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# THE SIGNPOST



**NCHO**  
**went digital.**  
**#resolutions.**

# Greetings North Carolina Housing Officers

Over the course of the years, our organization has been dedicated to connecting housing professionals across our state. *The Signpost* has been a staple of NCHO and has been distributed as a PDF document over our listserv, providing an opportunity for professionals to publish articles and be updated by the Executive Board. This year, our organization is taking the necessary step to meet one goal for communications: *The Signpost* will transition to MailChimp. Our listserv, however, will continue to be a place where our professionals can be resources to each other for areas such as job announcements and benchmarking. We hope that this change will allow more streamline publishing and sharing of knowledge across the great professionals in our state.

-- *Detric E. Robinson, Communications Coordinator*

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## Get Involved with NCHO!

Interested in getting more involved with NCHO? One of the many ways you can further your involvement and professional development is by serving on an NCHO committee! Volunteer for one of NCHO's committees by signing up here! <http://ncho.org/executive-council/leadership-opportunities/ncho-committees/>

Don't forget to like *AND* engage with us on Facebook





## From the President

Greetings NCHO!

I hope this issue of the Signpost finds you all well. Many of our members have wrapped up hiring of their residence life teams for the 2018-2019 academic year. Assignments teams are well underway to ensuring our bed spaces are filled. Summer conferences and operations staff are likely focused on the busy season right around the corner.

I want to take this time to thank the UNC Asheville team for hosting the joint NCHO/NCCPA conference. Kudos to Blair Jenkins and Stan Sweeney, our conference co-chairs, for their dedication and perseverance. The conference was well attended. We had 174 attendees represented by 37 North Carolina Colleges and Universities. Thank you to all who attended the conference,

you made it a success. Be on the lookout for more information coming soon about next year's conference in Charlotte!

This year's Executive Council is working hard to provide opportunities for members to engage with NCHO. Executive Council members are working to develop more informative ways to get new and old NCHO members involved and educated on what it means to be active in the state. Members can look forward to seeing new professional development opportunities to be offered this year as well.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage you to consider volunteering for a committee or getting involved with NCHO. We are looking for passionate and dedicated individuals keen on advancing our profession to serve on committees. Remember, this is your professional home and we hope that you will take advantage of the opportunity to network and engage with other members. If you have questions, reach out to current Executive Council members to learn more.

Thank you!

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## **Creating Space for Difficult Dialogues**

Living-Learning Villages as Catalysts for Engaging in Discussion across Difference

*--Dr. Anna L. Patton, Director, Impact Leadership Village (NC State)*

There is no doubt that we are living in trying times, particularly for those of us working on college campuses. With the question of free speech looming large in many administrators' minds, how might residential programs cultivate the space necessary for exploring these politically- and power-charged conversations? In this article, I would like to share one programmatic effort held to tackle difficult dialogues through an event sponsored by a Living-Learning Village, "Village Perspectives." Originally, "Perspectives" was a weekly dialogue series within one Living and Learning Village, the Impact Leadership Village, as cultivating critical listening and dialogue skills are closely aligned with relational leadership competencies developed in the Village (Cunliff & Eriksen, 2011; Seemiller, 2013). With the weekly format becoming unsustainable, "Perspectives" grew from a single Village opportunity to an all-Village event. While The Impact Leadership Village hosted this first session, all sixteen Living and Learning Villages were invited to participate in Village Perspectives to engage students in an experience intended to explore, enlighten, and challenge thoughts as well as assumptions on the selected topic. The program topic, the racial implications of the word 'Dixie' in the University *Alma Mater*, was selected as an intentional extension of previous Inter-Village and University-wide programming regarding racial justice and equity issues.

The goals of this program were to engage students in interdisciplinary, academic discourse, demonstrate active listening for understanding, and practice responsive dialogue across difference. The first goal of the program focused on creating a platform for students of various academic pathways and lived experiences to join together in discussion over a contentious issue lead by a faculty expert in the focal area. We achieved this goal through student attendance of over 50 people--all with different interpretations and inputs into the discussion--who were able to engage directly with the faculty moderator. The second goal was to practice active listening for understanding, which means listening not just to talk back but listening to empathize. We

demonstrated this goal through conflict with civility where even people with opposing views still listened to and validated the perspectives of others. Finally, the program aimed to help student practice dialogue across difference. Given the current political climate nationally and in higher education, the ability to question and discuss multiple viewpoints is an imperative leadership skill (Cunliff & Eriksen, 2011; Seemiller, 2013) for all students, so this program allowed students to practice how to respond rather than react to differences in perspectives while being challenged on their own assumptions and beliefs.

The event sought to engage any residential student, especially those in Living and Learning Villages, in productive dialogue on how and what we, as a community, can do to ensure NC State is a welcoming and inclusive community for all. To do so, the “Village Perspectives” topic for November explored: what are the racial implications of the word ‘Dixie’ in NC State’s *Alma Mater*? The event began with the hosting Village’s Director reiterating the guiding question, providing information regarding the development of the program content itself, and establishing shared agreements for engaging in the perspectives dialogue. The community agreements included owning your own truth through speaking with “I” statements, responding to others’ ideas and arguments instead of personal (ad hominem) attacks, and centering our shared identity as Wolfpack Nation community members. After the opening remarks contextualizing the event, the faculty moderator from the History Department, Dr. Blair Kelley, delivered a brief overview about the history of the word ‘Dixie,’ specifically as it became nationalized through blackface performances by minstrel troupes across the South. Dr. Kelley noted that while the word ‘Dixie’ had multiple, debated origins, the word was not found in widespread use until after its appearance in these minstrel acts. Dr. Kelley accented her comments through a visual presentation of pictures depicting minstrel characters, playbills advertising the performance of the song ‘Dixie,’ and an audio recording of minstrel performers singing the song.

After Dr. Kelley concluded her historical overview, the Village host opened the floor for questions, comments, and discussion with Dr. Kelley moderating the open dialogue. We scheduled an hour for dialogue, and the majority of the time, student engaged thoughtfully, critically, and respectfully. In particular, the conversation had a two main points of debate: can the meaning of words change over time such that the racist roots no longer apply as well as for whom does the word simply represent a geographical area and for whom does it represent something larger? Multiple students shared their personal experiences and stories with both their family upbringings and their experiences at NC State illustrating both points. Unfortunately toward the end of the event, a group of students from an outside organization began to shift the conversation to imply that our dialogue was intended to stimulate a ban on the word Dixie. Thankfully, Dr. Kelley was able to redirect this commentary back to the focus of the dialogue, which was to explore the historical, racial elements of the word 'Dixie' not to argue for its removal or presence.

This event resulted in three main positive and lasting effects: initiating conversations about symbols of white supremacy, illuminating the complicated history of naming buildings on college campuses, and reinforcing our interaction with campus partners. First, this program opened dialogue about the ways in which symbols of racism and white supremacy show up everyday on college campuses. By examining our *Alma Mater*, this program analyzed a song that is used at every major university tradition, sporting event, and even in campus branding to understand the racial implications of the word 'Dixie,' as it was tied to blackface minstrelsy performances. Additionally, we hosted the conversation in a building named after an individual affiliated with the KKK and white supremacist activity in the state in the early 1900s. The choice of location highlights how complicated it is to disentangle everyday parts of campus from the history of white supremacy in US higher education. Finally, this program

strengthened our campus partnerships--particularly with student government and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. To successfully implement this program, we had to ensure buy-in from multiple stakeholders of the conversation, which served to bolster our cross-campus collaboration with both academic and student life partners.

In addition to the positive and lasting effects mentioned above, Village Perspectives was particularly strong in creating an intentional platform to highlight multiple meanings of a complex historical construct, 'Dixie', including its racial underpinnings. However, there were a few areas in which the program can be improved. The most significant area of feedback for this event was underestimating public blowback. For the first four weeks of planning, there was not even a hint of tension or dissent. However, one op-ed in one statewide political blog blew the event up to much larger proportions within one week of the program date, which prompted our outreach to extra campus partners. Had we not underestimated public reaction to the dialogue topic, we could have put together a comprehensive contingency plan with campus partners much sooner and been prepared for the related media storm. Program moderation is an additional area of future consideration. While planning focused on allowing multiple student perspectives to be heard in discussion, we did not consider the implication of having only one scholarly point of view in the framing of the dialogue. To truly embrace the intention of multiple perspectives, multiple scholars could be invited to address the guiding question.

With the complex racial history of higher education in the United States and the growing need for engagement in difficult dialogues, other campuses could adapt this program through a few key pathways. While we started with our *Alma Mater*, other campuses can examine their own campus traditions and histories to identify racially problematic content, like building or event names. Campus leadership can then use this campus-specific content to facilitate a

dialogue-based program that analyzes the racial impacts of the identified practice or place. Other campuses can also adapt this program by assessing faculty expertise as a guiding factor in program content development. In connection with our guiding question, we focused on faculty members engaged in research and teaching on issues of racial justice; however, other campuses might have faculty members with diverse areas of expertise and willingness to moderate dialogue that could address any number of scholarly topics relevant to difficult dialogues, such as war and militarization. Finally, adaptations of this program could use current events, such as the Las Vegas shooting, as the grounding, guiding question with event discussion and dialogue focused on connecting global or national events to the local community, like gun control and access on campus. All in all, it is imperative that we, as residential life professionals, do not shy away from difficult dialogues. Instead, we are at a critical juncture to cultivate the space our students need to explore challenging, multi-layered ideas.

## **References**

**Cunliffe, A. L & Eriksen, M. (2011). Relational leadership. *Human Relations*, 64(11), 1425-1449.**

**Seemiller, C. (2013). *The Student Leadership Competencies Guidebook: Designing Intentional Leadership Learning and Development*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

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**“NCARH 2018: Taking a Leap of Faith”**



Throughout our lives, we often find ourselves in new and unfamiliar situations that push us outside our comfort zone. Starting a new job, moving to a new place, or entering a new relationship are just a few ways in which many of us have been challenged personally and professionally. For more than 150 delegates who convened at Meredith College for NCARH 2018, the challenge

was embracing their role as student leaders.

During the opening ceremonies on Friday night, students and advisors heard a powerful keynote address well suited to this challenge, a message that would set the tone for the entire weekend. The speaker was Jenn Latino, Senior Principal Strategic Consultant at Ellucian and former Assistant Vice President for Student Success at Campbell University. Jenn, who's professional career in student affairs began as a residence director at Meredith, acknowledged that we face many choices throughout our lives that are risky and perhaps even scary. In those situations, Jenn encouraged her audience to "take a leap of faith," trusting that the risk and the anticipation would all be worth it in the end.

As an example, Jenn shared the story of one of her former students at the University of South Carolina, Josh Dawsey, a journalism major who wrote articles for the school newspaper surrounding the confederate flag controversy at the state capitol. After his articles gained national attention, Josh was offered a position with the *Wall Street Journal*, an offer that would require him to move from rural South Carolina to New York City. Needless to say, such a move would be a huge change for Josh, but with encouragement from Jenn and others, he took the "leap of faith" and accepted the job. Josh went on to work for Politico and most recently joined the *Washington Post*, where he is part of the press group that travels with the president aboard Air Force One.

Jenn's inspirational words were the perfect beginning to a weekend of professional development, networking, and relationship building. During lunch on Saturday, the State Board of Directors facilitated the first known NCARH open forum, in which we actively sought feedback from participants about what NCARH meant to them and what they thought would make the organization better. In addition to providing great feedback for the organization's leadership, the forum also motivated several delegates, including first-time attendees, to

get more involved. We went from a single candidate for a single position on the state board at the start of the conference to 8 candidates by the time we reconvened boardroom on Saturday afternoon. As a result, we were able to fill all but one of the positions for the upcoming affiliation year!

The weekend concluded with an especially classy closing banquet, during which we recognized all of the wonderful work by individuals and institutions across the state, and expressed appreciation for those who have been instrumental to NCARH's success over the past year. Below you can find a comprehensive list of the award recipients - please take a moment to congratulate them on their accomplishments!

On behalf of myself and NCHO, I want to extend a sincere thank you to the students and staff at Meredith College for hosting their first ever NCARH Conference, and in particular the conference advisors, Heidi LeCount and Rachel Downey. It truly was a World of Opportunities! In addition, I want to thank Rachel Tinker, Alaina Cole, Lucas Daugherty, Jake Hofmann, Aileen Bell, and Megan Shannonhouse for their distinguished service on the State Board of Directors for the past year - you all are exceptional student leaders, and I'm excited to see where your "leaps of faith" take you in the future.

Finally, as I conclude my term as NCARH Advisor, I want to express my sincerest appreciation for those who have supported me in this role and made it a meaningful professional experience - my supervisor, Chris Gregory, and the leadership at UNC Greensboro; members of the NCHO Executive Council who have supported NCARH financially and through a strengthened structural relationship; fellow RHA and NRHH advisors across the state without whom this organization could not exist; and of course the students with whom I've had the privilege to work. I am proud to welcome the new NCARH Advisor, Sarah Magness from Wake Forest University, and believe that she has the passion and energy to continue growing NCARH.

We hope you'll plan to join us for NCARH 2019 at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, which will be February 8 - 10, 2019. In the meantime, I encourage you all to continue taking those leaps of faith - you never know where it may lead!

### **2017 - 2018 Annual Award Recipients**

- RHA President of the Year - Kayli Childs (UNC Wilmington)
- NRHH President of the Year - Scott Blackburn (UNC Wilmington)
- Student of the Year - Agustin Baler (UNC Chapel Hill)
- First Year Experience Award - Aidan Mangan (NC State University)
- Distinguished Service Award - Rachel Tinker (Elon University)
- NRHH Chapter of the Year - Psi Phi Chapter (UNC Wilmington)
- NRHH Case Study Competition - Yong Su An (Wake Forest University)

### **2018 - 2019 State Board of Directors**

- Director - Rachel Tinker (Elon University) (serving in an acting capacity for 30 days, or until a new director is elected)
- Associate Director for Finance - Ashley Fowler (UNC Greensboro)
- Associate Director for Administration - Ayanna Williams (UNC Pembroke)
- Associate Director for Membership - Kira Griffith (UNC Chapel Hill)
- Associate Director for Marketing - Gabby Turner (UNC Wilmington)
- Associate Director for Recognition - Ashley O'Bruba (UNC Charlotte)
- Annual Conference Co-Chairs - Ashley Mitchell & Sarah Roberson (UNC Charlotte)
- Advisor - Sarah Mangum (Wake Forest University)

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# ProDevo Challenge - Win Prizes!

Student affairs professionals spend their time and energy pouring into their students and staff every day. The Professional Development Committee at NCHO is excited to offer opportunities of support, growth, challenge and collaboration with institutions across the state. While NCHO has offered various workshops, socials and trainings in the past, this year the organization will also be hosting webinars, additional drive in conferences and an overall professional development challenge.

The professional development challenge is a state wide challenge encouraging participation in the variety of opportunities NCHO is providing throughout this year. Each month NCHO will post the professional development opportunities happening throughout the state of North Carolina. ***It is our challenge to you to attend at least 7 professional development opportunities before the NCHO conference in October.***

**Once an NCHO member has completed 7 professional development opportunities they will be entered to win prizes** such as a scholarship to the NCHO annual conference, monetary gifts towards regional or national conferences or other gifts that continue to encourage growth in this career field.

We are excited to build bridges, learn together and make time for our own professional development this year. There will be more details and information about the professional development challenge on the NCHO website but if you have any questions please contact the professional development chair select, Melony Texidor at [prodevo-chair-select@ncho.org](mailto:prodevo-chair-select@ncho.org).

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# Upcoming Events for New Pros

**February 27, 6:30 pm: Dinner in Downtown Greensboro- PM** Emma Key's Burgers [2206 Walker Ave, Greensboro, NC 27403](https://www.google.com/maps/place/2206+Walker+Ave,+Greensboro,+NC+27403)

Folks from the Triad Area are invited to dinner at one of Greensboro's local establishments. Come one, come all! Email Ryan Collins at [ryan.collins@uncg.edu](mailto:ryan.collins@uncg.edu) to RSVP.

**Hike at Hanging Rock** Saturday, March 10 Meet at 10:00 AM at Visitor's Center [1790 Hanging Rock Park Rd, Danbury, NC 27016](https://www.google.com/maps/place/1790+Hanging+Rock+Park+Rd,+Danbury,+NC+27016)

Join your fellow res-lifers for a moderate hike at Hanging Rock State Park. Pack a lunch and your camera to enjoy a day in nature! Email Ryan Collins at [ryan.collins@uncg.edu](mailto:ryan.collins@uncg.edu) to RSVP.

**April 7-8: Human Rock 'N' Roll Race!** Join Katie in running a relay, 1 mile, 5k or half marathon in Raleigh this April! Reach out to Katie Lewis at 4078649817 or [katie.michelle.lewis@gmail.com](mailto:katie.michelle.lewis@gmail.com) if you are interested in attending this event. You can learn more here: <http://www.runrocknroll.com/raleigh/>

**April 28: Charlotte Knights Baseball Game!** Tickets will likely be \$22 unless we get enough people for a group rate. Feel free to come to UNC Charlotte's campus and ride our new light rail over to the stadium with other new professionals. If you are interested in attending the game, let Jen Amano know at [jamano@uncc.edu](mailto:jamano@uncc.edu)