our students voice in these decisions? It is our responsibility as good professionals to educate our students about the history of our organization and explain the “why” of everything we do. It is our even greater responsibility as mentors to ensure they understand the significance and importance of the privilege to vote and exercise an educated opinion upon a subject. I relate it to calling an Ox a Bull. Yes, fundamentally it is flattering, but the Ox would still like to have what was rightfully theirs. Once again, I know this is an exciting time for our organization to discuss these impactful decisions and I welcome any feedback from you that I may share with our Regional Leaders as we move forward.

Lastly, but most importantly- equity, diversity, and inclusion must continue to drive the work we do. All of our respective identities continue to intersect and drive difficult conversations that we only begin to understand through empathy and effective communication. Meeting people where they are only works when someone is willing to go a lil more than 1/2 way. WE choose to be the 49% or the 51%- not just in difficult conversations but in unorthodox collaborations, random partnerships and strategic planning. As we continue to grow as an organization, lets strive to be the 51.

In Your Service,

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