



Podcast: One Thing - New Professional

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Summary: Host Stuart Brown chats with Jenna Shanley, Assistant Dean at St. John's University.

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B E G I N T R A N S C R I P T

Stuart Brown: Welcome to Student Affairs One Thing - New Professional, a podcast that asks a simple question of new professionals in the field. What is one thing you have learned, you feel will help you as you move forward in your career? I'm your host, Stuart Brown, the developer of StudentAffairs.com, one of the most accessed websites by student affairs professionals. On our pages, we have the most cost effective job posting board, listing hundreds of open student services positions and a wide range of webinars. On today's episode, I am very pleased to have Jenna Shanley, an Assistant Dean at Saint John's University.

Welcome to the program, Jenna.

Jenna Shanley: Thank you for having me. Hello.

Stuart Brown: So Jenna, what is your one thing?

Jenna Shanley: My one thing is to not count yourself out of opportunities and that particular sentiment, it was really personal to me because I became a college dean at 24 years old. And I felt at the time when I applied that, even though I had all the credentials, I felt that maybe because of my age, I wouldn't be able to get the job. And I really surprised myself. And since I've kept that mantra, I've been able to really see other opportunities across campus and I really haven't counted myself out of those things.

Stuart Brown: I think that's something especially for grad students or new professionals when you look at jobs and you think, I know I can do that, but then you read further down requirements, preferred requirements and you kind of just toss yourself out of the running and not to say you should apply for every job because there are requirements and certain systems have certain requirements. I worked at a state university and they were very particular. And if you did not meet one of the five criteria, you were out. But that's not to say to try to, to reach like, like you were able to do totally.

Jenna Shanley: I totally agree. I think at the time when I finished my master's program, I graduated in the midst of the pandemic. May 2020, I was unemployed for about nine months. I applied to maybe 200 jobs. And uh this job at St. John's was actually the last job I applied to and it was my first and only in person interview since uh the pandemic had begun. And even though it was an assistant dean job at that point, I just was like, I have nothing to lose. I have all the credentials I have the experience I was able to utilize both my degrees. My undergrad degree is a business degree. My master's is an education degree and I did the interview and it fit. And once I got the job I dealt with some impostor syndrome. But eventually I was able to recognize that I earned my spot here. And despite my age, I'm 26, now I've been able to really grow in these past two years as a professional because I didn't doubt myself in the beginning.

Stuart Brown: It's interesting you talk about impostor syndrome because I think sometimes even if you're highly qualified, you have that because it might be your first professional job. And, oh my goodness, why did they hire me? Why did they think I could even do this job? So here you are layering it by saying, well, I, I kind of reached and they hired me. So now it's almost like impostor syndrome squared.

Jenna Shanley: Yes. And the impostor syndrome didn't go away right away. I definitely, in the first few months of my time here, I definitely, I was asking myself that question. Why am I here? Why did they hire me? This is crazy. And even other people when other people meet me and I tell them my role, I'm assistant dean.

Sometimes people even now are still surprised and they're like, how old are you? And, you know, I tell my story and most of the time it's met with excitement and admiration and you know, even from students, they are happy to see this new generation of administrators in the field. But every now and then, you get that one person that is like, are you sure, are you sure that's a good fit? And it definitely took some time to not take those comments so seriously. Because that impostor syndrome really sometimes did get in the way as I learned this job and started meeting with students and that fear that students won't take you seriously, faculty won't take you seriously. If you have the credentials, you have the degree, you're a good worker, it's going to be just fine.

Stuart Brown: I have recently retired from the field, but during my years, I chaired many, many searches and most recently really, the year before I retired, I chaired a number of searches and I found a lot of individuals weren't really qualified. I was very miffed at the quality and this wasn't just for the positions at my institution. I talked to other people and they're saying, yeah, I just can't get qualified candidates. So I think that and playing into what you're saying and I don't know why, but maybe this is the time in the field when you look at positions to say, you know what I'm gonna try for that because maybe there's a turnover because of the pandemic. Are people leaving the field? I, I don't really know what, but I think it is the right time to maybe look for that position just above what you think you're qualified for.

Jenna Shanley No, I, I really agree with what you're saying. I honestly believe that the field is changing a lot. It's a whole new generation of people, my age, slightly younger than me, of, you know, higher ed administrators coming to this field that are trained to do this work. I'm in a unique position coming out of a Student Affairs master's program. And now in this role. And I'm the only person in my office who has a master's degree in this field and that's not nagging my colleagues because my colleagues are all qualified individuals. But it is like you said, a really good time, if you're coming out of these types of graduate programs to jump on these positions because that is what you went to school for.

Stuart Brown: I think is the opportunity for individuals to really sit down, mapping their skills, mapping their experience and fitting it into again, not the positions that you are qualified for. But looking beyond that to see what's there because I, I really do think the field is changing. I worked at a regional campus of a university and we had at least 50% of the full time staff retire. That's because we had all been there for 25, 30 years. It was very interesting that overnight the campus changed because all the familiar faces were gone. And that did allow new people, new blood to come in and again at my institution because of the the structure of the job searching process, it would have been harder for people like you, but we're just one institution out of the thousands across the country. So I think your one thing is something to, to take heart, especially at the recording of this episode. This is prime job hunting season right now.

Jenna Shanley Yes, it is two years ago, this week that I had applied to my current job. This is the prime time. I just remember all of the, the nerves and the stress and the questioning of, did I make the right choice? Am I going into the right field? And ever since I've gotten here, I've just jumped into every opportunity I can get. And I'm usually the youngest person in the space.

Stuart Brown: Well, let me be one of the first to wish you a happy anniversary.

Jenna Shanley Thank you.

Stuart Brown: You have been listening to Student Affairs One Thing - New Professional, a podcast that asks a simple question of new professionals in the field. What is one thing you have learned, you feel will help you as you move forward in your career. My guest today has been Jenna Shanley, an Assistant Dean at Saint John's University. I'm your host, Stuart Brown, the developer of StudentAffairs.com, one of the most accessed websites by student affairs professionals. I hope you'll join us next time for another episode.

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