

Heather A. Cruz

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Summary

Dynamic leader with 20+ years of experience in higher education in the areas of counseling, program development and assessment, management, compliance, and strategic planning. Client-centered, committed to fostering an environment supportive of diversity, inclusion, and engagement. Team-centric, adept at collaborating successfully with key stakeholders at the organizational, community, and national levels to provide high quality services and programs that advance educational outcomes. Technology savvy, able to take advantage of a variety of resources and data analytics to maximize efficiencies of operation.

Consulting Experience:

Buffalo Public Schools, Community Education (January 2021- present)

Lecturer

- Facilitates curriculum on vocational and career development in coordination with Say Yes Buffalo in order to reduce learning gaps and strengthen community engagement between the district and the community.

Niagara County Office of Mental Health (June 2021- present)

Planning Coordinator

- Researches, collects, prepares, and processes data needed to modify grants, plans, and programs, involving the Office of Mental Health, Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, Office of Addiction and Supports, and federal and local agencies.
- Facilitates meetings in conjunction with the Community Services Board, subcommittees, local providers, community consortiums, and peer advocacy groups.
- Lead community coalitions for the furtherance of County Strategic Initiatives including the Opioid Task Force and Suicide Prevention Coalition.

Grant Reviewer, Health and Human Services (September, 2021)

Projects of National Significance: Community Collaborations for Employment Program

- Evaluate applications from community stakeholders who sought to enhance collaborations across existing local systems to maximize a seamless experience and outcome of youth with ID/DD as they transition between school and work in the community.

PCG Consulting (January, 2021- July, 2021)

Community Support Specialist

- Responsible for working with the five western counties of New York State: Erie, Niagara, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, and Allegany to contact people diagnosed with COVID-19 as well as individuals potentially exposed. Ensures compliance with local and state Health Department guidance.

- Establish care plans for individuals needing resources including basic needs, testing, mental health, and clinical care in order to successfully maintain isolation or quarantine. Especially those individuals in rural and urban areas that may lack supports or access to services.
- Provides education concerning guidance on isolation and quarantine procedures.
- Provides concierge services for individuals wishing to be vaccinated.

**Grant Reviewer (December 2018)
21st Century, Community Learning Centers**

- Peer reviewer 21st Century Grant Proposal. Reviewed standardized applications from schools and community based organization on their ability to create learning environments that provided academic and social enrichment to high-poverty and low-performing schools.

Higher Education Experience:

**Monroe Community College (April 2019- October, 2020)
Associate Vice President, Student Services, Downtown Campus**

- Provided supervisory, HR, and budgetary oversight to all offices and off-site programs under the Student Services Division at the Downtown Campus. Forged partnerships with community based organizations to bolster institutional enrollment and to provide supplemental support services to students. Supervised a staff of twenty-five including Directors, Associate Directors, Coordinators, Counselors, support staff, community liaisons, and interns.
- Collaborated with the Director for Equity and Diversity, the Executive Dean at the Downtown Campus as well as VP of Student Services and Workforce Development to create facility improvements and inclusive spaces on campus to address the multiple needs of the student body. Provided Student Service guidance related to the Facilities Master Plan at the Downtown Campus.
- Worked in tandem with Auxiliary services related to funding and operations at the Downtown Campus including Campus bookstore, Childcare Center, food service, student workers, and student life and leadership activities.
- Maintained community based relationships and agreements with organizations that sought to alleviate students' insecurity needs including RTS bus service, Trader Joe's, Panera Bread, and Foodlink.
- Collaborated with national grant partners Single Stop and Save for Success to facilitate navigation of community resources for students. Ensured grant compliance and program outcomes.
- Developed the MCC National RISE Prize finalist proposal for the Single Moms Design Challenge. Collaborated with Academic Services, Workforce Development, and community based organizations to create just-in-time supports, academic enrichment, and intensive vocational counseling designed to advance economic viability and promote healthy outcomes. Responsible for meeting grant outputs.
- Served on SUNY's Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention Committee. This state-wide committee encompassed campus leaders, educators, and students, to support best practices, research, and connection, to community resources to address substance abuse and related issues that impact student health and success.

- Worked in tandem with Student Government and Executive College Leadership to create academic and co-curricular opportunities that speak to the student experience; finding your voice, campus connections, and engaging in difficult conversations related to diversity.
- Developed an informal partnership between the City of Rochester, Youth Services Division and Monroe Community College to provide on and off-site recruitment activities for youth service participants, their families, and employees.

**Erie Community College (February 2014- April 2019)
Dean of Students, South Campus**

- Provided campus and college wide supervisory, HR, and budgetary oversight for Student Service offices and programs. Provided supervisory support for a staff of fifteen including, Directors, program staff, counselors, support staff, and interns. Analyzed student data to advance programming efforts.
- Responsible for the enforcement of Code of Conduct policies and adjudication on campus.
- Implemented various communication and outreach strategies in diverse modalities to apprise students of their rights under Title IX, VAWA, and Erie Community College student conduct policies.
- Worked in conjunction with faculty and Chairs towards the resolution of academic concerns and complaints.
- Provided management to all three campus Health Offices in the coordination of direct service and wellness initiatives for students. Partnered with county health department and community based organizations to advance health outcomes for students. Ensured compliance to NYS Public Health Laws 2165 and 2167.
- Designated campus liaison for the implementation and compliance of Education Law 129-B policies communicated by SUNY and VAWA. Utilized data taken from institutional campus climate surveys to enhance training, the development of prevention strategies, and the coordination of inter-campus and community resources to assist students who experienced sexual violence.
- Developed a peer training program through the One Love Foundation that promoted students' understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships. Utilized data metrics to ensure alignment with program outcomes.
- Coordinated a student athlete and leader training with Crisis Services that encompassed sexual violence prevention and by-stander intervention strategies.

**Erie Community College (June 2009- 2014)
Department Chair- Counseling, City Campus**

- Responsible for the daily operations of the counseling center including all academic and administrative functions as well as specialized projects geared toward enhancing academic and personal success. In depth experience counseling diverse student populations such as students with disabilities, First Generation Students Veterans, refugees, Student Parents, and undecided students. Provided supervisory oversight for a staff of fifteen counselors, support staff, and interns.

- Served as the Alternate Delegate for the SUNY Faculty Council of Community Colleges and Secretary of the College Senate at ECC. These roles routinely intermingled with legislative, governmental, and collegial constituencies surrounding the development and execution of SUNY policies.
- Responsible for the enforcement of Code of Conduct policies and adjudication on campus
- Implemented various communication and outreach strategies in diverse modalities to apprise students of their rights under Title IX, VAWA, and Erie Community College student conduct policies.
- Worked in conjunction with faculty and Chairs towards the resolution of academic concerns and complaints.
- Coordinated the recruitment, screening, and selection of candidates for Erie Community College's Counseling Advisory Board. These candidates provided guidance on policy development, professional development opportunities for staff, and resources for linkage and referral.
- Appointed to community committees focused on improving post-secondary outcomes for at-risk students.

**Erie Community College (October 2002-2014)
Admissions Counselor, City Campus**

- Advanced relationships between the institution and Buffalo public, private, charter high schools, and community based organizations to expedite the admissions acceptance process.
- Coordinated specialized college prep programming with cohort populations such as Say Yes to Education students, EOP, and Upward Bound.

**Erie Community College (October 2001-2002)
Student Access Counselor, South Campus**

- Provided case management services to students that encompassed testing, coordination of accommodations, and advising.
- Possess comprehensive knowledge of student supportive documentation and compliance pertaining to Section 504.
- Routinely interfaced with ACCESS-VR staff to implement client plans that ensured academic and personal success.

**Erie Community College (April 2000- October 2001)
Career Exploration Internship Program Counselor, City Campus**

Assisted in the recruitment, screening, and selection of academically eligible students for the program.

- Provided academic, personal, and vocational counseling to Erie County foster care youth ages 14-21 with a goal of independent living. Conducted educational and vocational testing which lead to proper internship placement in the community.

Education

Canisius College

- Master of Science in Education, May 1999
- Concentration: School Counseling
- New York State Permanent Certification in School Counseling

State University of New York College at Buffalo

- Bachelor of Arts Degree, December 1995
- Psychology

Leadership Training and Experiences

- SUNY Sail, August, 2019
- Harvard Business School, Governing for Non-Profit Excellence, September, 2018
- Harvard Buffalo Business Social Club: Non-Profit Management Course, 2017
- Leadership Buffalo, Class of 2016, current member
- Leadership Buffalo Youth Mentor, 2016-2019
- United Way Non-profit Board Training Program, April 2015
- SUNY Erie Leadership Academy, 2013
- WNY College Connection/ Women's Leadership Institute 2011-2012
- NYSACAC Camp College Mentor, 2008-2010

Training and Certifications

- NABITA Case Management Training
- Clery Act Certification Training
- Mental Health First Aid facilitator
- One Love Escalation program facilitator
- QPR Gatekeeper Trainer

Presentations

- **National Finalist, RISE Prize Proposal:** *To promote innovative ideas and solutions with the greatest potential for impact in supporting the postsecondary success of student parents*, July 2020
- **Co-Presenter: MCC Professional Development Week Single Moms Design Challenge and Family Friendly Initiatives: Creating a Culture of Inclusion, June 2020**
- **Co-Presenter: SUNY Advising, Applied Learning and Student Success Conference, Meeting Expanding Student Needs in Fiscally-Challenging Times: A Partnership Approach, October 2019**
- **Co-Presenter: CCNY 36th Annual Conference:** *Mental Health First Aid, Coming to a Campus Near You: How to Build a Mental Health Training Program, Practical Applications, and the Importance of Leveraging Community Partnerships*, College at Brockport, June 2018
- **Co-presenter: Innovations for Community College Conference, A Data-Based Path to Success: Turning Information Into Action** Washington DC, April 2018