

## *Reflecting on Our Past*

### *Keynote by Robert Gatti*

The Ohio College Personnel Association  
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Thank you and good morning. I am honored to be asked to be here today. I am excited about this opportunity, but also a little confused as to why I was asked to speak. The announcement indicated that I've been a leader and a member of OCPA since its inception, but the fact is, I wasn't quite 21 years old when the thought of forming OCPA occurred in May 1975. So I did a little research to prepare for this presentation and found the list of possible speakers.

This isn't the first time this has happened to me. I was hired at Otterbein College in 1978 as a Hall Director and Greek Adviser. After a year and as I got to know my immediate supervisor, David Peters, he proceeded to tell me he was glad he stuck to his guns and they selected me, and that Dean VanSant, the Vice President, and Karl Oldag, the Dean for Student Development at the time, really preferred another individual, but David had a gut feeling I would be a good choice. I thanked him for supporting me, stayed at Otterbein, and was promoted two years later to Campus Center Director. During that time we bid out the food service contract and Karl Oldag, who had been the former Dean for Student Development at Otterbein College, was the Vice President for Sales for the new vendor. He proceeded to tell me after they got the contract that he was glad he stuck to his gut instinct, that David and Dean VanSant were not supportive of my selection – but he was – and he was happy they hired me instead of the other candidate. I thanked him for supporting me, stayed at Otterbein, and was promoted two years later to Dean for Student Development. At some point during those next four or five years, Dean VanSant, our Vice President for Student Affairs, who had been at the college for 40-some years, was introducing me to a group for a talk. During the introduction Dean VanSant relayed the story that when I applied to Otterbein College in 1978, her two associates, David Peters and Karl Oldag, had preferred another individual, but that she really stuck to her guns; it was the first time she had ever overruled her staff and she recommended hiring me – and she was glad they hired me. It was at that moment as I walked up to the stage that I realized that the first person turned them down and I was their second choice.

Public speaking doesn't come easily to me and I really have to work hard at these presentations, so I decided I would begin preparing for this keynote address one month prior to the conference. I had a fairly clear schedule on September 11 and, as many of you know, that day changed dramatically for all of us with the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Undoubtedly, every one of us will remember exactly where we were on that fatal day. As the day unfolded and the days followed, I was reminded of the role that Student Affairs professionals play in times of crisis, whether it was the start of Desert Storm in January 1991 or the day the Challenger exploded on January 28, 1986 or the assassination attempt of President Reagan on March 30, 1981. Many of us were at ACPA when Secretary of State Alexander Haig said, "I am in charge." During each of these times and times when personal crisis hit our campus – such as the death of a student, campus fire or other campus crisis – the Student Affairs professionals are asked to respond to the emergency while suppressing our own emotions and to assist presidents and other members of the community to put in place programs and services that enable our communities to express grief and sorrow about the tragic occurrences and to start the healing moments together. Marvelene Hughes, former ACPA President and currently President of California State University Stanislaus, in a recent article wrote about her reflections on that day on September 11, 2001, and I quote from her article. "I believe it was in Student Affairs that I was

enabled to develop a profound appreciation for humanity. I believe deeply in the ability of this profession and in the important role it plays in the lives of students and other members of the campus community. I fully believe I am a better person by virtue of the profession I chose. I also believe I am a better university president because of the lessons learned in Student Affairs.”

In times of crisis, OCPA has always played a role, being one of the first organizations to open discussions and respond to the issues. I am confident there will be plenty of time over the next two days for reflection on what is happening following recent events in our country. Among the many principles and practices learned and taught through OCPA conferences are subjects such as managing crisis and campus emergencies, learning and sharing, especially with one and other. Some success and some failures. OCPA has always been an organization that had the courage to bring these issues to the forefront. Empathy, diversity and ethics are all key principles that have been part of the dialogue that has occurred within this organization and has been demonstrated by the fact that OCPA was the first division to adopt an Affirmative Action Statement and Policy. Change, compassion and passion along with trust and an openness to fresh perspectives have always been a part of this organization.

#### Now to the history of OCPA.

Most of my comments on the history came from past minutes and reports, conversations with past leaders of the organizations and – this is a scary thought – from memory. So if some dates are off by a year, blame it on memory. The first meeting of a committee to form an ACPA state chapter was held during the spring of 1975. Philip Tripp, who was a professor of higher education at The Ohio State University, asked Bob Rogers to convene a group of faculty and professionals to explore this possibility. Bob Rogers is with us today and I would like for him to please stand and be recognized. Thank you, Bob, for your continued commitment to OCPA. We should also be thankful for the continued support to OCPA from our higher education faculty. It should be noted that the idea for creating OCPA started with Philip Tripp, Bob Rogers and Jerry Saddlemire, all faculty at their respective institutions. At the time, in 1975, there was a fall meeting that was oriented more towards NASPA and involved mostly chief Student Affairs officers. The organization that sponsored the fall meeting was the Ohio Association of Student Personnel Administrators (OASPA). A spring meeting was held, but it was loosely structured and organized by a number of preparation programs and colleges and universities in the state. The spring meeting was open to all Student Affairs staff from all levels. The proposal was to initiate an ACPA state charter in Ohio that would hold a spring conference. There were two premises: the organization would target all levels of staff and anyone at all levels within the Student Affairs Division could hold leadership positions. In late May 1975, the proposal was mailed to Ohio ACPA members, and approved. During the summer the committee, that included Bob Rogers, Jerry Saddlemire, Fayette Paulsen, Barb Keller, Richard Hudson and Dick Bredemeier, developed bylaws for the new organization, and in August 1975 the Ohio Personnel Guidance Association (OPGA) approved the bylaws and the organization became recognized within the state. At that time ACPA was affiliated with APGA, thus state associations had to fall under the state affiliate of APGA. In fact, we had to pay dues to APGA and OPGA. At the same time a letter of intent was mailed to ACPA along with proposed bylaws and OPGA’s endorsement. Finally, in October 1975 ACPA approved the first ten steps of the organizational process.

On March 25, 1976 the first general meeting of OCPA was held at Bowling Green State University. The first president of OCPA was elected that year and that individual is with us today – Faye Paulsen from Bowling Green State University. Faye, would you please stand? Faye is the only person in Ohio who has been president of all three state personnel associations: the Ohio Association of Women Deans, Administrators and Counselors (OAWDAC), the Ohio Association of Student Personnel Administrators (OASPA) and OCPA. I remember first meeting Faye and how gracious and kind she was and how she made me feel welcomed. Faye set the tone for OCPA and made sure that everyone at every level, new and seasoned, felt welcomed in this organization. I do remember a story I want to share about Faye. It was during her term as OASPA President. The conference was held at Deer Creek and I was asked to

bring in some type of entertainment to liven up the evening's festivities. You have to understand that OASPA is a much more reserved organization. Conference usually called for professional dress, so I certainly wanted to liven it up. I hired a 4' 5" accordion player named Esther from Diebel's Restaurant in Columbus, Ohio. How rowdy could a 4' 5" accordion player be? Esther came to the conference, pulled out her accordion, and had chief Student Affairs officers and others standing on tables, dancing and singing. Faye had to have been mortified; yet she was so gracious. The only comment she made to me was "That certainly was lively." Faye, thank you for all you have done for the profession, OCPA, and for this inexperienced new professional. You certainly are a role model for many of us.

The first annual spring conference was held at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio on March 24, 1977. That had to have been shortly after Kenyon went coed. Topics included *The Future of Student Affairs: Tomorrow's Higher Education Model* (or the *THE Model*). This was a monograph written by Dr. Robert Brown. It is interesting to note that in Bob Brown's writing of the *THE Model*, he promoted the development of living/learning environments, the collaboration between faculty and Student Affairs professionals in emphasizing teaching and learning, and the recognition that learning can take place in many different models. Concepts as relative today as they were 25 years ago.

President Elect for OCPA, Mark Noffsinger, suffered a heart attack and it was decided that Don Schwingruber from Bluffton College would replace him as a Program Chair and also President Elect. Don is also with us today. Don, would you please stand?

In Richard Light's book, "Making the Most Out of College: Students Speak Their Minds," he strongly encourages the importance of relationships, especially those between faculty and students. Don Schwingruber has lived that philosophy all his professional life. In fact, one of Don's favorite quotes is "It's all about relationships." To give you an idea of how Don "walks the talk," every other year Don holds a reunion for former student leaders and their families. It would not be unusual for up to 100 participants, ranging in years from students in the 70's to current graduates, to attend what must be a wonderful family gathering. To me, that is what relationships are all about. During Don's last Summer Leadership Retreat, they celebrated his 25 years of service to Bluffton College. And all 25 of his Bowling Green State University interns were represented on a separate quilt square that was put together and given to Don at the retreat.

In March 1978 OCPA hosted its second annual conference at Lorain Community College, thus demonstrating this young organization's commitment to our two-year colleges and universities. During the conference there were sessions such as *Lifestyles for the New Professionals*, which reiterated our commitment to the new and emerging professional in the field. Under the leadership of Dick Bredemeier, OCPA sponsored her first New Professionals Conference, which was held in the fall of 1979. The intent of the New Professionals Conference was to sponsor a workshop throughout the state at three different sites. Thus, programs were held at Baldwin Wallace College, the University of Cincinnati and Otterbein College. In essence, it was a traveling road show with similar presentations given at each site, and new professionals could drive a short distance to get a quality staff development program. In fact, that has always been one of the primary functions of OCPA – to provide inexpensive, quality staff development through conferences for professionals in the state. I believe the registration fee for the first new professionals conference was \$10.00, a relief to many new professionals during a time of limited funding. The late 70's and early 80's were challenging times for many colleges and universities in the state of Ohio. Projected declining enrollments plus reduced funding and the sluggish economy led to meager budgets and limited funds for many Student Affairs divisions. Those times are upon us again as was indicated in this past Saturday's edition of *The Columbus Dispatch*. The headline was "Ohio State University Job Cuts Coming but the Scope is Unclear." The article talks about the dismal economic forecast affecting Ohio State University and that job cuts are likely. President Kirwan is stated as saying, "We will have to do more with less." During the early 80's this was referred to as

downsizing; in the 90's it was right sizing. I am anxiously awaiting the new terminology for the current state of affairs.

OCPA has had a long history of bringing quality programs and speakers to the various conferences over the years. Let me just read to you some of the individuals who have presented at the various conferences over the years – and I am sure I have left somebody out: Bob Rogers who probably leads the list in the number of presentations to OCPA, Marcia Baxter Magolda, Philip Tripp, Maureen Young, Ann Fitzgerald, George Kuh, Janet Greenwood, Mikell O'Donnell, Jay Stormer, Fran Lucas, Pat Kearney, Marvelene Hughes, Jeanne Likens, Patricia King, Richard Hollingsworth, Jerry Saddle mire, Susan Komeves, Barbie Tootle, Leila Moore, Peggy Barr, Richard Stevens, Richard Bredemeier, Richard Mulendore, Carmen Newburg, Bill Thomas, Peter Meyers, Kathryn Briggs and Charles Shroeder – just to name a few of the conference presenters. We have been blessed with talented, knowledgeable leaders in our field. These individuals have published a combined 217 books and over 1,587 journal articles. Are you impressed that I researched those numbers? Don't be. I just made them up to get your attention.

Kathy Venema was President of OCPA IN 1981-82 – Kathy is with us today – Kathy, would you please stand? During this time several new Board positions, including the position of Student Personnel Preparation Program Chair, the Government Relations Chair, the New Professionals Task Force Chair and the Awards Committee Chair, were established. It was under Kathy's leadership that some very difficult decisions were made by OCPA. Most of those decisions revolved around the finances of the organization and being able to maintain financial solvency. Kathy, I am glad you made the right decisions and glad for all the work you and the Executive Board committed to keeping this organization afloat.

During the early 80's a number of new awards were established by OCPA: the Young Professionals Award, the Philip Tripp Award and the Innovative Program Award. The Young Professionals Award was later named the New Professionals Award in memory of Mark Noffsinger, President of OCPA during 1980-81. Richard Toby Bears designed a new OCPA logo, which was first used in the October issue of the *OCPA News* and continues to be used today. By 1983 OCPA had 535 members and won the State Division of the Year Award. The spring conference was held at Otterbein College and a panel discussion included such major leaders in the field as Dr. Margaret Barr who was then President of ACPA; Dr. Mikell O'Donnell, President of NASPA; Dr. Richard Stevens, Executive Director of NASPA; Dr. Karen Arms, President of OAWDAC; and Mr. Joel Rudy, President of OASPA. That year under Steve Markwood's leadership, OCPA, OASPA and OAWDAC jointly published a statewide newsletter and talks began for the development of an Ohio Journal of Student Personnel. Steve Markwood, our eighth President of OCPA, is currently President of Alderson Broaddus College in West Virginia. I did have the opportunity to exchange an e-mail with Steve and he remembers fondly his years with OCPA, and the effort to involve professionals at all levels within the organization. Steve visited the Master Programs at Bowling Green, Kent State, Miami, Ohio State and Ohio University to encourage graduate students to join and become involved. Steve states in his e-mail, "My service on the OCPA Executive Committee was some of the most rewarding experiences in my professional career (sure was easier than being a college president)." Steve sends his regards to all his colleagues with whom he had the pleasure to work while on OCPA.

Technology was on the horizon in 1984 and OCPA responded as one of the first organizations to devote a conference theme on *Technology and Student Affairs*. At that time many of us didn't have a computer on our desk and OCPA was establishing a conference around that theme. Susan Eckland Leen became President and is the first – and hopefully only President – to attain a two-year term due to the President Elect moving to Florida State. Susan is with us today. Would you please stand? Susan Ekland Leen has probably served the longest of anyone on the Board, holding various positions including her first position as Membership Chair from 1980-82. As mentioned earlier, it was at that time OCPA was

considering closing down the association because of financial problems. Under some wise leadership, Susan Eckland Leen was asked to serve as Membership Chair. A mandate was given to Susan on the quote of number of new members that was to be increased. Susan did achieve the goal and was so successful that she was asked to serve in the leadership role as Membership Chair of ACPA. Susan was one of many OCPA leaders who moved on to major leadership roles within the national organization.

The spring 1986 conference had as our keynote speaker Dr. Peter Briggs and Kathryn Meyers. Yes, of Meyers-Briggs fame. 1987-89 saw a number of firsts in the area of diversity, with the creation of the Affirmative Action Chair on the Board and the development of an Affirmative Action Statement. OCPA was the first state association to do this. The spring conference theme was on Diversity and it was the first conference that focused on disabilities, GLBT issues and ethnic diversity. Dr. Marvelene Hughes, President of ACPA, was the keynote speaker.

OCPA also cosponsored the first ACPA Regional Workshop on Cultural Diversity, which was held at Otterbein College. Under the leadership of Joanne Risacher, who is with us today – Joanne, would you please stand – Joanne received the ACPA State Division Outstanding Leader Award and, under her leadership, OCPA also received all three major ACPA awards including State Division of the Year Award and the Outstanding Achievement in Membership Award. Joanne is also a role model for a number of seasoned veterans. After thirty plus years working in the field, Joanne returned to school at Ohio University and this summer completed her Ph.D. Congratulations, Dr. Risacher. There is hope for me yet.

By 1990 OCPA had 870 members, the largest state division. The first issue of *Connections*, a journal for Student Affairs new professionals and graduate students, was published. Dr. Carney Strange, Bowling Green State University, served as Editor. The fall conference in 1990 was the first OCPA conference to actively recruit undergraduates to attend. There were 314 participants who registered for the conference. The major issue during the 1990-91 year was the vote by ACPA to disaffiliate with AACD. The debate over philosophical and pragmatic issues surrounding the affiliation was intense. Extensive discussions, numerous articles and countless meetings preceded the vote. Walt Gilliard announced at the spring conference that the vote to disaffiliate had passed. In May 1992 OCPA sponsored a first seminar for clerical, secretarial and administrative support staff. It was held at Otterbein College. I believe this was the first professional organization in the state to sponsor a program for secretarial and administrative support staff. Also, during that year the Career Development Committee sponsored a first-ever summer workshop for mid-level managers. The program was held in July of 1992 at Capital University. As you can tell, OCPA was very active in promoting ongoing workshops and seminars for professionals at all levels, and by the early 90's this included students and support staff.

In 1992 we were celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students. Dick Mullendore was Chair of Inter-association Task Force that included 13 associations to study the Joint Statement. He was our keynote speaker. I kept a copy of his speech. Don't know why, but I do have it! He spoke to his concern for external groups who are "pushing us back to the days of in loco parentis." He was concerned about the tremendous pressure from our local communities and federal and state policy makers for colleges and universities to go off the campus and deal with students and their behavior where they may be. He warned us that institutional authority should never be used to simply duplicate the function of general laws for behavior for students who violate civil law off campus, and stressed that only where institutional interest as an academic community is clearly involved should the special authority of the institution be extended. His foresight on this issue was incredible as we deal with the issues of enforcing college/university policies off campus ten years later.

Karen Hagans became President of OCPA during 1992-93. Karen is with us today. Would you please stand? Carol Russell had to ask Karen twice to see if she was willing to serve as President. The first time Karen said no and, upon Carol's persistence, she convinced Karen to serve as OCPA President.

Another thing you may not realize about Karen is... The role of the Past President is to run the election process. Karen was on maternity leave at the time she served as Past President and her doctor, like many doctors, advised her to rest while the baby was sleeping. Well, what Karen did was to do the elections for the new OCPA President while her son, Brandon, was sleeping. In 1993-94 Becky Smith from Otterbein College was honored with the ACPA State Division Leader Award. What is unusual about this is, Becky was recognized by ACPA two years after her term as OCPA President! Typically, ACPA State Division Leader Awards are given to current state Presidents. During 1994-95 Leslie Harby McNeil was President and OCPA embarked on a long and tedious process of developing a Strategic Plan and revising the Mission and Vision Statements for the organization. This was a period in time of reevaluation and reorganization within OCPA.

Under the leadership of Luther Smith, President in 1996-97, OCPA finalized and approved the Strategic Plan 2000. Luther is with us today. Please stand. OCPA established a rolling three-year calendar for conferences, set in motion a membership survey, established a marketing plan, and put in place OCPA use of technology through Web pages. OCPA did publish The Ohio College Student Development Journal and Luther served as Editor. Luther has worked at Xavier University and every time he plans to leave, he is promoted. Soon he will be President!

Robin Gagnon was President from 1997-98. Robin is with us today. Robin missed the last OCPA Executive Board meeting. He is in such a habit of showing up at Otterbein that he came to our campus not realizing the meeting was held down at The Ohio State University. In 1997-98 a one-day drive-in spring conference was held and presenters Marcia Baxter Magolda and Pat King presented a daylong workshop on *The Reflective Judgment Model*. In 1998 OCPA moved away from the one-day drive-in conferences in fall and spring and moved to a one-conference format that was held over multiple days. The conferences were also moved to hotels as opposed to college campuses. Sandra Emerick was President from 1998-99. Sandra is here; would you please stand? Besides her work in Student Affairs, Sandra has a passion for theatre, and I was hoping we would see the blonde version of Sandra, as I understand she had the lead role in *Evita*.

Marty Manning is current President. Marty is with us today. If he looks a little tired, he and his wife just had a baby. In the year 2000, OCPA had a joint conference with Michigan CPA and Susan Komives was the keynote speaker. This was Susan's third visit and second keynote to OCPA. She was keynote speaker in 1991 and in 1979 served as a program presenter. The Case Study Competition was named in honor of Bob Duback. An extensive Membership Survey was completed last year, which is now the Driving Our New Vision 2004 Statement.

President Elect Scott Smith is with us today. Scott, would you please stand? Scott is currently working on his Ph.D. at The Ohio State University.

What are some of the challenges that face OCPA? Although I haven't been as involved with the organization in recent years, I can only guess that the challenges are the same as those we have faced over the past 25 years. As we talked this morning, you have been introduced to a number of people involved in this organization, mostly Past Presidents. As I reflect on the past of OCPA, the key to this organization is the people – wonderful people who care passionately about this organization and the work that her members do.

The future for OCPA looks bright, especially given all the work done on the Strategic Plan 2004. Let me close with a story. In 1904 when *Peter Pan* began playing in London, the children were so enthralled by the flying hero of Never Never Land that they took his words literally. If they believed strongly enough, then they would be able to fly. J. M. Barry, the imaginative creator of *Peter Pan* began hearing from distraught parents whose children had injured themselves attempting to fly. He could have issued a statement or written a disclaimer for parents to bring their parents to the play. Instead,

he incorporated a slight change in Peter's formula for flying. His solution was effective, imaginative and long lasting. His solution perfectly fit the situation, and even improved on what originally existed – the ideal way to solve a problem. From then on, in order to fly, the children in the story needed to be sprinkled with dust of Tinkerbell, a pixie. OCPA leadership has developed an extensive Strategic Plan and Vision for the year 2004. I am confident that with a little dust OCPA will continue to be a leader in the state of Ohio.

Friends, I have enjoyed very much this wonderful opportunity to speak before you today. Thank you.

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