

‘Round About Campus Episode Transcript
About What Kind of Development Happens in College with Kris Renn and Erica Johnson
(Season 4, Episode 5)

Z: I'm Z.

Alex: And I'm Alex, and this is the 'Round About Campus podcast, bringing our scholarly magazine to your ears.

Z: This season on 'Round About Campus, we're diving into the evolving landscape of college student learning and development. Even as higher education faces mounting challenges, supporting student growth remains critical for educators and leaders alike.

Alex: And Z, usually the start of a new semester—sorry to our friends on the quarter system; we see you too—heralds a new season, but you still said this is season four.

Z: Yup, folks, you heard that right. We're doing a super-sized Season 4 spanning this whole academic year. Not only are there lots of big questions to muddle through when it comes to student development, but also, Alex, this is your last season with the pod, so we figured we'd go out with a bang!

Alex: Yes, it's true. All good things must come to an end...I'll miss being a co-hostess, but we won't dwell on that too much for now. Let's keep the music going and dance as long as we can, shall we?

Z: We shall!

Alex: Today, we are continuing to focus on the components of college student development by focusing on the *development* part. Before we get there though, it's time for a quick segment we call "Take a Round" where we each take a round to talk about something related to our season theme or individual episode. Z, take a round to tell us about a person you met along the way in your college journey who propelled your development forward.

Z: I can. So lots of great people to think about and shout out to the person that I will mention today is still working in higher ed. That's how I like to, you know, signal that I still have some youth left that these people are still working in higher ed. Hilary Flanagan, who I believe is up in the Pacific Northwest now at Seattle University, but back in the day was my career counselor at Roger Williams University. And, I used to come in, especially towards the end of my undergrad experience. I worked in orientation. It shared kind of office space with career services, and I would go into her office and ask her all these questions, thinking that she was going to give me all these answers. Like, oh, here's what you should be doing with your life. And instead, she asked me a lot of really good questions in return. And there was one meeting where I remember we were talking and she said, you know if I help you walk away asking more questions than when you came in, I feel like I've done my job well. And so she really kind of

helped me think about asking better, more complex and deeper questions. And it's actually something that I mirror in my practice with students, be they students in the classroom or thinking about advising or, yeah, students that just pop into my office. And with faculty now in the work that I do with faculty affairs. So, yeah, that's someone who I constantly thank in terms of how they pushed me forward a little bit. What about you, Alex? Who's your person? And what did they do for you?

Alex: Yeah, I thought a lot about this question. I would probably say my supervisor/advisor, Adam Ferrando, who is not of the field, isn't in the field anymore. Actually got his master's...

Z: You're still young and beautiful, by the way. We don't do a video component of this, but I can confirm that Alex is still young and beautiful.

Alex: [Laughing] Has all the skincare tips that you've given me over the years. Well, Adam got his master's in political science and sort of was in, I think, a transitional part of his career when he took on this role. And Adam was a really great person who pushed and challenged me to think of the bigger picture often. When I became student body president my senior year of my campus, I was called a governor rather than a president because there was an overall university presidents. A whole complicated thing. Very federated. In my senior year, being governor, I had worked with Adam for a couple of years, and he had me do this activity to identify sort of like my grounding values, and actually put it on a card and have it carry on me at all points in time. So, I've actually, every 5 or 7 years, I go and revisit that little card, and I have redrafted it twice since, incorporating lessons of like, what are my anchors? What are sort of my commitments to myself every day? I think for many folks college is an opportunity to clarify your values. And that was a very tangible opportunity to clarify my values and direction for my life from there. Adam now works in the private sector, which I think was always his goal. But he is someone who is massively shaped my development. I look forward to the opportunity to thank him at some point in the future.

Z: Couple things. First of all, love that activity. Second of all, not surprising that you've kept that card and redrafted it multiple times. For folks who know, you'll know that Alex is that kind of gal, which I really love. Oh my gosh, you're pulling it out right now so you can show me. This is amazing. We need to do video for these podcasts. And third of all, isn't higher ed basically the private sector at this point...that's a different conversation for a different time. We'll get there at a different season, maybe, but let's...jokes jokes. Let's like...

Alex: Feels like you're previewing season five.

Z: Well, maybe. Who knows? Let's get out of the way, before we get too carried away, to make room for our fabulous guests.

Alex: Today, we are talking all about what sort of development one might anticipate happening in college. To talk about this, we have two guests, Drs. Kris Renn and Erica Johnson. Kris is University Distinguished Professor of Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education at Michigan State University. Her research and teaching focus on college student learning, development, and success. Kris has written extensively on mixed race college students and on LGBTQIA+

students, as well as gender in higher education internationally. She served as an associate dean of student life at Brown University for ten years before she became a faculty member. She is co-author—with me, Chayla Haynes, Cris Salinas, and Rosie Perez—of a new textbook on student development theory in action to be released early in 2026. Erica Johnson is the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs at and proud alum of Central Michigan University, where she oversees counseling, sexual aggression services, student disability services, the volunteer center, student conduct, and care teams—just those few things. She has more than a decade of leadership experience at CMU, advancing student engagement, wellness, community building, and holistic development. Earlier in her career, Erica led community engagement, leadership, student activity, fraternity and sorority life programs, and served as an academic advisor, career coach, and residence hall director...literally every functional area I just listed.

Z: Covers all the bases.

Alex: She holds a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from Central Michigan University, where her research examined the impact of utilizing a campus food pantry on student success. She also earned a Master of Arts in College Student Personnel from Miami University and a Bachelor of Professional Accountancy and Management from Saginaw Valley State University. Erica and Kris, welcome to the 'Round About Campus podcast. So, Kris and Erica, we're going to talk about development in a second, but we want our listeners to first learn about you as educators. Tell us what drew you to higher education as a profession? When did you know you were going to make a career of this? And for this question, I'm going to start with you, Kris, and then we'll come to you, Erica.

Kris: Great. Thanks so much, Alex, and thanks, Alex and Z, for having us. So I went to one of the United States oldest women's colleges, now, gender diverse women's college, Mount Holyoke College. And while I was there, I was pre-med. And along the way, as one does, gets very involved in campus life. And by the time I was a junior, I was trying to decide whether I wanted to stay the path. I was, you know, taking the courses for the pre-med. So to that, I was a music history major. So I also got really excited about the idea of a PhD in music history. I earned my keep in the summers as a summer camp counselor and director. So I was thinking like, maybe outdoor ed, but then I was really attracted to the work I was doing on campus. My work study job was in the dean of students office. I was the campus leader of the whole thing. And so I kind of looked at that choice set my junior year and, fairly naively was like, well, if I get a job in student affairs, then maybe I could get some other degree at that university that I'm working at. Now people do sort of do that thing, but that's a quite naive perspective. But that sort of led me down the path into higher ed student affairs. I had great mentors, as so many folks who come into the field do. And that's really kind of how I got my start.

Alex: Erica, what about you?

Erica: I'd say my journey into the profession started on the day I moved into campus, into a residence hall. I'm a first generation college student, and I had really no idea of what to expect

in college. And needless to say, the transition to college didn't go so well for me. I was sick every day the first week of school when I begged my parents to let me drop out. But thankfully, they convinced me to stay. And, that first year I still struggled to find my place on campus. But in my second year, I joined a sorority, and from there everything changed. I found my place on campus, and I got involved in a lot of other activities. I actually ended up loving college, and I did an internship in their student life office, working with community engagement and fraternities and sorority life. And when I graduated, I thought I should put that accounting degree to work. So, I worked for almost a year as an auditor, but very quickly figured out in my first week that accounting wasn't my calling and was not going to be my career. I decided to look into what was I most happy doing throughout my life. And when I was thinking about that, I came up with all of my college engagements. I loved all of those activities that I was doing. So by December of that year, I was applying to graduate programs in student affairs. I had figured out already that college degrees change lives because it changed my life. And so I knew I wanted to be someone on a college campus that could help students who, like me, didn't really fit when they got to college. And help them find their place, and, I call it "changing the stars," for their stars and for generations to come if they could graduate from college. And so, I was really lucky that Miami University accepted me into their grad program. And I haven't looked back since. And I get asked a lot now about whether or not I'd ever think about leaving student affairs or higher education. And whenever I think about that or what else I might be able to do, and nothing ever seems to feel right or fit. And so, I really think that supporting students in higher education is my purpose in life.

Alex: That's awesome. And it's just a great reminder of: no one goes to college thinking they're going to work in a college often. Unless maybe you're like the children of a faculty member and you're going to become another faculty member. But the discovery process in our field, I find, is always an inspiring note for folks that you really found your spark in a different way. And for both of you, you did, on different journeys and paths, but you still found this profession to be worthwhile.

Z: Yeah, and also a good reminder that no matter how well you know people, you can always learn something about them. I mean, yeah, we were talking before we started recording the episode about kind of our connections, and I've known Kris and Erica for quite a while, but did not know accountancy and pre-med. So that's new, right? All of us clearly have an abiding belief in the importance of college environments to promote student growth and development. I think, Erica, you named that really well. And clearly we've kind of built our careers, all of us around this. What are one or two important takeaways that you'd want people to know about how students experience this development while they're in college? And for this one, Erica, we'll start with you, and then, move to Kris.

Erica: Thank you so much. And knowing me, Z, I'm sure that you know, that one or two was hard for me because it's such a broad and complex concept in conversation that you made me work on this one. Yeah, I've got it down to two, and I'll try to keep it concise, but, if I had to say two things, I would say to remember that paths are not linear. They're individual and beautifully messy. And so yes, as practitioners, we and educators, we need to be intentional and thoughtful about designing our work. But remember to embrace that process and the process of

development because growth takes time and reflection. The effect doesn't always immediately follow the cause. So that's my first one. And then two, I think about this a lot in my work—pretty much on a daily basis. But so much of development happens in times of challenge or dissonance. And how we change as we work through those challenges is the kind of development. And as campus professionals, I think we need to remember that life itself often deals a lot of these challenges to students. Thinking about the pandemic and its lasting effects, physical and mental health challenges, family struggles, basic needs, insecurities, physical and psychological safety concerns, loneliness, and so, so much more that college students are navigating every single day, and maybe have faced for their entire lives. And so, for those of us working on a college campus or engaging even with college campuses and students, I think we need to consider, one, if we're creating any unnecessary barriers or challenges through our policies, practices, classroom accountability measures, etc. that pile onto students in that way. And then, what I focus on in my work, what I try to prioritize, is being thoughtful and intentional and thinking about innovative ways that we can provide support to students in our classes, in our student engagement activities, living environments, in the community, everywhere that they are, so that they can successfully navigate college, and have the space to actually learn while they're here and engage with materials and to manage the life that inevitably happens while they're enrolled.

Z: Love it. Love it. Kris, what do you think?

Kris: Oh thanks so much, Erica for that response. And I wanted to hear the other things you didn't manage to fit in there. And initially my thoughts fall right into...I've made a bunch of notes on dissonance, for sure, and it is like a really big piece of it. And folks who know me a little bit will know I see the world through ecology models, and I really focus on, you know, the context people find themselves in, and then the processes that are kind of wrapped up in ecologies. And so much of what it comes down to in terms of what the driver of, I think, of development is that process of, you know, Marcia's basic outline of like the explorations and commitments. And what drives people to exploration, it could be a happy or neutral kind of moment. Like, I don't know whether I want to be a camp counselor or a doctor or music historian or a student affairs professional. And I get to explore that. That's one kind of exploration. But I think Erica's point...that's not most of what the exploration is. Most of the exploration is: I'm an athlete, and I've just had a career ending injury. I'm here at college, and I'm sending money home to my family. I'm worried that my siblings are getting in trouble, you know, in school. And how do I deal with that? So I feel like those challenges, many of which are not in that when I think about the ecology. Like we see on campus, we see and have some influence over parts of that ecology. But so much of the exploration and challenge that are happening for students are not on campus. I think that is sometimes lost in larger public conversations about what it means to go to college, and this mythology that you know, people pack themselves up and disappear for four to six years, and can ignore all the rest of it. Like that is not what's happening for our students. They are parents. They have parents. They are military veterans. They are working their way through 35 or 40 hours a week. So, I think that part of what's driving the developmental process, you know, oh, at the same time, they're trying to learn to be accountants, you know, like, they're actually learning some academic content...have all of these kinds of explorations and begin to find themselves through that and

make commitments. So that, I think is what I want people to think about is just the giant complexity of it all.

Z: Yeah, yeah. What I was thinking about a lot as you two were talking...what comes to mind for me is Jane Pizzolato's work on provocative experiences. And that many of those things happen off of what we would consider university grounds. So, yeah.

Alex: Yeah, I even start my student development courses these days, now with like, who are the students we're talking about in this course, and like, you can't do justice in a one three-hour class session. But to talk about food and housing insecurity, to talk about the true diversity of college students these days, and which of these students go to which kinds of institutions when we talk about this development as well. So I think, Z started this thread a little bit, but, you know, college going has long been a contested issue. I think particularly these days, you can't listen to a podcast about higher ed, read an article, without running into ROI, or return on investment of attendance. And folks really questioning, is college worth it? What would both of you say in response to that question, particularly as it relates to what we know about how students grow and develop in college? And Kris, I'm gonna ask you to take the first pass on this one.

Kris: So I'm going to tell you the story of the four Renn siblings. One of the four Renn siblings graduated high school and joined the military. Is still in the military. Many, many years later, and has a very distinguished career for somebody who did not come to college before doing that. The other three Renn siblings started college, one at a very elite institution who left it and never returned and never finished a degree. The second who went to college, transferred, I think was at four different universities, did a great deal of swirling...leaving school for a while to start a family and then coming back to finish. And the fourth one is me who went right through four years at the same school. And so, these are four very different pathways. And when I look at the Renn sibling, you know, group text thread or, metaphorically look around the dinner table because that doesn't happen often now. But thinking about people in their 50s and 60s who had four very different pathways post-high school all really quite successful and kind of made their way through it. So thinking about how important was college in all that? I will say that I feel like what I got out of my traditional residential liberal arts experience, which was supported by Pell Grants, federal work study, and scholarships. I had a much more structured experience with some guardrails. Some of my siblings without guardrails had a harder time with some parts of young adulthood. I had some people there. I did have what I think other people didn't have, maybe was, for lack of a better word, grown ups. The mentors, educators, student affairs professionals, faculty, instructors, and other staff on campus keeping an eye out on me. And, they looked at me from, you know, age 17 when I started to to 21 when I graduated, and thinking about the privilege of having some set of people who kind of had eyes on me in some way was really valuable and important to me. And they also structured an environment for me to kind of grow into and through in that process. So, I had that. Now, I will say that the siblings who joined the military probably right after high school had found themselves in a much more, demographically diverse context than the rest of us did by going to college right away. Many colleges are more homogeneous than boot camp, frankly. So thinking about what was in place for that sibling when they were kind of learning to deal with people very different from themselves, dealing with literally life and death matters and ethical issues that are quite

profound. So thinking about getting to have some guardrails in that process, maybe a slower introduction to some of those concepts, a little more...challenge and support. I know I had way more support than boot camp. Although, I don't think my two siblings who had different college experiences would say that about their experiences. So I feel like it was that kind of structured sense of that. And, so that's the story of the Renn's, and kind of how we did that. I think where I take that to the rest of the world is that you can absolutely have an incredibly fulfilling career. The siblings who didn't finish college are the two of the deepest thinkers in our group. You know, like, it's not the going to college that causes that...it's how people got there, and the pathways and the directions were very different. And I think that now as we are aging the two of us with college degrees probably have more choices job-wise and career-wise of things that are literally physically able to do as you age. There are jobs that you can have without a college degree, many of them involve a different kind of physical labor and commitment than many jobs with a college degree. So, that actually is something I've been thinking about a lot as we kind of get older and thinking about my siblings without degrees and sort of how they age. That's all kind of a roundabout, deeply personalized way of saying return investments, really important. Like as I nibbled away those student loans for all those years, right. Like I wanted to make sure I was getting that return on investment. And I don't have a problem with the return investment argument. I do think there's other returns on investment societally that are not being recognized right now. People having critical thinking and the ability to pivot and make good decisions. But over time, my siblings who didn't finish college also got that. I'm going to pause there, and let Erica jump in.

Erica: Well, I'm so excited to hear all of that from you, Kris, because I think my conversation here mirrors your's so, so much, but I think you might have said it much better. So I'll take a try here. But I guess, I would say I wholeheartedly believe in the impact of the college experience to change people's lives for the better, right? Like, I've personally experienced this and my children are benefiting from my college education. And I've also seen a lot of students where this is true for them. And yes, the college degree is still the primary driver of social mobility in our country. So those are important things to keep in mind in this ROI type conversation. But in relation to student development, specifically a college experience could and should really help students grow, succeed in so many more ways than just career, right? If we're doing this right as a campus; we help students move further along that twisty path toward their best self, right, to become their best version of their selves through self-discovery and awareness, and grow into more complex people who think critically, are savvier consumers of information and knowledge, understand people and how to navigate relationships, care about their community, contribute in meaningful ways, participate civically, and can manage their well-being in an informed way. All things that are important life skills. But I, as Kris mentioned, don't believe that college is the only place that people can grow in these ways. I have a lot of folks in my family as well who are great examples of that same thing. I also acknowledge and understand that in the industry of higher education or the college going experience, we have work to do to make higher education work for everybody. It doesn't work the way it is now for everybody, for every style of learner, and what people want to have out of their post-high school experience. But I do think, and I think this is especially where I hear Kris in the conversation, is that I think the college environment is probably the most holistic, comprehensively intentional. And, as you mentioned too, supportive environment, where they are teaching you the skills that you're going to need to do this thing called life, I guess—that anybody could participate in, you know, to get

to where these outcomes are going as far as development. Yeah, I think we're on the same wavelength there.

Alex: I appreciate both of you saying that one, college isn't the only place to get these kinds of gains, or these moments of learning and development. When I was doing my PhD work, I remember my committee really challenged me to say why is college special in some ways? I responded back, I'm like, well, it's special in that it brings a bunch of different components together, sort of for that totalizing student experience that you're both getting at, in ways that other institutions in society can't replicate as easily. But I think folks get the same thing out of being a part of a book club. The idea of coming together to make meaning of something together that's not about anyone else in the room, per se. And engaging in dialog and figuring out how to do that together. I also appreciate the thinking about where college gets it right and where it has plenty of room to still get it right as well.

Z: Both, and, also right? I really appreciate this comment about intentionality of design for environments for lack of a better term. It's to be really frank with you, it's one of the reasons why Alex and I both immediately thought of you two when we wanted to do this episode because you're both so fantastic at creating learning rich environments that promote student development. So when we think about creating these environments and thinking about Kris, I loved your language about guardrails. What are some of the things that you would encourage listeners to do that might be similar in terms of helping to promote student development? And maybe Erica, let's start with you again.

Erica: Thanks for your generosity there. So, I guess I'm going to go back to one of my first responses in our conversation about thinking about and considering how hard it is to navigate college and life at the same time. So I'd encourage people to think about their current practice and to reconsider what they are and how we can be more intentionally and mindfully supportive of students and teaching them the skills that they're, you know, here to learn beyond just vocational career skills. And thinking about how we can be supportive in a multitude of ways around creating supportive environments, that they can be supportive to each other around, right, and help each other navigate their development—that reaches beyond our literal presence as practitioners and spaces. So thinking about the entirety of their experience on campus. And remove barriers for students when they're there, thinking about policies and practices, and our accountability measures, I think are so important. And how do we balance accountability, which is also a great learning tool, with compassion and thinking about how we promote development and create the environment that promotes development. And I would also encourage folks to consider for a minute, Baxter Magolda's concept of being a good learning partner. And the way that I think about that is, and I talk with students about this actually when I work with them, is this means that we have to listen to students. We have to engage with students about what their needs are and recognize and validate them as the experts in their experience. So things like assessing beyond satisfaction and learning outcomes, but actually asking students for feedback on the format of how they're learning or experiencing our programs. Include them in the program development process in meaningful ways, and then, at the same time, also ask them to respect our areas of expertise, our years of experience in the field, and what we have learned and known and seen to be true and have worked. So for me what that looks like, especially when I'm advising a group of students to either create a program or student government—those

kinds of things—it means having an actual conversation about the good partnership process. What does that mean for you? What does that mean for me? And here's what you can expect, and what we should expect from each other as being the good company on our journeys. Again, a Baxter Magolda concept. Then really explaining in its most basic form student development and how I, as an advisor, am going to work with them so that when I have to have a conversation about either something that's challenging or something that they're having a challenge with that I need to provide some assistance with, we can go back to that conversation. And then, they know what to expect from me...I find that it's really helpful when they're experiencing challenges to say, okay, this seems like maybe that's too much. How do we like...what do you need to be able to get to where you're going? Maybe we need to break it down into smaller steps. Maybe we need to bring in some help. That kind of thing, especially in accountability conversations, I find this to be particularly helpful in sharing with them, like, hey, do you remember that conversation where I said I was going to challenge you? I use that because it's a more easily understandable concept for students if they've never experienced or seen development theory before. I'm like, well, here's what I'm going to do to help you get through this. And we're going to do this together because remember that piece about being good partners along the way. So, yes, that's where I would go in my advising style, and how I think about creating these environments.

Z: Yeah, somewhere in Oxford, Ohio, Marcia is smiling, knowing that you're still using her work.

Kris: I am going to “yes, and...” everything you said, Erica. Being good partners is a phrase I use a lot. And I remember Stan Carpenter, one of our more senior colleagues is retired. Stan was a keynote at the Michigan ACPA meeting one year, and Stan said something like you just said Erica about, like, for years, somehow we decided that we wouldn't tell students about student development theory. We would sort of do it to them or work it on them, but it was like, why would we pull back the curtain? And Stan was like, we should tell them, like, A: they can handle it, B: it's not going to give it away, and C: they can be partners in it with us. So I love that. What I would add is and thinking about continuing to find ways to bring students into this process of doing hard things. And using that kind of like it's a growth mindset adjacent idea, but helping people really think about how do you acknowledge that something is hard, but keep doing it anyway? And I think that comes up in the accountability conversations, as well as getting people to be comfortable with ambiguity. When all the answers are in your back pocket on a little machine, very easily answerable, we sort of lost patience maybe for not knowing and ambiguity. So I do think that naming that for students, and not to say, like back in the olden days, we had to wait to find the answers to such things. Not that at all, but just to say, to help people build up the muscle of sitting in lack of knowledge and uncertainty. You know, think about Pat King and Karen Kitchener, and then also Marcia, kind of that work on like big messy problems, and sort of the unknowable things, and getting people comfortable with the idea that Google AI isn't going to give you all the answers. So we need you to figure out how to be okay with that. So I would say that's something that I've been working on lately, but to be a good partner in that, right. Like there's nothing, nothing, nothing beats being a good partner on the journey.

Alex: Yeah, and as I sit across from a good partner in my journey.

Z: Aw, thanks, guv'nor.

Alex: Oh, gosh. Now, it's never going to go away. Now, I've said that...It's clear that both of you have a depth of experience when it comes to the study and practice of student development. I'm wondering, are there areas of development that have been less of a focus in college than you would like? Anything you'd want to encourage we, as a field, take a little bit more detailed look at? I'm sure we have listeners who are thinking about embarking on dissertation work or research projects, or even just their own projects, and will be eager to hear what both of you have to say. So, Kris, I want to start with you on this one. What do you think is understudied, under-looked at?

Kris: When I was first thinking about this, I don't want to say what I think is overstudies because I don't want to crush the hopes and dreams of somebody out there writing a dissertation. You do you. Keep doing that work. Just remember, a gap in the literature is not a reason to do a study. Why do we need to fill that gap?

Alex: Say it again, Kris. Say it again.

Kris: I know. But a big gap, right. And this is new; there hasn't been a lot of time with this, but I'm thinking about AI, and I wrestled a little bit with my last question. We're beginning to see some studies on generative AI, what it literally is doing to literal brain mapping of youth and emerging adults. I want to see more about that. Particularly, you know, the use of generative AI with college students. And I'm not in the like, catch them cheating camp at all. Like I'm legitimately in the like, I want to know what this is doing to their learning and then their development. Like, what? I got excited about thinking about who is studying...I don't know if the word is algorithmization, the algorithm hegemony, whatever that thing is that we're all living under. Like, there are algorithms in every piece of our life now feeding us things that [it] thinks we might be interested in. And so AI, AI answers, and generative AI...thinking like, what is this doing to...are we going to be reducing students opportunities for dissonance, for encountering difference? Will it answer what feels like easy solutions? Instead of sitting with the discomfort and kind of working their way through that. So that is what I'm really interested in learning more about right now myself. I'm not doing the studies. I'm interested in reading other people's really good studies about that thing. Because I'm interested to see, again, I'm not in the like, you know, the moral panic about AI and cheating at all. I'm really into, like, what is this doing to our brains and our communities and our relationships?

Alex: Yeah, I mean, someone post-promotion I think will be thinking about that work. Who could that be, I can only imagine.

Erica: So I guess, I would...yes, all of that. I'm sitting on a committee working on some AI policy and all that kind of thing right now. And all of these questions are coming up for me too, so I'm looking forward to reading that...somebody. I guess where I would go, and it makes sense given what I am interested in studying, is thinking about the impact on basic needs insecurity on college student development. And there's a lot of research out there around the physical impacts, the mental health impacts, K-12, the impact of student learning around that,

right? We have very few studies on the impact of mitigating basic needs insecurity, and any potential benefits of that. We know it negatively affects our student success, too, like all of that's very well documented. But the impact of what happens when we can help a student mitigate basic needs insecurity, thinking about, like, what if we provided, you know, large-scale meal plans, that kind of stuff. Like, what does taking basic needs insecurity out of the equation, like if we were actually able to address that at a campus level, [what would that] do for student development? And, yeah, you know, I'm sure there's things around...we can even look at, like, what is basic needs insecurity? How does it impact student development in general, you know, potentially negatively...but what is...yeah, I'm really interested in what is mitigating it. Like if we could systemically on a campus solve that, what does that do for folks.

Z: Yeah, and I'm thinking about all the partnerships that we can make across disciplines and communities to be able to address some of these questions. Like, we'll get to work with people in ed psych, in computer science; we'll get to work with people in public policy and public health in ways that maybe we haven't been able to as a field before. Yeah, there are lots of different ways that we can think about, not just what the answers to those questions are, but how we can come to some of those answers to begin with. Alright, final question. One last one. Which is another question limited by numbers, Erica. So this might have also been frustrating and hard for you as well. But what are two texts...they don't need to be like *the* two, right. But what are two texts, broadly interpreted books, articles, videos, podcasts, what have you, that you might recommend to our listeners to engage with...maybe some texts that you're thinking about now that are, you know, top of mind for you?

Alex: Or co-written.

Z: Oh, yeah. Or like, the one that you're a co-author on.

Alex: Kris might bring it up. We'll see. Yeah, no pressure.

Z: Yeah, well, let's start with Kris then. Let's put Kris on the hot seat first.

Kris: And that wasn't pressure at all.

Z: Yeah, you're going to mention the book, right, Kris?

Kris: So I will say that it is a short read, but not a light read. And it is Timothy Snyder's *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*. And, I strongly recommend it; it is not expensive. There's a graphic novel version or a graphic version of it. I do think every thinking, thoughtful person in higher education and beyond should be reading that right now. And because I was goaded into it, and the only reason for such self-promotion, I will say that there is a new student development theory textbook coming out. This winter/spring. And Alex is a co-author on this, and we are just super excited about introducing a new framework for putting student development theory into action. So it's a book that will, I think, provide educators with some new tools. And a lot of really interesting updated theories across the three waves and beyond of college students' development theory so that, you know, look for that coming soon.

Alex: Since I pressured you into it, Kris, if you did have a third one you wanted to present, you are welcome. I will give you that cheat on this one.

Kris: That's very generous of you. I'm going to go with *On Tyranny* as the one thing to put on your bookshelf if you don't already have it there.

Alex: Heard.

Erica: Yeah, so I struggled with this one a little bit again, lots of things. And I also think about like everything is so specific, right, to your interests. Like when I'm reading things and all that kind of stuff. I just don't think there's like one for me. There's not one thing. There's resources for me. Like where I would go to stay up to date on different things. And so, I would say that I get regular emails from Inside Higher Ed, and just the conversations that people are having because those are...and things like podcasts and videos and that kind of stuff...they're seemingly like real time to what my experiences are on a college campus right now. Or the Chronicle has great ongoing things. But then, I guess, I would say I'm really interested right now in connecting some of the other areas of study into student development theory. Like so, how does recruitment and retention efforts play into student development theory and that kind of thing so much, and especially in my line of work right now, mental health supports for college students and trends in mental health. And so, I read a lot in those areas, and I think whenever I'm reading those, I'm constantly comparing back to student development theory, and where are we missing? Where are we missing the supports for students to be able to navigate these things, or the skill sets, or where do we miss the entirety of their educational experience how to provide skills to be able to navigate whatever's happening in their life? And so, I read a lot of that and then compare it to like what I know and think about. The one that I guess in my mind that people should read is, *Immunity to Change* by Kegan. That one tends to relate to me. It relates to a lot of what I'm even reading now. Why are we relying sometimes on things that are, or what has always been done versus moving forward today? A long answer, but yeah.

Z: I love that book. I think it was one of the books that I read in my first doctoral class, and it's put out, if I'm not mistaken, by Business Press. Harvard Business. So, yeah, interesting to think about. Sometimes I think business becomes a dirty word in student development. And it's interesting to think about how we can look across fields, across areas, across genres even to influence our work.

Erica: I think there's a longer version that uses a similar model in that I think it's, *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work*. So that's a similar tool construct. [Inaudible]. And it really makes you think so...

Z: Yeah, totally. Well, thank you both for joining. Yeah, I'm really excited for listeners to be able to engage with all of the gems that you've dropped. And, yeah, thanks again for joining us on the pod.

Erica: Thank you so much for having us.

Alex: The ‘Round About Campus podcast is audio-engineered by the incredible tech team in the College of Education at the University of Arizona, including Jason Aragón and Erica Lmuth.

Z: Mary Ellen Wade designed our logo. *About Campus* Managing Editor Kelly Ancharski helps us pull together the show notes and transcript. You can send questions or reflections about this episode to aboutcampusmag@gmail.com.

Alex: I am Alex.

Z: And I’m Z, and we’re both recording today from the ancestral and current lands of the Tohono O’odham Nation, home to the Tohono O’odham and Pascua Yaqui Peoples. We’ll see you ‘round for our next episode soon. Bye!

Alex: Bye!