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LEARNING CONSIDERED:
EMERGENT DESIGN IN STUDENT AFFAIRS

by

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SYNTHESIS*
MASTER OF ARTS
CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

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Advisor: Peter J. Taylor

Abstract: This paper is an argument for how Student Affairs practitioners in Higher Education can do a better job pursuing and living up to the profession's stated goals for student learning. It is not a balanced or thorough presentation of facts and theories and it makes no attempt to review all of the pertinent literature. It does use extensive quotations from key documents and authorities in relevant fields and those excerpts are intended not only to support the argument and display the ideas and language necessary to develop a learning centered culture, but to also point out that people working in the field have known what to do about student learning for more than twenty years. On many campuses, these goals have proven difficult to embody and achieve. This paper tries to explain that failure and point to some different approaches and directions for the field to explore. The extensive excerpts and quotations also represent an underlying premise of my work, that the words we use matter and here are some authoritative and in some cases peer-reviewed words so it is okay to use them and start moving forward. If my argument is weak or misguided, it can still succeed to the extent that it encourages thinking and discussion about the ideas it promotes.

* The Synthesis can take a variety of forms, from a position paper to curriculum or professional development workshop to an original contribution in the creative arts or writing. The expectation is that students use their Synthesis to show how they have integrated knowledge, tools, experience, and support gained in the program so as to prepare themselves to be constructive, reflective agents of change in work, education, social movements, science, creative arts, or other endeavors.