

NCCDA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Byron Dickey is the Assistant Director for Experiential Learning at North Carolina Central University (NCCU), one of the 10 historically black colleges and universities (HBCU) in North Carolina. Currently, he is a student in East Carolina University's Doctor of Education program, concentrating on Higher Education Administration. Recently, Byron's calendar included being part of the team for NCCU's Homecoming Weekend. NCCU students must complete 120 hours of community service as a graduation requirement, so he's been inundated with requests in the recent months, and he enjoys every minute of connecting with students.

What drew you to the world of career coaching (counseling, advising)?

Originally, Byron wanted to be in the music industry, with a goal of representing artists or serving as a music consultant manager. When he realized relocating to the West Coast or elsewhere for the music business would take him from his family, he reconsidered. Realizing his passion for consulting, Byron made the decision to pursue a counseling degree. Subsequently, he earned a MA in Counseling Education concentrating on Career Counseling & Placement.

What is your favorite part of the job?

His favorite part of the job is building relationships with students. He finds it gratifying when students have that "lightbulb moment", when they finally are able to envision their future and the steps to get there.

How has NCCDA played a role in your career?

NCCDA kicked off his career when he received a graduate scholarship to attend the annual conference. Even though it was during the pandemic and online, he gained a sense of safety in networking with a group of like-minded people. He enjoyed the experience of reflecting on his conference attendance for the NCCDA newsletter.

What do you think is the biggest challenge facing our profession today?

Byron feels there are several challenges today: (1) A general lack of knowledge about qualifications for a career, (2) a lack of funding to staff career centers and to provide students with the required supervision hours, and (3) improving BIPOC students employability after attending an HBCU (paid internships, for instance).

When you aren't working, what do you like to do?

Byron continues to spend time in the music world by singing. He also appreciates hanging out with his friends in a relaxed atmosphere. He describes himself as an extraverted introvert, sometimes, just needing quiet time to be.

What five terms would you use to describe yourself?

Determined. Enthusiastic. Present. Resourceful. Worthy.

If you could be any fictional character, who would it be and why?

Byron spoke eloquently about Robin, Batman's sidekick evolving into Nightwing after his gig with Batman ended. Byron sees his fictional character as an offshoot of Nightwing. People poured into Byron as he grew up, went to college, and entered the professional world. Now, it's his turn to become a resource for other people and transform their lives.