CSAEd FALL 2023 WEBINARS
CERTIFICATION PROCESS CONSOLIDATED Q & A

WHY TAKE THE EXAM?

What inspired you to take the test?
- Opportunity to demonstrate student affairs knowledge as someone who had a non-traditional graduate program pathway into the student affairs profession.
- Interest in being an advocate for Certification and encouraging other professionals to pursue Certification as part of their professional development.

What elevator pitch would you give your VPSA about why they should offer you financial support to pursue certification?
- Strong, low-cost professional development opportunity at a time when financial resources for conference attendance are limited.
- The NASPA Foundation provides scholarships to help with the exam costs.

EXAM PREPARATION:

How did you prepare to take the core exam and/or the specialty exams?
- Use publicly available, free resources like the Candidate Handbook, the CAS Standards, and other resources linked on the Consortium Website and NASPA website.
- Take advantage of additional prep opportunities like the Certification Pre-conference Workshop at the NASPA Annual Conference.
- Brush up on your grad school learning, including terminology and current student development theories, and focus on any areas that are outside the scope of your day-to-day work and that you may not have looked at since grad school.
- Connect with colleagues, mentors, and advisors for their perspectives and experiences. Meet with colleagues in other departments, request to sit in on meetings and tabletop exercises, and speak to colleagues who work at other types of institutions to gain a broader perspective.
- Use the Certification domains, subdomains, and tasks to frame your preparation, but be aware that the exam is not structured by domain - topics are not in order, questions are not labeled with domain information, and many of the questions could fit into more than one domain.
- Remember that this is knowledge you have been developing and honing for a long time.

Are there practice exams available?
- No, there are currently no practice exams available. However, planning is underway to offer sample questions.

What do you wish that you had known before taking the Core exam?
- When scheduling your exam date, pay attention to the time zone and date selected. Reserve that time on your calendar.
- Carefully read all the instructions about technical requirements and exam space expectations in advance. Ensure you have all the necessary permissions (e.g., download and install software) on the technology you are using
- On the exam date, turn your phone off. Close every application on your computer. Put a sign on your door. Let people know that you cannot be disturbed.

- Note that the 3-hour test clock doesn't start when your appointment starts. The testing time begins after you have worked out the logistics with your proctor and you have actually started the exam.
- Don't be intimidated by the online exam environment, which is new to most people.

What advice do you have for those of us who do not have an educational background in this field and don't have grad school classes or experiences to draw on?
- Your educational background has been developed as a practitioner. In 15 years, your exposure to the material was presented in a different way than in a graduate program. Do not short sell practical experience in terms of providing you with a strong foundation.

What resources would be helpful for the financial management domain?
- Look at the Chronicle of Higher Education and learn what is happening at other universities in the financial area.
- Review the resources provided and understand key definitions and terms.

What was the most helpful preparation for the assessment and evaluation questions?
- Experience with student learning outcomes was helpful.
- Many definitions and key terms are used in assessment and evaluation. Review the difference between learning outcomes, assessment, evaluation, and program evaluation and in which kind of scenarios you would use which type of evaluative technique.

If you could go back, what domain do you wish you would spend more time reviewing?
- It differs for everyone, but Foundations of the Profession, Crisis and Risk Management, and Financial and Facility Management required the most review for many.
- Review each of the domains, subdomains and tasks in the Candidate Handbook. There is a list of the percentage of questions for each domain. From your own self-assessment, determine where you think you should spend your time preparing.

TESTING EXPERIENCE:

If you sign up to take the core and one of the specialties, should you take them both on the same day?
- This is not recommended. Split them up by a few days or a week.

What was unexpected or surprising about your experience taking the exam?
- It is a professional certification designed to show competency. It's not for new professionals.
- For most exam takers, this is the first time with a live proctored virtual exam. It is a great opportunity to experience a type of testing that our students are also experiencing.
- Choose the response that will be the best answer for a majority of situations. Don't overthink the answer related to your identities or positionality on your campus.
- The actual exam doesn't say anything about which domains are covered by which questions.
- You have the opportunity to flag questions that you want to go back to, and you will be able to look at these again, up to the point you take your break. Once you've taken a break, you cannot go back to any questions.
- The complexity of the questions spoke to the interdisciplinarity of the field. I felt affirmed by the exam in terms of how challenging, complicated and interwoven the field can be.

Most of us have not taken a multiple-choice exam since the GREs. I'm concerned about the questions having one correct answer and being able to know the perfect answer. How did you make your decisions?
- Institutional context and culture can sometimes shape how we would answer questions. If it's a scenario-based question, think about what seems like the best answer for the situation. There were some questions where more than one answer could have been right depending on the situation.

SCORING AND SCORE REPORTS:

What is the score needed to pass? Could you share the percentage of people who pass?
- The passing score is not publicized but it is included in the score report.
- Within the pilot program, the passing rate was 83% for the Core exam. It varied by specialty.

What does the score report look like? Do you remember how long it took to get your score back?
- Scores are delivered via email within a few days. Your score will be reflected as a percentage. There is a Likert scale continuum for each domain that has an arrow to show your skill level in that area, so you can see the domains in which you are strong, and the areas in which you may need some improvement.

Do you know anyone who failed?
- I don't know anyone who failed. If you don't pass your first time, your score report has a high-level overview of what you should focus on. There's always the opportunity to try again.

Are you told about which questions you get wrong to review afterwards?
- Unfortunately, no. You will see in which sections you did well, and what sections you didn't do so well in, but the report does not include the actual questions you missed or the correct answers.
- This is because the exam questions are confidential. If the questions, response options, and correct answers were made public then that question could no longer be used on the exam. This is also why sample questions are not yet available; Certification is new, and this content development will take several years.

RECERTIFICATION:

What is required to maintain your certification?
- You need to complete 50 continuing education credits over 5 years for each certification. There is a list of continuing education (CE) providers on the Consortium website which lists the options for the core and social justice requirements.
- The partner associations offer CE credits. You can encourage other organizations to become pre-approved CE providers, so you can get your CEs wherever you do professional development.
- You cannot "double dip" for CE credits. If a program qualifies for CE credit for more than one certification, you must choose which certification it will count towards - it cannot count for both.
- You submit your CEs in the Prolydian portal which tracks your CE progress.

POST-EXAM BENEFITS:

Could you share any personal validations on getting your certification? How has it helped you now that you've passed it? How are universities valuing certifications? If you've applied for jobs since getting certified, have the potential employers talked to you about it?

- Certification gives you extra credibility with your academic colleagues, people both in and outside your division, with people across the field, and with colleagues on other campuses.
- When I see job postings that say preferred qualifications or requirements, to be able to list this certification will be beneficial. Certification sets you apart from the general applicant pool.
- You can opt in to be in a public database of certificants, and there's a digital icon for each certification to use on your LinkedIn profile, or your email. I get lots of questions via email and LinkedIn because of the digital icons on my signature.
- In the community college system, most jobs require a bachelor's degree. There is a great wealth of knowledge on our campuses from those who don't have advanced degrees. The certification program opens doors for those who have lived the work and will never get an advanced degree. Certification is a way to prove that they are great student affairs professionals.