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Exploring the Higher-Level Leadership Inside the Student Affairs Department at International Universities in Europe

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Abstract.

Student Affairs divisions at universities experience the highest number of turnover in Human Resources: people come to work and do not stay more than a year in their job positions due to burnout, overload of responsibilities, and insufficient resources. Considering that Student Affairs` leadership is hierarchical, Student Deans and Department Directors are often overlooked as people who might experience similar feelings as other workers in the division. There is no research about the experiences of higher-level leaders in Student Affairs. Therefore the main question of this qualitative study was, "What does it mean to be a department head?" In this study, five higher-level leaders in Student Affairs at International Universities in Europe answered a few questions about their meaning, experiences, and desirable changes that they need in their position. As a result, five themes emerged and included: meaning, responsibility, relationship, mental health, and changes. Considering the constantly changing nature of things in Student Affairs, further research is needed about the experiences of higher-level leadership and the implementation of the desirable changes to improve the work experience in Student Affairs.

Keywords: leadership, Student Affairs, meaning, experience, changes