

- Dan Silverman: Good day listening public, today is March 18th, 2020 normally you were listening to general disclosures. Normally I have a little joke to start off and I just don't have one today, so I guess that's one nod to the challenges that we're all facing, but we are really happy to continue on with some sense of normalcy and having a wonderful discussion planned with Angela Lee today. Cheryl, I'm also joined of course by my cohost Cheryl Dowd. Cheryl, are you there?
- Cheryl Dowd: Hi everybody.
- Dan Silverman: All right, great. So we're going to start off with Angela Lee, the regulator for the district of Columbia and Angela, I like to start these conversations with a couple of questions that I ask just about everybody. Just kind of zoom out for a second, which is defining your role, however you do. Why do you do this? You're a person of a lot of talents and interests. Why have you chosen this path?
- Angela Lee: It's funny, this path sort of chose me. I am a social worker by training and work in public housing for many years and while there met a colleague who was an educator and when my colleague left the housing agency and went to the education agency and this opportunity presented itself, he sort of reached back and said, "Hey, I think you'd be great for this." And so it kind of fell in my lap. Interestingly enough, I tell people all the time, there really hasn't been a huge difference in sort of the client population that we serve ultimately in housing and in education is all about helping people to get to a next level. Helping people to improve their life circumstances. And so I've been able to very easily transition from being a social worker in a housing space to a higher regulator in serving the same client population in the district of Columbia. So it's been kind of interesting that I've been able to sort of translate those skills.
- Dan Silverman: When I used to work in college athletics, one of my first bosses had an MBA and a MSW and she said that she used her MSW a lot more than her MBA. So it is a very interesting parallel.
- Angela Lee: Good.
- Dan Silverman: My next question is, if higher education was outlawed, eliminated, gone for good, what would you do instead?
- Angela Lee: Higher education is gone. I also, have a [inaudible 00:02:43] event planning. I do that kind of on the side. I do actually have a professional certification in event management, so I could absolutely fall back on planning weddings and parties and corporate events if I need to. And not to sound morbid, clearly given everything that's going on with my family actually owns a family funeral home. And while I'm not interested in the science of funeral planning, mortuary science. I absolutely think it's great to be a support to families when they're going through a really difficult time. So actually helping families with the planning of funerals, not so much like I said, the mortuary science piece of it, and that may be where some of my social work comes back into play. The being

able to support families doing their very difficult time, but that might be what I do.

Dan Silverman: Grow up in the funeral home. Was it that close?

Angela Lee: Oh no, no, no. But we spent a little time there, because it is a family business. So after my dad left service in the metropolitan police department and he went to support the family business. And so, yeah there we're plenty of days and we would have to stop by there on the way to school after school on the weekends in between whatever was going on. So we did spend some time in the funeral home, but no, we didn't live there.

Dan Silverman: I had a friend in college who had a very similar situation and he had some unbelievable ghost stories, but we're not going to go there. Were not going to go-

Cheryl Dowd: Yeah. We even have two mortuary science institutions that are part of our sand membership.

Angela Lee: Awesome.

Cheryl Dowd: Yeah.

Dan Silverman: So hopefully not too far, hopefully kind of far from that topic. Cheryl, you were going to ask Angela a little bit about some of the district's response to the COVID-19 crisis?

Cheryl Dowd: Yes. Angela, what we're getting some questions from our institutions that don't participate in reciprocity because what we're seeing is that with all of the institutions nationwide basically moving to an online format, we're finding that institutions will see their students go off to a variety of states and if they're not participating in reciprocity, then they have a compliance issue in the state where the student is located while they're participating in the online course. So our recommendation has been to of course track the students so they know where their students are going to participate in the rest of the semester. But then they need to be aware of the state compliance requirements even though there was federal guidance about how it relates to title four, but we were wondering if you had extra advice that you might be able to share with our institutions about how they should manage state compliance at this point.

Angela Lee: Absolutely. I think Cheryl, you hit it right on the head that it is important for the institutions to contact each state individually. This is a constantly evolving scenario and so there is no one size fits all approach. In the district, we are evaluating those requests on a case by case basis and we do absolutely want the school to have a thoughtful plan. We want to know how many students it's impacting. We want to know the timeframe that the institution is requesting. The exception for, I can't speak obviously for all of my other colleagues around

what they're requiring their schools to do as that will differ across the country, but maintain a communication with the regulatory entities and not just the education regulators, but the school should also be reminded to make sure that they're in communication with the professional and occupational licensure bodies.

Cheryl Dowd: You're right. We've been talking with that for our institutions too about the professional licensure aspect, but just even to start with about the state compliance and some of them haven't been concerned about this because they've been primarily a face to face institution.

Angela Lee: Right.

Cheryl Dowd: So all of a sudden they're hit with this online portion. So the other really important piece that I've tried to help them see is that the state authorization guide, which replaced the SHEEO surveys is located prominently on the NC-SARA website. I've been giving that link out quite a bit lately. So folks will go there and they can reach the contact information for each of the higher ed agencies around the country. Where they have students located, they can then contact. So if they have students who went home, I put that in little air quotes there to D.C.

Cheryl Dowd: Then they would know how to contact your agency to determine if there are requirements and they could vary because that's what state authorization is, it really varies between states. So thanks for that direction and yes, the professional licensure piece, that's another big concern and that's something that we're going to be pursuing some more answers to if we can because that's something that is a real concern. For example, all of these law schools that having to go to an online format and whether the ABA who would perhaps normally not approve an online education, for law schools, may in this situation be offering that opportunity. Given the flexibility of other areas as well. Any other guidance for the institutions at this point? Maybe even, what questions should they ask of you?

Angela Lee: I would say from my vantage point, I want as much information as possible. I know sometimes we don't want to reveal ourselves because we don't want to get in trouble. But given the circumstances that are kind of surrounding it, the more candid and communicative and restitution is the better, we want to make sure ultimately that everyone is okay, the students included. And so we want to know how the institution is planning to do what they're doing. What method they're using. We want to know what impact it may have to the school. Obviously, we want to know the name of the school this is applicable to, we do for the sake of the students. Also, want to make sure that the schools are accredited because we just want to understand all of the scenario so the more information that an institution can provide to the state regulator, I think it will be easier with them being able to make a determination about how to be able to approve the school.

- Angela Lee: Again, the time period that the institution is requesting some special sort of circumstances. Also, recognizing that while this is happening, it is evolving and so that guidance may change. The institution should check back with the state regulator frequently. I know a lot of us are in the process of getting guidance posted to our web pages and so while I know it is not fun to look at 50 different states information right now, that's the best we can sort of offer, but that the contact is frequent and candid.
- Cheryl Dowd: Well, hopefully for these institutions, if they're tracking their students well, then they only have the specific states where their students are located to determine-
- Angela Lee: That's a good point.
- Cheryl Dowd: What those requirements are. So I hope that makes it a little bit easier for them because tracking their students will minimize how much research they need to do.
- Angela Lee: That's a great point.
- Dan Silverman: Angela let's go back and [inaudible 00:10:30] a month or so ago before this was the front page news. What were the types of inquiries that you would get over and over from institutions? And how might they be able to save themselves some time?
- Angela Lee: We get a lot of inquiries still about the difference between local approval and SARA approval. A lot of institutional representatives are still not completely clear about what SARA permits institutions to be able to do and what falls outside of SARA and then require some level of either approval or exemption in the district. So I'm constantly sort of encouraging institutions to really review the coverages and limitations section of this their manual. Just as recently is a couple of weeks ago, I had a school representative who called me from an out of state line, telephone line telling me that she was doing some recruitment activity in the district though because they were SARA approved, then they weren't clear to go and it was like, is this your business line for the school? Yes, I got this business line for the school because I wanted the students not to be alarmed if they saw an out-of-state phone line, but when you read this, their guidance, establishing a phone line as a permanent business mechanism clearly violates the provisions of what SARA allows.
- Angela Lee: So I think it's really prudent for institutions to pay close attention to what SARA permits so that they don't want to [inaudible 00:12:12] and create themselves a physical presence trigger that they didn't mean to do. So I think that's one area that we get a lot of questions about. And then of course the second question is how can we be exempt from oversight or licensure? And the district is not one of the territories that has the most relaxed provisions. I know some jurisdictions you don't have to, if you're a non degree program that exempts you, if you're a

religious program that exempts you, if you have fewer than certain number of students that exempts you and that isn't how the district's laws are written.

Angela Lee: And so I think it's really prudent that institutions take a couple of minutes and review the provisions of the law. I would argue that's not just the case in the district, but also in other jurisdictions and that they do it before they begin operating in a specific territory. It is not okay to say we didn't know we were supposed to be approved or licensed or exempt. Those questions should come at the onset before the programs begins to take place so that then you can make sure that you are in proper compliance with whatever the local jurisdictions, rules and regulations are.

Dan Silverman: Speaking of other jurisdictions, as you've gotten to know other regulators and known other jurisdictions regulations, is there ever been something that you came across and you said, "Wow, I really wish the district had this, or wow, I'm so glad the district doesn't have that?"

Angela Lee: That's an interesting question, Dan. I can't think of anything. Well, I'll say this. There are some jurisdictions that do religious exemptions and the district of Columbia does not. I can't say that I wish that we didn't. I just think it's just different. I don't know that I can say that there was something I wish we did differently than some other jurisdiction.

Dan Silverman: What about any changes? Let's say all of a sudden you were in charge of all higher education regulation, complete king power. What would you like to change?

Angela Lee: I would like it to be consistent. I would like all of us to ask for the same general information. It's going to sound kind of cliché, but kind of the way SARA has been able to sort of establish itself as a national process where there's one form and there's one set of expectations. I think it would be ideal for us as regulators probably for the institutions as well to be able to have one standard process. Maybe there is a streamlined application that I can fill out one application and check all the states where I want to be approved and that application, gives me view sort of through the same lens that would be magical [inaudible 00:15:30].

Dan Silverman: That would certainly be magical. Cheryl, do you have any last questions for Angela before we move on to our next segment?

Cheryl Dowd: I think just this would be interesting for me to know is you serve not every state where is there a state regulator that is also the state portal entity contact. Do you see advantages or disadvantages to being both in your location?

Angela Lee: I think there are definitely advantages to being both. Those two roles are very closely tied together because we are already very familiar with what the institutions are doing, what their capacity is with some of their strengths and maybe areas for opportunities for improvement on them being able to work

with them. We understand the institution and the institution's representatives. I think it also makes it easier for the institution because then they're not having to build relationships with another organization yet another regulatory entity in the district. I mean in the territory where they are, D.C. also has the uniqueness of being... My office also serves as the state approving agency professions benefits. So we have all three functions in our office, which is definitely different from a lot of jurisdictions, but I do think that it works really well. Again, because it's streamlined approaches our schools don't have to go to three different agencies to network with trying to basically achieve the same thing.

Dan Silverman: Angela, is there anything else we've missed or you'd like to get out there?

Angela Lee: I don't think so.

Dan Silverman: Well thank you so much. As expected, you knocked it out of the park. We really appreciate your time and we'd love to have you stick around for the next couple of minutes while we do our regulation of the month and reel Cheryl in musicals.

Angela Lee: Okay.

Cheryl Dowd: You're free to chime in there, Angela.

Dan Silverman: So we're going to move on to the regulation of the month, which as our dedicated listeners, whoever they are, know we don't do every month. But the idea here is to make more concrete, the very abstract nature, sometimes the professional licensure compliance and evaluating those regulations. So I try to look around and find some interesting or thought provoking regulations just to make real but can be kind of abstract. So in New York, the New York board of dentistry in section 61 of their regulations, says that dentists must complete 60 hours of pre-professional education in a number of fields, including chemistry, biology, et cetera. This is very interesting to me because this is not this course work, certainly could have taken place at any institution other than the graduate dental program. So that would be a real challenge I would think to evaluate for their students and for their program. Moving on to musicals, Cheryl, do you use musicals more as an escape or more as a thought provoking way of generally informing yourself and educating yourself?

Cheryl Dowd: Oh gosh, that's really interesting. Okay, so having been a kid that grew up with watching old MGM musicals, I'm sure it was more of the myth of the escape ism. I think as many of you all know, I have a daughter in performing arts and actually both daughters who have real interest in performing arts and although one of them is pursuing it for her career, they have taught me different things. And so I'm looking at different things now including, how it is directed, how it is costumed. So I'm looking at other aspects plus how the storytelling is managed. So the storytelling becomes really important to me. So I think I've evolved. So yes, later in life you can teach old dogs new tricks. So I've evolved to find more interest in some of the other aspects as well. Good question.

- Dan Silverman: Is there anything that they haven't been able to convince you of like, "Oh mom, you really should care about lighting." And you're just like, "Nah."
- Cheryl Dowd: No, because what's really interesting is, how is being around people who have a real knowledge know how to dissect a show or a movie or whether it's a musical or a drama. So it's been really interesting to see how the different aspects and so I feel like I'm always learning something. They're always able to point something out to me. They go, "Oh I see where that contributes." So no, I'm open minded to all of it I guess at this point.
- Dan Silverman: We got word from our colleague Lindsay Downs this week that the metropolitan opera is making all kinds of recordings, for a free streaming online during this social distancing time and [inaudible 00:21:09] self-quarantines. Which way do you think, Cheryl, do you go to opera or is that a bridge too far for you?
- Angela Lee: I know nothing about opera, so I would love to learn, but I don't have any appreciation for it because I don't have any knowledge. But to Lindsay's point, I think it's really interesting while you all are stuck with social distancing and so we're staying home. There are a number of things on social media. A number of different performing artists have set up Instagram events. I just read like a half an hour ago that somebody was pulling up... They're making an event out of the old HAMP Rodgers and Hammerstein Cinderella. They're making a virtual event where everyone watches YouTube at the same time to see the old Rodgers and Hammerstein Cinderella with Leslie and Warren from a gazillion years ago. So people are coming up with all kinds of creative things, to keep us interested in performing arts through this time of isolation.
- Dan Silverman: Finally, have you ever seen a musical that addresses pandemics or other challenges like that in a meaningful way or not?
- Angela Lee: No, I actually haven't, but it's interesting and Angela, feel free to chime in here. I have been commenting about how I regret having watched all this dystopian storytelling, whether it be in books, movies, or place, because it makes my imagination run wild with what's going on right now.
- Dan Silverman: Sort of the dark side there of-
- Angela Lee: Oh yeah. Yeah, a little too much Handmaid's tale. I've been saying that to folks lately.
- Dan Silverman: Yeah. I read a book a couple of years ago called station 11 which is very good book and actually about how art comes back after, apocalyptic flu, but also maybe it's a little too close to home.
- Cheryl Dowd: Yeah, yeah. Sometimes. Sometimes we see that. Angela, do you have a favorite play or musical?

Angela Lee: That's a good question.

Cheryl Dowd: Because you've got great venues where you are.

Angela Lee: Right. But I don't take advantage of those right now. And so I say is my favorite Chicago.

Cheryl Dowd: Oh yeah, absolutely.

Angela Lee: Really enjoyed that. [inaudible 00:23:47] Where's the DVD? I'm going to go pull it out, since we're home and have something to do. But I do like that. And then of course I have young people, and so I'm kind of a fan of the highest Q musical series as well.

Cheryl Dowd: Sure, sure.

Angela Lee: Well, and on Disney plus right now is a musical of Freaky Friday. The old movie that came out, I think twice now. It's been redone, but they came out with a musical version. And so it's very much high school musical like, but to that story. So your kids might like that.

Cheryl Dowd: They might, it might do. Right?

Angela Lee: Yeah, it's light and fun and good singing.

Dan Silverman: Fun just like the general disclosure podcast. Fun for the whole family.

Cheryl Dowd: There you go.

Dan Silverman: So, Angela, thank you so much, Cheryl Dowd. This is Dan Silverman saying we'll see you next time.

Cheryl Dowd: But I have to say thank you to Angela too, because Angela, we've always appreciated how much you've been willing to contribute to what we share with our sand members. And so we're really grateful that you've been really active with us, so thanks very much for that.

Angela Lee: I appreciate the invitation. I'm glad I can help.

Dan Silverman: Thank you. Bye-bye.