

ALL ABOUT

# MENTORING

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# All About Mentoring

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## MENTORING

### Issue 56

Winter 2024

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Cover Artwork: from "Isolation  
Series"

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incredibly helpful in the final  
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## Introductory Notes for All About Mentoring #56

As you will see throughout this issue, sometimes the word “college” and sometimes the word “university” are used to describe our institution. We chose *not* to make the change to “university” in every case. In this way, we have kept the timeframe and spirit of the language used when the piece was written.

This is surely the most substantive issue of the publication’s history to date (1993-2023). Indeed, it is gathering of all of the submissions to *All About Mentoring* since our last publication (#55, autumn 2021). Thanks so much to everyone who has contributed: for your words and images and care and patience. So glad we have been able to bring all of these rich materials together in one place here. Thank you.

Scattered in this issue are words from **Nel Noddings** (1929-2022) and **Mike Rose** (1944-2021) whose ideas and spirit have inspired our common efforts as educators for many decades.

Citations for Nel Noddings and Mike Rose quotes included throughout this issue:

Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*. University of California Press. p. 49

Noddings, N. (1995, May). Teaching Themes of Care. *The Phi Delta Kappan*. 76 (9). p. 675.

Noddings, N. (2002). *Educating moral people: A caring alternative to character education*. Teachers College Press. p. 14

Noddings, N. (2013). “An Interview with Nell Noddings. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*. 20 (2). <https://doi.org/10.1108/ccm.2013.13620baa.004>

Noddings, N. (2016). *Stanford University: An Oral History conducted by Chelsea Rosenberg*. <https://historicalsociety.stanford.edu/nel-noddings> pp. 47-48.

Rose M. (2009). *Why School? Reclaiming Education for All of Us*. The New Press.

Rose, M. (2009, June 01). “Blue Collar Brilliance: Questioning Assumptions about Intelligence, Work, and Social Class” *The American Scholar*. <https://theamericanscholar.org/blue-collar-brilliance/>

Rose, M. (2010). “More than a Paycheck.” *Inside Higher Education* (06 August) and in <https://mikerosebooks.blogspot.com/2010/>

Rose, M. (2011). “Underprepared Students” *Mike Rose’s Blog*. <https://mikerosebooks.blogspot.com/search/label/underprepared%20students>

Rose, M. (2012, 16 August). “Writing about Education.” *Mike Rose’s Blog* <https://mikerosebooks.blogspot.com/2012/>

## Editorial: An Age of Mentoring

Alan Mandell

*Don't think twice, it's all right*

Bob Dylan (1963)

*And we're stayin' alive, stayin' alive*

*Ah, ha, ha, ha, stayin' alive, stayin' alive*

*Ah, ha, ha, ha, stayin' alive*

Gibbs, Gibbs, Gibbs (1977)

*It'll be just like starting over*

John Lennon (1980)



Photo by Joseph O'Dea

Empire State (then) College was at the very heart of an “age of mentoring.” By reconsidering, and truly reimagining, the faculty role as “mentor,” our institution quite explicitly challenged the position and the responsibilities of the “professor” who claimed so much power and a monopoly on all the knowledge worth knowing. Indeed, a half-century ago when we got started, the critique of institutional authority was felt in a wide array of social movements of the time—the Civil Rights movement, the women’s movement, the anti-imperialist campaigns across the world. We were one quite small institution trying to find a place--coming alive--but we were a part of something much greater; our mission and our core values mirrored a groundswell of social-political-economic-cultural and educational critique of the day. There was something wrong with higher education: it was too elitist, it had become too bureaucratized, its encased ivory towers separated it from the day-to-day experiences of almost everyone. A major reform was necessary—more and more people demanded it. It is not so surprising that Illich’s *Deschooling Society* and Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Marcuse’s *An Essay on Liberation* and Figs’ *Patriarchal Attitudes* were all published within a few years of each other in the early 1970s. At Empire, we were in the game.

We asked: Could there be an alternative? And our Empire response: Our institution could be such a place. Student voices would be heard; students and mentors would

“Student voices would be heard; students and mentors would work together...”

work together to create individual studies (learning contracts) and entire curricula (degree programs); grading and conventional testing would be erased (narrative evaluations); time would be rethought (no semesters); study possibilities would be blasted wide open (no college catalogue); and learning from the past, regardless of where it took place, would be recognized (PLA from the start).

Overall—this was our promise to each other and to the world—an anti-institutional institution could find a way to carve out a zone of flexible, more open-ended, imaginative, and academically rich study space where subject-object would become subject-subject. Yes, of course, there had to be—there *were*—policies, and people had official titles (expected of any institution within the State University of New York), and students paid tuition and got degrees (that had to fulfill some SUNY expectations), and faculty had contracts and were evaluated and got paid for their work (and the work was always demanding and the full-year calendar was always a burden). But at its core, I’d say at its heart—our utopian moment—SUNY Empire was going to be a distinctive kind of place (though, of course others were trying too). We’d make a difference in our students’ lives and in our own lives as we tried (and this was always hard, always an experiment) to create a new mentoring role and, more broadly, an academic institution redefined as an entire mentoring culture (which meant that we were all in it together—there was a common good—regardless of our jobs—from support staff to professionals, to administrators, to faculty).

Of course, this was an ideal, and part of the beauty of the enterprise was that there was such an ideal that informed our common work. But what exactly did it demand? I’d say it demanded an enormous effort of time and energy; it demanded that we-as-faculty reconfigure our attitudes about ourselves as possessors of expert knowledge; it demanded that we learn to serve as attentive listeners (and not focus on professing); it demanded that we constantly reflect on what we are doing and admit when we haven’t quite gotten it right; it demanded that we recognized that learning is happening all over the place and that so-called “learning opportunities” can’t get sliced up and then packed neatly; it demanded that we

have each other for support, advice, and honest appraisal; it demanded that we acknowledge that we can't get stuck in any single pedagogical model, so we always have to be learning and thinking of ourselves, right along with our students, as life-long learners; and above all, it demanded that we experience our students as whole people with work and home and community lives that not only can't (and shouldn't) be neglected but that, if we are imaginative, careful enough, and keep the inquiry rolling, can also find their ways into their academic lives. We know that we have to know them. It is our promise. The life of a mentoring culture depends on it.

Where are we now? Can an "age of mentoring" that we at Empire State University were so deeply part of, that we championed, that people knew as crucial to our distinctiveness--can it stay alive? Do we have the foundational necessities, the zeal, the principles, and the tools to say that mentoring has a hold on us, not only because we are emotionally attached to the term (I think many of us are) and can toss it around when we need to find a word that captures our hopes (I do that all the time), but because it is our practice. Are we truly mentors in 2023? Can we be honest with ourselves?

2023 is not 1971. It would be a mad distortion to think that our world today (politically, economically, ideationally, culturally, socially, educationally) is the world in which our institution was founded. It would also be completely unfair and certainly another historical perversion to say that, at any particular point in our institutional history, the ideal was the real. No way! But I think we have to look at what we have done to ourselves, perhaps, in part, in response to powerful external factors, but yet we have done it: We have faculty/professional workloads that (even with fantastic efforts on our part) have squeezed the life out of so many colleagues and made it so much more difficult to get to know our students. Often in the name of academic quality, we have designed more tightly bound degrees and stringent guidelines, and pretty much cemented-in-place programs. Hoping for more orderliness, we have developed incredibly intricate rules and policies that are demanding to locate, let alone master (thus leading to the further instrumentalization of everyone's work). With the introduction of schools and departments, we have created new barriers that have made the potential magic of interdisciplinary/cross-disciplinary/individualized faculty and student work harder to experience and try out; and we have, I think, pushed ourselves into more conventional understandings of "scholarship." Thus, taken as a whole, I think we have done harm (often so incrementally that we lose sight of it because it so quickly

becomes the texture of our daily doings) to the flexibility and space for care and freedom on which a terrain of mentoring practice lives.

Wow, is there much to be proud of and to fight for. I bet there were many people in 1971 who believed that this tiny experiment in public (a big deal unto itself) higher education geared to working adults (we were alone for quite some time) would run out of gas or be absorbed into something quite different from what we ever wanted to be, or just be pushed out of town. And here we are.

I think our new question is daunting: Can we as a whole institution, an entire community, remain shaped by the spirit and substance of mentoring? I'd say it's a very difficult challenge. This is *not* about an immediate problem of institutional survival or even about the potential of growth in enrollment or whether there will be new programs and partnerships and new groups of students who need us, and who we will enthusiastically welcome to Empire State University. We can at least be semi-optimistic about those things. Rather, it is whether we have morphed away from mentoring as an animating ethic, as an authentic faculty practice, and as an institutional commitment, and thus, if we are being completely honest with ourselves, whether--right now--the word has anything more than symbolic and perhaps nostalgic value.

I say it must take more than such a linguistic nod (however heartfelt), if we choose to continue to use and celebrate mentoring and recognize its inherent critical spirit and its value as a living platform to question the academic ways of the day—including, for sure, our own. Think about the questions we would have to raise, the hot debates we would have to welcome, the changes we would have to make, the additional resources we would need, the learning we'd have to take on together about the forces that are penetrating the university today and the possibilities of change, the shifts in perspective and attitude we would have to invite--if we were to even begin to pull this off.

As I feel it, it's like, now in 2024, we are back in 1971, searching for more than an institutional means (an alive, accredited university) to an academic end (more degrees for those who had been left behind). Mentoring, taken in its fullest, deepest, and truest sense, has always been more than that. Can we really be "all about mentoring" today? Or could--or should-- there be an alternative for a new age?

## Continuum of Support: Development and Implementation of a Post-Graduate Mentorship Program at the Black Male Initiative (BMI): A Very Brief Practice Discussion

David Fullard, Social and Behavioral Sciences



### A Continuum of Support

So, we have mentored our students competently, overcome the historically high dropout rate for this group, and gotten them to the point of actually graduating, thanks to the unique support provided by the various facets of the SUNY Black Male Initiative (BMI) and Fortified Classroom programs at Empire State College. Is this where it ends? Does the relationship end? Does the mentoring end?

For us it doesn't. Although the majority of our students are employed, they are not necessarily in an upwardly mobile career. Now that they have graduated and possess a newly minted degree that was earned through blood, sweat, and tears, it is now time to move to the next stage of development in our social justice model of providing services to students who historically have been underserved, by creating a new Post-Graduate Mentorship Program

### A Post-Graduation Continuum of Support

The next step, as I see it, is to expand our social responsibility and social justice initiatives to include ongoing mentorship post-graduation. This expansion of our overall initiatives involves providing standard career and professional development practices such as assisting students in developing a *professional résumé* and enhancing their *speaking and interviewing skill set*. But we go beyond that, to support graduates in not merely obtaining a job – any job – but rather focusing on developing a career path that has a route to advancement. Through their experience in BMI, and by taking advantage of various facets of the Post-graduate Mentorship Program, these young workers can envision and create an

“The next step, as I see it, is to expand our social responsibility and social justice initiatives to include ongoing mentorship post-graduation.”

employment trajectory with progressive growth, not just take a series of dead-end jobs.

Indeed, we have taken professional development support a step further. Currently, we are reaching out to Fortune 500 companies, smaller private companies, civil service, as well as non-governmental organizations to tell them the unique story of BMI and the Fortified Classroom. I was quite surprised that many people were interested in hearing about the success of African-American students and were willing to assist them in not just finding a job but starting a vocation with potential for upward mobility. These organizational connections will allow BMI/ESC to make positive, effective referrals to match graduates with career avenues suited to their skills and interests, while providing employers with a trained and talented work force. Even when such referrals do not result in immediate employment, opportunities for *interviewing practice, résumé development, and professional networking* will provide ESC alums with much-needed experience in a supportive environment, able to break down the encounter afterwards with their BMI post-grad mentor and learn from the engagement.

Through both group seminars and workshops as well as intense individual one-on-one mentoring, newly minted graduates are able to work with trained faculty and members of the Black Male Initiative in a safe and dynamic environment. Some of these mentor-mentee pairs may be *continuing relationships* built during the student's time at ESC; others may be *new connections* developed through this unique initiative. BMI Post-Grad Mentor group workshops can focus on specific career issues such as the above-mentioned résumé and interviewing skills, as well as other issues such as asking about pay rates, raises, and benefits. Other group seminars can address complex cultural issues, such as *how to handle intentional or unintentional racism in the workplace, relations with difficult colleagues or bosses, professional etiquette, how to redress unequal pay, being passed over for promotion – or fired – and more.*

“Evidence suggests that mentoring is critical early in adulthood and/or during important life transitions...having the guidance and support of an experienced person can help [mentees] make a smoother transition.” (Booker & Brevard, 2017) This ongoing mentorship program must involve training for paid, professional faculty mentors, enabling them to create true “high-touch” connections and open communication with a manageable case load of mentees, following the Fortified Classroom where “everyone involved shares... contact information with [mentees] so that when [they] have issues, they can actually call



anyone of us... they know that it's available... that makes a big difference, so the support aspect is critical" (Burkart, 2022). Mentor relationships have a much higher rate of efficacy when mentors have more time available to meet with their mentees, and training on how to provide interpersonal support and guidance beyond basic academic or career advising (Booker & Brevard, 2017).

### **The Mentor Connection Starts Early—and Goes Both Ways: Teaching Students to Develop Mentor Relationships**

Empire is noted for its focus on undergraduate mentoring, and as noted above, there are many studies showing the importance and effectiveness of mentoring on student success. However, the responsibility for developing the mentor-mentee connection is not solely on the school or individual mentors; students, too, can learn how to deepen these relationships. This is a wonderful role for juniors and seniors to train freshmen and sophomores, as well as for returning alumni to share specific tips on ways to improve connections with their professors – and how those connections have continued beyond graduation.

Crucial steps which students can take to enhance contact with their mentors include:

- Going the extra mile (demonstrating an interest in the subject matter, showing up to meet with the mentor during office hours, completing all assignments);
- Knowing the individual (learning about the mentor's area of study, publications, and interests; get to know them outside the classroom, independent study, outside events);
- Letting them know who you are (expressing your own interests and challenges, without overstepping boundaries of sharing inappropriate personal details); and
- Reaching out (striking up a conversation, sending an email, making a call, even mailing a holiday card is a way to kindle – or re-kindle – a relationship with a mentor).

If these relationships are built and tended, a former professor can become "a role model, a friend, a mentor and someone [to] continue to learn from post-graduation – [even] someone to [give you] relationship advice." (Glass, 2013)

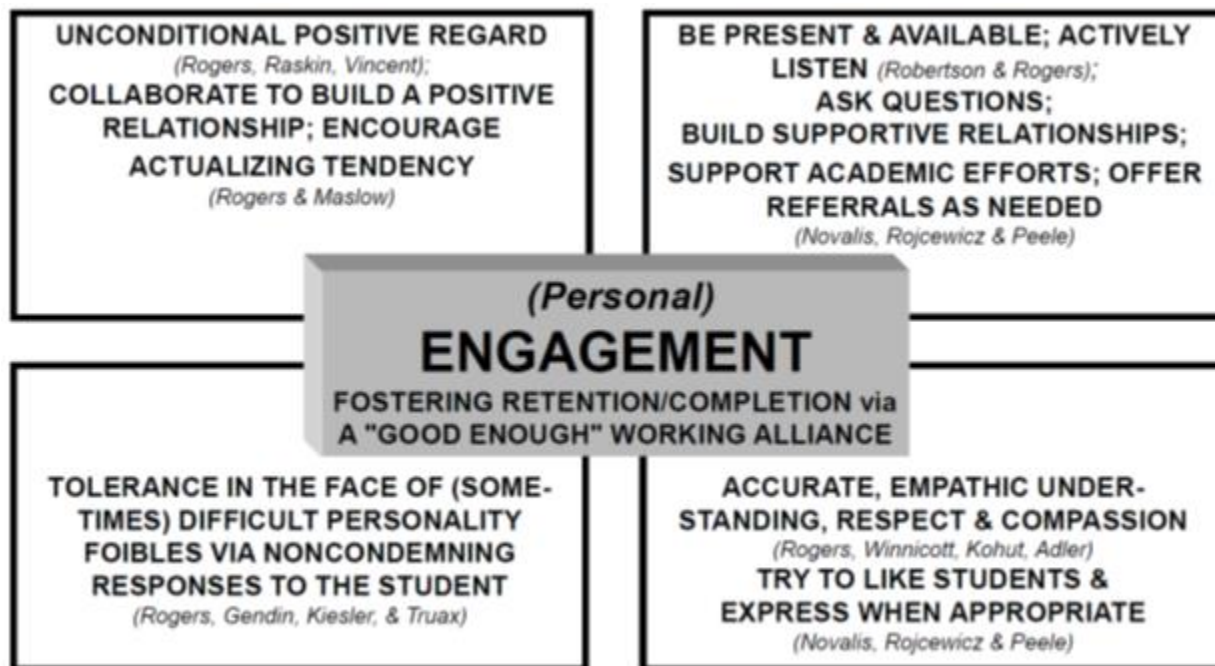
### **Training Faculty in both Undergraduate and Post Graduate Mentoring**

There are many skills that the mentor needs as well. To enhance both college-level and post-graduate mentorship, faculty benefit from extra training in building and

maintaining effective mentor relationships with their students, to ensure success in school and beyond. ESC already provides robust support for undergraduate mentoring, focusing on the qualities of the Ideal Educator in the BMI Fortified Classroom (Fullard, 2021), including:

- knowledge and thorough command of content area;
- proven teaching skills and abilities;
- the ability to form a strong working relationship with the mentee; and
- the temperament, demeanor, and presentation to work with mentees effectively.

While mentoring alumni who have entered the world of employment may focus on new topics that arise in the workplace, a successful mentor still requires these qualities to develop an effective connection with their mentees. Ongoing training in the principles of positive Personal Engagement (Fullard, 2019) benefits all mentors, helping to enhance their relationships with mentees, both current students and graduates.



Professional mentoring relationships also benefit from certain skills and structures, such as:

- Developing appropriate qualifications and characteristics to be an effective mentor, (relevant experience, commitment, ethically and culturally responsive).

- Developing a written mentorship agreement that spells out both mentee and mentor roles and responsibilities, timelines, and clearly articulated goals.
- An involved mentor documents the content of meetings and progress towards goals, providing useful ongoing and summative feedback to the mentee.
- Maintain mentorship relationships through regular (if flexible) scheduled contact, including electronic contact (e.g., phone, e-mail, videoconference, text).
- And mentorship relationships respect both ethical principles and legal regulations, including confidentiality, privacy, and personal boundaries. (NASP, 2021)

Many people who provide mentoring services to students and graduates find that the experience is as enriching for the mentor as it is for the mentee, personally, professionally, and practically. “Provision of support benefits mentors as well through career enhancement, professional growth, and a sense of giving back to the field... [and] such efforts may qualify for continuing professional development credits toward renewal of a credential...” (NASP, 2021)

### **Continuing Support**

Many studies and anecdotal reports note that mentorship from a faculty member is “the single most important ingredient of college success... having a faculty mentor who encouraged their goals and dreams more than doubles a graduate’s odds of being engaged in their work and thriving in their well-being throughout their lifetime.” (Busteed, 2019).

The connection which is created during the college years – based equally on making students feel cared about as well as challenged academically – often continues into the years after graduation. Not only do students receive the benefit of this support while they are in school, and residually upon graduation: when mentorship is genuine, they stay in touch as the years go by. Nearly half (46 percent) of students who have a strong undergraduate mentor connection report that they have seen them within the past three months, and almost three-quarters (71 percent) say they have communicated with their mentor in the last year. (Busteed, 2019).

The new BMI Post-Graduate Mentorship Program aims to harness and direct the power of ongoing mentorship by establishing a robust outreach program to contact graduates and invite them back to campus to re-connect with their mentors and

professors in person. This would only enhance the continuing support and positive impact of the mentor-mentee relationship.

### **An Ongoing Relationship**

Like a marriage or a friendship or any other intimate connection, there is no forced termination date to a genuine mentor-mentee relationship. While contact with an academic advisor or classroom professor may be designed to end at the conclusion of study or the attainment of a degree, the mentor relationship can – and should – continue into graduate study, internship, and professional career development.

First of all, if there were any doubt about the sincerity of the mentor’s interest and concern for the mentee, this continuing personal involvement proves the validity of the connection which was initiated during the years of college study. The mentor’s ongoing availability, interest, and involvement in the mentee’s growth – and help dealing with any challenges which may arise – shows that their connection is more than a mere job obligation on the part of the mentor.

Second, professional mentorship in the form of guidance, coaching, counseling, and referrals, is valuable to anyone in the developmental stages of their career. Mentoring can complement administrative supervisory relationships, providing “emotional support and serving as a protective factor against burnout, [helping] with time management, establishing professional boundaries, identifying or changing a career trajectory, managing relationships, and fostering professional skills and competencies, as well as creating a foundation to become supervisors or mentors in the future.” (NASP, 2021)

Furthermore, this new BMI Post-Graduate Mentorship Program provides an opportunity for graduates – who may have “missed the boat” to start building a close mentor-mentee relationship while still in school – to *establish a new connection* with an understanding, experienced, academic professional who can provide guidance with both career and personal issues. Having someone who can provide a listening ear at any stage of our lives has deep intrinsic value. For BMI grads, working with someone who has shared cultural and career experience, and who also has relevant professional mentor training, is even more beneficial.

### **Guidance from Someone Who Has Been There**

This shared experience is particularly important during times of fraught racial tension, as over the past few years. At Florida State University, Black faculty sent an open letter to Black students, expressing profound empathy: “[W]e see you and feel

the racial battle fatigue, grief, and frustration that you are probably feeling... We recognize the toll institutional and structural racism can take on your motivation, as well as mental, physical, and spiritual health... We know that you are balancing all of this while striving to thrive in your academic programs... we are committed to doing our part in addressing this wherever and whenever we can" (College of Social Sciences and Public Policy, 2020).

There are many challenges to increasing the number of Black faculty to match the percentages of Black students on campus, much less in the general population. "The consequences for the lack of a diverse faculty, especially Black professors, can be detrimental for generations of students... more

"It is very important to provide appropriate training and pay for faculty mentors, rather than subject yet another generation of Black workers to the indignity of providing unpaid and undervalued labor."

intentional efforts need to occur to fix this unspoken gap between Black students and Black professors" (Stoudemire, 2021). When representation is too low, these scholars are often overburdened by feeling obligated to take on excessive mentoring and committee work rather than pursuing their own scholarship and publication. There are intense demands on Black professors to lead diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives "without compensation, on top of their already disproportionate duties mentoring students of color, and often without their recommendations being adopted" (Flaherty, 2020). Worse still, these extra efforts are not considered for tenure and promotion, leaving these overworked professors even farther behind on the academic treadmill. It is very important to provide appropriate training and pay for faculty mentors, rather than subject yet another generation of Black workers to the indignity of providing unpaid and undervalued labor.

Having a diverse staff is valuable not only for the "important role faculty of Color can play in addressing the needs of students of Color" but also providing all students with increased intercultural competence, "successfully interacting with others without forfeiting or ignoring the core self... better prepared to navigate an increasingly multiethnic nation outside of higher education" (Madyun et al, 2013). There is a broad range of scholarship on the value of having Black Faculty and counselors to serve as role models, as well as providing and understanding ear based on shared experience with students.

Examples of negative campus experiences for Black men abound: “Black men have often been perceived to possess oppositional attitudes towards college attainment... have to endure microaggressions rooted in racist and gendered stereotypes [such as] the ‘dumb jock’ or the ‘at-risk student’ with a propensity toward criminal behavior...[which] can lead to low self-confidence, isolation, and academic failure” (Best Colleges, 2020). However, increasing faculty diversity and providing support groups such as BMI can turn this around: “Black men must be in learning environments where they are supported by teachers and given the opportunity to openly share their fears, worries, and concerns... Research indicates that when Black male students have access to a Black teacher, dropout rates fall... Having a space where they can connect and meet like-minded peers and acquire leadership skills is essential for their academic and personal success...” (Best Colleges, 2020).

This level of unspoken shared understanding is even more valuable as students move into the workplace. While the involvement of a caring mentor is valuable to everyone, BMI members in particular find it is reassuring to speak with another black male professional. Who else will understand and has faced the subtle but ubiquitous racial discrimination, bias, and assumptions on the part of work colleagues, clients, and bosses? This is always hard to deal with, whether intentional or unintentional, confrontational, or conniving, “in your face” or behind your back.

These can include outright ethnic and racial slurs and insults... to implied if unspoken beliefs on the part of others that they benefited from affirmative action programs and “don’t really deserve” their position or “didn’t really earn” their degree... to being mistaken for an orderly or an admin or court security rather than being the doctor or professor or judge that they are... to being treated dismissively when they speak up to contribute to meetings and papers. It is helpful to young professionals to realize that their mentors have faced the same – and worse – and come through to develop a position of respect and authority despite such social and cultural opprobrium.

The BMI Post-Graduate Mentorship Program can address overt and covert issues of racial bias, preference, and discrimination in group workshops as well as in sensitive one-on-one interactions with a trained mentor who has been through similar experiences. Realizing that you are not alone and having support and guidance from someone who has been there is truly priceless and can help graduates with adjustment issues in the workplace.

### Encouraging Supportive Partnerships and Passing it On

Along similar lines, there is a long-standing (if finally waning) convention of the “exceptional minority” both in academia and in business. Trained mentors who have professional connections with peers in their field can serve as role models for their mentees, encouraging and supporting them to form collaborative bonds with other black males in moving ahead, rather than viewing them as competition for a limited slice of pie.

This works against the old trope of “crabs in a barrel,” with each person trying to pull down his fellows in the fight to get ahead, based on the idea that there are a limited number of positions available to people of color. Mentors can help mentees focus on a new future where there is room for more than just one black

“These alums can also describe and demonstrate the value of the connections they have maintained with their own mentors, and how they did it, encouraging students to develop and deepen their connections while they are still on campus..”

high achiever in a department, company, field, and to change the motto to “a rising tide raises all boats.” Indeed, simply showcasing the supportive relationships between mentors and their colleagues, or mentors and graduates, demonstrates the validity of this to current students.

The BMI Post-Grad Mentorship Program can provide graduates with the practical experience of supporting others, by inviting them to come back and meet

with current BMI members at ESC. Alums can partner with mentors as a source of encouragement, confidence, hope, and inspiration: “If we did it, you can too” – yes, it may not be easy, but it’s worth the effort. Through informal presentations and building connections with current students, Alums can share their challenges – both setbacks and triumphs – to show undergrads what they have to look forward to.

These alums can also describe and demonstrate the value of the connections they have maintained with their own mentors, and how they did it, encouraging students to develop and deepen their connections while they are still on campus. Graduates can share how this highly functional post-graduate mentoring helped them to develop a career path with opportunity for growth, promotions, salary raises, and concomitant increases in authority, responsibility, respect, and recognition in their field. These living success stories can voluntarily return to talk

to new students as credible messengers who can speak about what both BMI and the Fortified Classroom did for them – and serve as role models for prospective students who may be on the fence about involvement in these programs.

Of course, during this visit, the graduates themselves get the opportunity to visit in person once again with their own mentors. While they may have remained in touch by phone or email or text with each other since graduation, there's nothing like sitting together, going out for coffee or a meal, and sharing their latest life and professional experiences with each other. This "high touch" connection is most effective in person, getting to know each other, who we are and why we're here. There is nothing quite like seeing and experiencing each other through in-person, face-to-face meetings, where the student has the mentor's undivided attention, support, expertise, and mutual collaboration.

Though let it be said: if we have gained nothing else from the pandemic lockdown, we have learned that we can get together with others virtually no matter where they are, so even if alums can't visit in person, a videoconference can go a long way to inspire connection. There are times where "high tech" has to supplement (or even replace) "high touch." Having virtual conversations keeps us involved and opens up these events to those who are challenged by distance, time, schedule, or travel constraints. Technology can allow them to continue to contribute to – and benefit from – this new initiative. While "high touch" is always preferable, we should be grateful for the "high tech" option when needed (Burkart, 2022).

### **Moving Forward**

To sum up, putting the BMI Post-Graduate Mentorship Program into place will benefit everyone. Graduates will enjoy the support of an experienced mentor in navigating professional and personal challenges, and the opportunity to share their experience with current BMI and Fortified Classroom students. Mentors will have the pleasure of sharing their experience and guiding the next generation to achieve their career potential, while receiving training and compensation appropriate for their efforts. And Current Students will have the opportunity to learn from returning alums what how to develop and deepen their own effective mentor relationships while still in school, with the understanding that this connection and support will follow them into the future, to enrich their lives beyond the university.



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## The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Student: Reflections on a Career in Nontraditional Adult Education

Lorraine Lander, Professor Emerita



I came to work at Empire State College in 2003, fresh from a doctoral program with a degree in Human Development in Educational Settings. The focus of my dissertation work was looking at sustained attention (attention span) in preschool children and how this was impacted by motivation to learn and choices in a learning situation.

As a graduate student, I knew the research on how various methods of teaching in college settings can impact long-term retention of information. The results are not always encouraging. For example, students taught in traditional lecture classrooms in college (a very common method for psychology and human development, my fields, as well as many other academic disciplines) and who are tested with multiple-choice exams retain very little of that information six months after the course is completed. Knowing that dismal finding made me question whether there were better methods. I was thus excited to be working at SUNY Empire State (ESC) where students learned in different modes and the ways that learning is demonstrated was primarily through writing.

During my first years at the college, I had an opportunity to look at some of these educational differences. For example, I researched motivation to learn in Empire students versus students at SUNY Brockport in a traditional classroom and found it to be higher. I explored self-directed learning theory and found the first of what I would call 21<sup>st</sup>-century student learning advantages to an education from ESU. Workers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century need to be able to acquire new skills and knowledge almost constantly, given the rapidly changing world we live in. How better to do that than to be able to learn in a self-directed way? Rather than sitting passively in a classroom like students do on traditional college campuses, ESC students had to learn in a much more active and independent way. Self-directed learning that is built into the college's learning modes is an important 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning skill that our students must acquire and demonstrate.

Over those first years, I reflected on the world and how quickly information was changing for our students and their future career plans. Was a focus on an education that primarily was about information acquisition even the best thing for students? Given that the learning materials I was using from textbooks were several

years old by the time my students read them, was that information even valid any longer? If I was helping students learn out-of-date information, what was the point? Information was changing too quickly for that. Most students using a computer, or a smartphone had information at their fingertips. Wasn't, then, an important skill ESU could pass to its students the ability to find information, evaluate its legitimacy, and then in many cases to apply it? These are skills often associated with higher-level cognitive activity. In particular, analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing are often referred to as critical thinking. I came to believe that an important focus of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century college education ought to be helping students become good critical thinkers so they could evaluate the information to which they are exposed. I would argue, in fact, that the highest quality college education for students today is to help them find and evaluate information for themselves. Students at ESC were often given opportunities, through writing and projects, to practice those activities and develop those skills.

"Given that the learning materials I was using from textbooks were several years old by the time my students read them, was that information even valid any longer?"

In those early years, I began to learn more about critical thinking skills. I co-taught workshops and a group study with local colleagues Susan Hollis and Ed Warzala. Around this same time, I had an interesting conversation with my son who teaches college-level math. He shared with me how he tries to encourage his students who may not want to be taking a required math course that one of the positive results of taking math is that it teaches students to be logical and systematic in their thinking. The idea of a logical and systematic approach was exactly what critical thinking skills were about! I suspect that various academic disciplines have different approaches to those systematic and logical processes, though. In working with students in the critical thinking workshops and group study, I found that students were logical and systematic about things like buying a car or finding an apartment. However, when it came to using a similar approach to information, some were hesitant to question information shared in education. After all, they had spent years in public education where the focus was learning what they were told. For others, using systematic thinking skills about abstract concepts seemed to be something they struggled to do. This is where outside supports seemed important. As it turned out, the approach of demonstrating learning through writing seemed a way of supporting or scaffolding those thinking processes, so that students could work on improving their ability to think logically and systematically, (in contrast to

evaluation through multiple choice exams which seem more about memorization, recognition rather than recall, etc. and seldom even give students a chance to demonstrate critical thinking skills).

I do not know if the original founders of the college, people like Ernest Boyer and Arthur Chickering, thought about or built critical thinking into the design of the college, although both of them were noted educators who thought deeply about the best ways to learn. However, it was clear when I started at the college that these higher-level thinking skills were important. The learning contracts I was shown as a new mentor were filled with critical thinking terms like analyze, synthesize, and evaluate as the criteria for good work. Someone coming from outside who looked at a college that used written work and not exams, while also emphasizing the importance of these terms for assessment would likely conclude that there was an underlying emphasis on critical thinking in our work with students.

I would argue that to promote critical thinking skills for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century student, then, we need to use methods of evaluation that encourage that. Multiple-choice exams that focus on information that may be outdated is not a good method of promoting better thinking skills. It may even trigger cynicism in students who don't feel that what they are learning has much real-world value. Perhaps it even encourages students to think that college is mainly about jumping through hoops to get a piece of paper with little real-world value. (An attitude faculty sometimes encounter that is discouraging). I am not suggesting that educators not share any information with students or expect them to be familiar with it. Making the acquisition of that information the core purpose of a course, though, through evaluating by multiple-choice exams alone certainly does implicitly suggest to students that this is what is important. In other words, how we evaluate our students shows them what we value and motivates them to focus on those things.

After my first five years at the college, I transferred to a unit coordinator position at the Canandaigua location. There I regularly ran orientation for new students. I wanted them to know what I had discovered, so I explained that an education at ESU was better than other colleges in that we used methods that encouraged them to become better thinkers! I could see their faces light up when I shared this information. Not to just indirectly compliment them on their choice to attend ESU, I suspected many of them were worried about the writing and I wanted to plant a seed in their thinking about the value all that writing would provide to them. I went on to explain that being a better thinker, rather than someone who learned and could recite information, was especially important as a 21<sup>st</sup>-century skill with the

rapid changes in information being created. I explained that the college's priority on using writing, rather than exams, was evidence of this important focus.

Empire remained an exciting place for me to work as I believe it provided a much higher quality learning experience than other colleges through the methods I have described above. I worried a bit off and on about the messages we advertised that focused on the practical aspects. For me, the value wasn't about just not having to go to class, it wasn't just about learning when or where it was convenient. I wondered if we could do more in our recruiting to educate prospective students that there were these extra values to studying with us. Could we share in some way that we were helping our students acquire 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills?

As I continued to work on orienting new students at our unit location, I realized that there were two additional 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills we were helping our students acquire. Both of these involve communication skills they need to practice that center around the idea of sharing what they know with their mentors and fellow students. I think I became aware of this value through having multiple students come to me and tell me that they no longer sat silently during meetings where they worked. After studying with us they understood more about what was going on, but also had

"The college's methods of working with students was helping them to practice the art of sharing what they know in a professional setting, thus helping them to become better at participating in important information sharing with future colleagues."

more confidence to speak up. By asking students to talk to us either via in-office meetings or on the phone about what they were learning, we were helping them acquire an important skill in many workplaces: the ability to talk with others about what they know or to ask good questions. A closely related 21<sup>st</sup> century communication skill is doing something similar in writing either in emails or in online discussions. The college's methods of working with

students was helping them to practice the art of sharing what they know in a professional setting, thus helping them to become better at participating in important information sharing with future colleagues. In addition, changing jobs and careers has become increasingly common place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These communication skills of talking about what you know with others could be valuable for interview situations as well.

I leave teaching for the college with some unanswered questions. One of the debates we had when I was in graduate school was who is the consumer for the educational system? For example, there three primary consumers could be the consumer the students, it could be future employers (the idea is it is important to a community and the economy to have a supply of well-educated workers), or it could be our society (it is important to a civil society to have an educated citizenship). The reality may be that it's a little of each, but colleges may want to pay attention to shifts in the balance of those three stakeholders. For example, a shift away from more liberal arts degrees to more professional degrees has been mirrored by concurrent losses in public funding. This suggests that there has been an underlying shift away from the preparation of good citizens to more emphasis on preparation for future employment. This may change what students are expecting when they enroll. Whether this should change what faculty do is another question. A college education is not analogous to other service industries where the consumer is given what they seek. After all, college faculty challenge students, evaluate them in ways that aren't comfortable for students, and may even prevent them from finishing when low grades are given.

These questions are not merely philosophical, they have a practical influence on the main goals that are focused on by educational institutions. Educational researchers have studied whether conditions of schooling can impact future career paths. For example, skills like punctuality and following directions may better prepare students for lower-level jobs, while a focus on thinking, creativity, and independence may better prepare them for future management and leadership careers. An interesting discussion could be held on what type of focus a college like ESU has based on the type of assignments, emphasis on due dates, writing versus exams, etc. that underlie the methods being used. And if there are approaches that promote different types of employment, might the college be more proactive in promoting the types of employment engagement skills that our students would benefit from acquiring?

As my work in motivation to learn and self-directed learning evolved, I became interested in the idea of wisdom as a culmination of thinking skills. In the field of psychology, one theory of wisdom suggests it consists broadly of four related parts including information, critical thinking, ethical thinking, and civic action (or inaction when that is the most ethical decision). Can a college education promote wisdom? I think most college faculty would not associate a college education with a pathway to wisdom, yet there may be possibilities for promotion that result. If we accept that college can teach information and a good college education can promote critical thinking skills, could it also help with ethical thinking and civic action? An



analysis of the ESU mission statement, general education requirements and guidelines for various concentrations and degrees would suggest that ethical thinking is a part of a college education at Empire. That the information acquired, critical thinking skills promoted, and ethical thinking valued lead to action in students' future that would influence actions that could be considered guided by wisdom? We can hope that is the case.

In contrast to the excitement that I have felt about the 21<sup>st</sup>-century design and methods that ESU uses and how it is so beneficial to students, I have tended to find that not all faculty and administrators seem to be aware or to value what I have described above. Why might that be true? Could this lack of obvious valuing be because higher education is an environment where some administrators and faculty have little to no formal training in educational methods? A background in educational methods would provide for a common vocabulary. Time for these kinds of deep discussions may also be in short supply. In particular, with large proportions of college teaching being provided by part-time and adjunct faculty, it is unclear how the educational methods that may support the values the college holds, or the 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills I have written about might be transmitted to these individuals who are so important to student learning.

Might the college promote the infusions of these skills, for example, through some types of professional development efforts to help faculty to understand self-directed learning, critical thinking, and the professional communication skills I have mentioned? I think this would

"This century is going to require a continually learning workforce that can think critically, ethically, and engage in actions that promote a civil society."

require public recognition by both faculty and the administration. In terms of the future, without some awareness of the value of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills I've identified (and potentially others that may exist that I have missed) they may be at risk. For example, administrators may not value these aspects of what we do with students, thus in efforts to be more financially efficient, structures and processes may change and lead to these skills being harder or impossible to promote with our students. If it were to be more financially efficient to revert to multiple choice exams and less faculty-student contact and in the absence of some value to what we do to promote these skills, those aspects may diminish or be lost.



If I were to offer advice to the college as I retire, it would be to start proudly acknowledging the added value of what the college offers from an educational perspective. These added values need to be communicated throughout the college to all our own personnel. It needs to be communicated to both new and existing students and it most definitely needs to be shared with the outside world. I think it would be especially important for recruiters to understand these added values so they could be communicated to prospective students. It should be built into our website and college materials shared with the outside world. Internally, I would recommend the college encourage more open discussion about academic quality and the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century student. I would hope some of the topics might be the skills I've identified, but I would also hope others might be identified. For myself, as a retiring faculty member, I think it is time to shift away from discussions about changing processes and structures and carve out some important time for educational matters. I believe the faculty at ESU would still become enthusiastic about such discussions. The reality for me is that without discussion of what is valued academically it becomes very difficult to have effective discussions about how changes to processes and structures can be detrimental to working with students.

The college has a rich history as a nontraditional college, but I believe it could be doing more to promote its position as a leader in 21<sup>st</sup> century student education. This century is going to require a continually learning workforce that can think critically, ethically, and engage in actions that promote a civil society. To promote the important work it is doing, it is essential to identify what is important through discussing the value of high-quality educational work that is done at ESU, and to communicate that work to the outside world. And for those who feel their work with students is threatened by change, the first step to preserving what helps students prepare for this century is to openly recognize its value.

## Encounter (a play in one act)

Connelly Akstens



**The scene** is the space in front of a cottage at a writer’s workshop—perhaps on a leafy New England college campus.

There is a bench in front of the cottage, under an overhanging tree. It’s Friday, the first day of the conference. It’s a pleasant summer day about noon.

**Jeanette** is about forty. She’s an enthusiastic person who tries lots of things, looking for self-actualization. Her enthusiasm can be ditzzy and annoying—and she knows it.

**Eleanor** is in her mid-sixties. She’s a professional person, perhaps involved in social work or education. She’s close to retirement and the writer’s workshop might be an experiment to help her decide what next to do with her life. She’s experienced in the world, bears some scars, but is not world-weary or cynical.

**Danielle** is also in her mid-sixties. She is a transgender author and educator. She’s the author of a new memoir. After several dead ends, her life is going well. She’s a confident person, but also bears some scars—but hers are more carefully camouflaged. She and Eleanor were married many years earlier. They haven’t seen each other for thirty-eight years.

### Scene 1.

**Jeanette:** I love that this is a “writ*ERs*’ workshop”—you know, not just a “writ*ING* workshop.” Makes me feel like I’m a writer, not simply a dabbler.

**Eleanor:** That’s an interesting word—“dabbler.”

**Jeanette:** I guess... Anyway, for me, it’s worth \$475 for three days just to be here with other writers. Real writers. There’s so much on the schedule for this afternoon. I don’t like making choices. That’s just me. Sounds crazy, but I can’t decide whether to put my energy into being a novelist or an essayist. Or both. You haven’t told me yet about your own writing. [She waits a beat for a response, but there isn’t one]

Oh—maybe I’m bugging you. You haven’t even unpacked yet. I can really be a pest. [a pause, briefly] But do you know yet what you’re going to do this afternoon? Should we go over the workshops in the program? Or do you want to run over to lunch?

**Eleanor:** Ah... not yet. [laughs] Not yet to all three questions... [pause]. I registered for this thing on a whim. I haven’t even looked at the program. I wouldn’t call myself a writer—wouldn’t begin to. I do write in a journal quite a lot. Then every New Year’s Eve I have a glass of something really good, read it through... and then with grand ceremony toss it into the wood stove.

**Jeanette:** Not really...

**Eleanor:** Just my little ritual. Trying to learn how not to hang on to things. Or to people. To be honest, I just wanted to do something different on my week off—and this somehow seemed better than whale watching... I mean, you watch one whale, you’ve watched ‘em all, I always say...

**Jeanette:** [Doesn’t seem to get the intended joke] Okay... Anyway, maybe I’ll see you in one of the workshops. Right now, for me, it’s lunch. I want to get to the buffet before everyone breathes all over everything. If we don’t bump into each other I’ll see you about five, then. At the bar. Writers hang out in bars, right? It’s part of the ethos.

**Eleanor:** Ethos?

**Jeanette:** OK—well, lifestyle, then. Five If not before, Okay? [Exit **Jeanette**]

**Eleanor:** Absolutely. [She says this as someone for whom there are no longer any absolutes, but Jeanette is already out of earshot.].

[**Eleanor** is about to turn to go into the cottage. Then she notices the bench, considers for a moment. Then sits and begins to open a journal. She is thinking out loud.]

**Eleanor:** [alone] \$475. And gas to get here. And meals on the road. And these new \$135 “Eleanor goes to a writer’s conference” shoes. As if anyone notices a writer’s shoes. A real writer, anyway... [With irony] Dear Lord, have mercy on your wastrel daughter. [She writes.] “Wastrel.” That’s an interesting word...

[Writes a bit more, as if making a note, then flips through the journal. As she does so, **Danielle** enters—as if passing by the cottage on the way somewhere else. In a bit of a hurry. **Danielle** sees Eleanor. Stops and looks at her.]

**Danielle:** Ellie? Can it really be you, Ellie?

**Eleanor:** [She looks up, but there isn't instant recognition] Nooo. Eleanor. I prefer it. [**Eleanor** rises and extends her hand but stops in mid gesture, suddenly astonished. Recognition.] Dan?

**Danielle:** No. Danielle. I prefer it. [Continuing but not finding words] Well. This is awkward, huh?

[There is **no** “nice to see you how are you” small talk.]

**Eleanor:** For me—or you? Both of us. After—what—thirty-five years?

**Danielle:** Thirty-eight, I think...

**Eleanor:** [She figures in her head] Yes, well it would be thirty-eight. But why are *you* here? Ah... are you writing? Or teaching?

**Danielle:** Teaching. You didn't see I'm doing a workshop? At four this afternoon. It's called “Writing Your Transgender Memoir.”

[**Eleanor** looks at Danielle's name badge before answering, then reads it out loud.]

**Eleanor:** Danielle Curry. No, I didn't see the program, I just registered online to... No, I didn't see that. If I had, I would be watching whales right now.

[**Danielle** looks puzzled]

**Eleanor:** Private joke. So you really are Danielle now? Finally? I'd say “Wow” but that might be condescending somehow—or something—I don't want to be disrespectful—or whatever... [finally] Well, it doesn't surprise me.

**Danielle:** No I suppose not. It was an issue between us.

**Eleanor:** Yes, an *issue*. Well. That's a sanitized way to put it. An *issue*... [She hesitates, then decides to plunge in] I had no idea what was going on. I found myself married to a man who maybe wanted to be a woman—or then again maybe he didn't. I didn't know what to think or what to let myself feel. So, I just didn't let myself feel much of anything.

**Danielle:** I didn't understand it either.

**Eleanor:** Do you now?

**Danielle:** No. Sort of. Not really. It just is. I'm just who I am.

[Pause for a beat while **Eleanor** remembers. Mood shifts.]

**Eleanor:** Who you are... Who you were... Who I was... When you were away at campus, teaching or in the library, I used to walk. I'd walk down to that little park by the school—and just go and sit on a bench under the trees. [**Eleanor** sits again] Like here. It was calm there, with the light filtering in through the leaves. I'd just sit—sit and just hope that I'd have the patience... that I'd have some understanding...

**Danielle:** [Interrupting, but kindly] Why didn't you tell me?

**Eleanor:** I was ashamed. Ashamed that I couldn't just handle it. That's why. I thought a good wife, a good-hearted person should be able to just handle it.

**Danielle:** We were both ashamed.

**Eleanor:** [rising] Yes. We were. And now you're a writer, and a teacher or something. Doing this workshop. "Writing Your Transgender Memoir" you said... I suppose you have a book.

[**Danielle** nods].

**Eleanor:** [continuing] Did you write about us? No—I'm afraid to ask that. It wouldn't change anything, anyway. So you landed on your feet after all that.

**Danielle:** Yes, I think I would say that I did.

**Eleanor:** I'm glad for that—for you. [As she continues to talk, she gets lost in a memory—for a moment.] After I moved away, I worked at a school in Portland for two years. I had a little apartment. It was a lovely apartment. If I stood on tippy-toes and peered out the kitchen window I could see the ship channel over the rooftops and watch the ships moving out toward the lighthouse and the open ocean. At first, I would wonder where each ship was going. It intrigued me—the question: “Now just where is *she* going?” But I knew I would never know the answer. [She's fully back in the present now...] So, after a while, I stopped wondering. I gave up standing on tippy-toes and just did what everyone else does in their little kitchens in their little apartments. Make breakfast, do the dishes. Then go to work. Why are you smirking?

**Danielle:** Not smirking. Just smiling at “tippy-toes”—It's a very Ellie thing to say.

**Eleanor:** [She smiles herself and shrugs] Yes, I suppose it is.

**Danielle:** I sent you a letter years ago.

**Eleanor:** Yes, you did. That was appreciated—that you apologized. To me. Because I was due an apology.

**Danielle:** I apologized because I was sorry that...

**Eleanor:** [She interrupts] Please don't say “sorry.” Sorry sounds as if you're sorry for yourself. So please don't. Don't say it. Not now. [**Danielle** gestures as if about to speak] Please. It doesn't mean anything to say that now.

**Danielle:** But I regret...

**Eleanor:** I *do* get it. Honestly. A long time ago you sent me that letter and then I sent you a postcard from France. I wrote that I had forgiven us both. You can't claim this. It's mine as much as yours.

**Danielle:** That postcard was the last I heard anything from you—or about you.

**Eleanor:** And I thought—hoped—it would be the very last. I wasn't interested in following your exploits.

**Danielle:** [Less kindly now] Look, I've just been trying to lead my life...

**Eleanor:** ... and be who you've always wanted to be when you grow up, right?

**Danielle:** That's harsh. Really.

[Silence for a beat. Then she speaks.]

**Eleanor:** Harsh. Yes. It was. I wanted to hurt you just then. The things you did hurt me so much. I stood in that doorway on that rainy night and threw away my pride—my self-respect, really, and asked you with all my heart to come back. And you stood outside the open door in the rain and said no. You wouldn't even step over the threshold to get out of the rain. I think you knew that if you had come inside, you might have said yes...

**Danielle:** I *am* sorry...

**Eleanor:** Please stop that.

Beat.

**Eleanor:** We didn't know how to talk about it. If we had known how, things might have been different. But we didn't, and they weren't.

**Danielle:** I tried to talk about it.

**Eleanor:** Yes, I will say that you did try. But then you lied. You lied to me about "going to visit friends." I found out—one sympathetic, young "friend" in particular. You lied about her. And you lied about yourself. You lied.

**Danielle:** Yes, I did.

Beat.

**Eleanor:** Thank you for not saying you're sorry.

[**Jeanette** comes back from lunch with a paper cup of coffee in one hand and the conference program and some papers in the other. This causes some clumsiness as she switches things around to shake hands.]

**Eleanor:** This is Jeanette, my roommate here at the...

**Jeanette:** ... Writer's Conference! [beaming]

**Danielle:** I'm pleased to meet you... here, let me take that... [**Danielle** takes the program and papers; still a shadow of Dan the gentleman...]

**Jeanette:** [**Jeanette** regards Danielle. Recognition.] You're in that, you know. [indicating program]. I wondered who you might be. It's not a very good picture... Now I guess I know [clumsy laugh].

**Danielle:** Yes. I'm Danielle...

**Eleanor:** [Attempting and failing to be sardonic] I guess you might say that Danielle and I used to be sort of roommates ourselves. A long time ago.

**Jeanette:** Sort of roommates? What's a "sort of roommate?"

**Eleanor:** [Searching for humor in the awkwardness]—Well, more than that. We actually were married...

**Jeanette:** *Were* married? I don't know *anybody* who isn't divorced. Mostly two or three times! [flighty] "To speak of woe that is in marriage"... That's Shakespeare.

**Danielle:** Chaucer, actually. Oops—not polite to correct.

**Eleanor:** Forgive us, we were both English majors. Back when dinosaurs roamed the earth.

[All three laugh, but just a little. Awkward pause.]

**Jeanette:** Well you must be surprised to run into one another here. I mean at this conference...

**Eleanor** and **Danielle** [almost simultaneously] : Yes. [They glance at each other. Perhaps a glimmer of smiles]

**Eleanor:** [Almost to herself] It's been thirty-eight years...



**Jeanette:** Just about my whole lifetime! Sorry, but I'm a snoop, so I'll ask. Has it been okay? To meet up like this? A little uncomfortable, sure? But somehow okay?

**Danielle:** It's been okay. Yes, I think very okay. [**Danielle** glances at Eleanor, waiting to hear what she will say]

**Eleanor:** Yes, it's been very okay.

**Tableau** momentarily, then **Blackout**.

## Scene 2.

Sunday afternoon. Interior of a cottage at the writer's workshop. Danielle is arranging things, preparing to leave. There is a suitcase on the bed. As she arranges and packs, there's a knock at the door.

**Danielle:** Yes? Come in, please.

**Jeanette** enters, **Danielle** looks up and sees her.

**Danielle:** Oh yuh—Hi—How can I help you?

**Jeanette:** [She mimics Danielle's tone] "How can I help you?" You *do* sound like a professor. [joking] I'm not looking argue about my grade... I just want to talk with you before I leave...You know Ellie left Friday night?

**Danielle:** Ellie, not Eleanor?

**Jeanette:** I don't know, I just think of her as Ellie. I think you do, too.

**Danielle:** Yes, I do. I thought she must have left. She hasn't been at any of the meals since Friday night...

**Jeanette:** You didn't go looking for her?

**Danielle:** No, I didn't.

**Jeanette:** [Being her snooty self, but good natured; not accusatory] But why not?

**Danielle:** [Testy] Because we're not in a Jane Austen novel.

**Jeanette:** I have Ellie's address and number. She wrote them out for me—I wondered if she was really writing them out for you, in a way. Would you like them?  
[**Jeanette** holds out a sheet of paper]

**Danielle:** No, I don't think so.

**Jeanette:** Really? But maybe there's unfinished business. She seemed to accept your gender, I thought. And listening to you both, it sounds as if there was a lot there... when you were together. Maybe you could be friends.

**Danielle:** There's always unfinished business between people. As you say, she seemed to accept my gender—but we're not in the bedroom or sitting across the dining table from one another every night. And yes, there was a lot there. But it ended. Things end. And it's been thirty-eight years. Do you realize we could have been your parents, for God's sake! [**Danielle** laughs at the idea.]

[**Jeanette** laughs, too.]

**Jeanette:** If only you knew my parents!

**Danielle:** [Impatient; wanting to deflect from talking about Eleanor] Nice people?

**Jeanette:** In their own way.... For a couple of golfers and country club lushes... But like most people... nice... in their own way. Good dancers...

**Danielle:** [Impatience] Look, I'm getting on a train and...

**Jeanette:** Oh, sure, I'm sorry...

**Danielle:** Please don't say you're sorry. It sounds as if you're sorry for yourself. Somehow...

[She's puzzled]

**Danielle:** [Continuing] Self-pity. Ellie used to call me on that and send me directly to the penalty box. Major misconduct, Five minutes in the penalty box. Ellie was a very efficient referee...

**Jeanette:** She judged you?

**Danielle:** Certainly. She had to...survive. I gave her plenty to judge. My peccadilloes. [Reflects] That's an Ellie kind of word...

**Jeanette:** Why did you? Do those things... whatever they were. Okay I *am* a snoop, but I want to know why. I'm interested in human motivation.

**Danielle:** So you can write about it?

**Jeanette:** Perhaps. I don't have as much experience in the real world with real people as you do.

**Danielle:** That might be something to be grateful for.

**Jeanette:** [Unfazed, continuing] I'm more about movies and books. And Masterpiece Theater sort of stuff.

**Danielle:** Ah... so it *is* Jane Austen! Living vicariously through Emma?

**Jeanette:** Don't make fun. You don't need to cut me down to size.

**Danielle:** I'm sorry... Oh, there I go again. Still, I mean it. It was a lousy thing to say.

**Jeanette:** I just would like to know more. You are very intriguing people...

**Danielle:** You might like to read my book... [**Danielle** reaches into her bag, pulls out a copy and extends it toward Jeanette as a gift]...

**Jeanette:** [**Jeanette** reaches into her bag and holds up a copy of her own] I did read it. Last night. That's what brought me here.

**Danielle:** Why?

**Jeanette:** Why. Exactly. You wrote a lot about what and who and when and how. But you didn't write so much about why. I want to be a writer about why—I'm serious that I want to learn about motivation—I'm really serious. Greed, pride, lust, fear...

**Danielle:** I know what you mean and that's a fair criticism of my book.

**Jeanette:** You barely wrote about Ellie at all.

**Danielle:** I know.

**Jeanette:** Why? Please try to tell me...

**Danielle:** [**Danielle** goes more internal, seeking to avoid the question] One thing I do regret—When we first met, Ellie loaned me—or gave me, I'm not sure which anymore—a book. *The Country of the Pointed Firs* by Sarah Orne Jewett. [Now directly to Jeanette] It's a classic novel about Maine. Nineteenth century. Regionalism. A book you might enjoy. Ellie was from Maine, and I think she wanted me to appreciate that about her, and maybe grow to love the place as she did.

**Jeanette:** And did you?

**Danielle:** Appreciate her? Yes, I believe I did. But grow to love Maine? No. I honestly never did... I was a Cape Cod kid. I didn't like the cold water, the rocky shore—and all the coves and inlets—having to drive an hour and a half to get to a place ten miles away. Anyway, I'm just bitching now—I guess to hide my guilt about something—[**Danielle** glances at Jeanette, reading her expression] No, not about being unfaithful—something about the book. I had forgotten I even had the book, and then I found it in a box of things I hadn't unpacked for years—old yearbooks and such. And I looked at the book for the first time in decades. I opened the cover. And there was a signature on the flyleaf, in that perfect penmanship kind of writing they used to teach in the nineteenth century. Laura B. Palmer. That was her grandmother's name. A beautiful signature. Careful. Precise. Dignified. Confident. Pure. Yes—somehow pure. It had been her grandmother's book. So it's still Ellie's, by rights. I didn't know where she was—and even if I had known I felt it would have been an intrusion to contact her to send it back. As I thought it over It just seemed idiotic. "*Hi! It's me again! You're former husband. Here's your book. Thanks. Bye...*" But then I thought she might have children and they should have it...

**Jeanette:** You didn't know where she was—or whether she had a family?

**Danielle:** No.

**Jeanette:** That seems...

**Danielle:** Weird? Maybe. But that's the way we both seemed to want it.

**Jeanette:** Seemed?

**Danielle:** Well, I don't think we ever talked about it, but that's the way it's been. I'm not going to try to change that on my own. Ellie told me Friday "You don't own this." That's hard for me—not to stage manage everything—but what she said is true. It's not for me to decide that we can be friends. I know she's right and it's not for me to take this on. I took everything on. [With some bitterness] And I made sure there was plenty to take on...

**Jeanette:** But now I have her address. Really, don't you want it so at least you can send her the book she gave you?

**Danielle:** No.

**Jeanette:** Why not?

**Danielle:** My, but you *are* a snoop, aren't you?

[**Jeanette** laughs...]

**Danielle:** [continues...] I honestly don't know. I have a very rewarding marriage now—in the present. And what happened between Ellie and I was way in the past and had its own awful kind of completeness. There is an end to things. Has to be. And we have very different lives now, and...

**Jeanette:** How do you know hers is so different?

**Danielle:** The look in her eyes... the distance...

**Jeanette:** I understand. [**Jeanette** is inclined to reach for Danielle's hand for a moment, but then pulls back... Tone changes. A bit jaunty now] I've learned a lot this weekend.

**Danielle:** About writing?

**Jeanette:** I'll take that bait. No, I haven't learned much about writing, except that you just need to start and not stop until it's done. But I did learn about Ellie, about you and about myself.

**Danielle:** I'll take that bait... What did you learn about yourself?

**Jeanette:** That I don't need to have all the answers from everyone I know. That I don't need to be a den mother. That sometimes it might be okay to just leave things alone. Like now. [**Jeanette** pauses. Suddenly uncomfortable with her own presence in the room] Yes, it's very hard for me, but like now. Well, I'll be leaving now. Goodbye.

**Danielle:** Godspeed.

**Jeanette:** Godspeed. I like that. It's a nineteenth century kind of thing to say. So— Godspeed it will be.

[**Jeanette** gives Danielle a last look and leaves].

[**Danielle** gathers herself and continues to put things in her traveling bag. Pauses. Reaches into the bag and pulls out a small book. It's the book. She has had it in her bag all along. She reads the title out loud, to herself]:

*The Country of the Pointed Firs*. [She turns the flyleaf and reads the signature]: Laura B. Palmer, December 25, 1898. [Pause, then she places the book in the bag, almost reverently] There is an end to things.

**Blackout**

### Scene 3.

**Lights come up** to discover Eleanor alone in a simple interior space, with a plain writing desk and chair. There's a lamp with a pull chain. She holds her journal from scene 1. She speaks directly and consciously to the audience, in monologue...

**Eleanor:** You're probably wondering what happened to me. Wondering why I left. Well, I'm not certain I really know, myself. It's that I just couldn't stay. I couldn't walk down the pathways, in and out of doors, stand in the line in the dining hall knowing that Dan—Danielle—might be there. Maybe on the other side of the next door. I couldn't do that.

This might not make much sense, but I told Jeanette how much I love Maine... and I told her how Dan—Danielle—seemed almost determined not to. Not to even give it a chance. When I told her,

I felt the disappointment, the disillusionment all over again from all those years ago. The awakening that things would not be the way I had hoped they would be. That I had deluded myself to expect the things that were so easy to expect, like a home, a husband and a family. And a little place in Maine that we would get away to. That someday we would be older there together. That if we simply loved enough those things would come to pass... [Suddenly] I feel cold inside. [Pause—she regroups] I didn't need to stay. I think I learned what I needed to learn. [Some irony] And I have these new shoes that I do like pretty well, after all...

You know, the hardest part has been to think back and remember that the person I trusted so much could be duplicitous. But I think she's a different person now. That's my hope. Yes, I know what you are thinking. "Duplicitous." Being two people at once—one you show and one you hide. [An ironic smile] What an interesting word. It's already in my journal. Goodnight. [She packs her journal away in her bag. She pulls the chain. The light goes out and **the space goes dark.**]

## Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st Century: The Power and Joy of Learning

European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)

*The European Association for the Education of Adults (Brussels, Belgium) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that seeks to be “the voice of non-formal adult education” in Europe. Founded in 1953, EAEA now links 120 member organizations in 43 countries and advocates, develops resources and information, creates networks, and is focused on community-building. It is primarily interested in promoting “adult learning and access to and participation in non-formal adult education for all, particularly for groups currently under-represented.” We thought that this “Manifesto” was most relevant to our mission and our day-to-day work.*

<https://eaea.org/our-work/influencing-policy/manifesto-for-adult-learning-in-the-21st-century/>

**The updated EAEA Manifesto 2019 outlines the challenges where adult education can play a key role, its transformative possibilities, and the power and joy of learning.**

The manifesto is targeted at European, national, and regional policymakers to demonstrate the benefits of adult learning. The manifesto communicates EAEA’s vision of a Learning Europe with all necessary skills, knowledge, and competences.

EAEA proposes a Europe-wide effort to go one step up, to develop a knowledge society that can deal with the challenges of our time. This demands sustainable investments now – on the European, national, regional, and local levels in adult education.

The manifesto presents nine current European challenges, which adult learning helps to solve:

### **Active citizenship and democracy**

People who participate in adult education participate more in society, by voting, volunteering, or taking active roles in communities. Adult education is the tool for the development of critical thinking.



**Health and well-being**

Adult learners lead healthier lifestyles and experience improved well-being. Adult education contributes to personal development and fulfilment. The health of our societies depends upon lifelong learning.

**Life skills for individuals**

Adult education transforms lives. It opens new job opportunities, creates pathways to learning, activates people's artistic passions and builds new social networks.

**Social cohesion, equity, and equality**

Adult education supports greater social mobility and equalizes societies. Adult learning brings together people from different walks and stages of life. This benefits democracy and social peace.

**Employment and work**

Workplace learning is one of the key drivers of adults' participation in lifelong learning. Adult education increases innovation and productivity of employees, entrepreneurs, and volunteers—this makes companies more successful.

**Digitalization**

Adult education helps to close the digital gap and provides individuals with digital competences, which are key to personal fulfilment, employment, social inclusion, and active citizenship.

**Migration and demographic change**

Civic education and intercultural learning create inclusive societies and cultures. Seniors who learn are more active, work longer and stay healthier. Intergenerational learning enables older and the younger to profit from each other's knowledge.

**Sustainability**

Adult education provides competences, information, debating spaces and creativity to develop new approaches necessary for sustainable development. A paradigm shift is only possible through critical, conscious, and innovative citizens.

**Adult education and European & international policies**

European & international policies Adult education contributes to main European and international strategies in the fields of growth, employment, innovation, equity,

social cohesion, active citizenship, poverty reduction, climate change, internal market, migration, peace and more.

“There are people that are attracted to care ethics that talk about caring schools and then say something about what they look like. I would raise a finger of caution there. A school can’t care. An organization can’t care. A nation can’t care. What these organizations can do is to work to establish structures and social arrangements under which caring can flourish. That’s very different. You don’t say, “Here’s what a caring school does, and here are the six steps”. No. You ask yourself, “What do I need to do to establish an environment in which caring can flourish?” And right after that, you need to talk to people. You need to listen to them. You need to find out what it is they seek, what it is they see, their ideas, and all the rest. It’s a slower process, but it’s one that never ends. Once you get it going, you really have something wonderful going there.”

**From An Interview with Nel Noddings**

## Ensuring Equitable Student Success

Tai Arnold, School for Graduate Studies



I had the opportunity to join a Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) virtual course on Equitable Student Success in the spring of 2023. I want to share with you a bit of what I learned. The course information and discussion were quite reassuring in many ways, and I learned many new things about how we might be better at it. I will share what I connected with, what I can work on in my new role in the college, how I think it can help the college and where we can act in support of our students, individually and collectively.

SUNY Empire State University has done tremendous work in student success, identifying it as a key institutional goal. Further the university has developed significant data/information resources, the ability to use predictive analytics, track the effects of interventions and make decisions accordingly – to name just a few. Most importantly, the people at Empire are deeply committed to equitable student success, each with our own definitions of what that means.

The university's [strategic plan](#) puts student success at the top and President Vollendorf emphasized students as **the** reason we are here in her inaugural address in March 2023. This top-level commitment has been in the strategic plan for the last few iterations, but this time, I perceived not just an enrollment imperative, but quite refreshingly, a moral responsibility.

### Defining Student Success

In my course, we heard from Jennifer Wells, the program officer at the Gates Foundation working on making student success resources public through [The Guide for Postsecondary Changemakers \(postsecondarytransformation.org\)](https://www.postsecondarytransformation.org/). I so much love their definition of success: **eliminating race, ethnicity, income, and first-generation status as predictors of success**. With this language, Gates offers a very high-level definition with policy and funding implications.

The Gates goal also gives me pause. At Empire, we have been saying reduce the equity gaps for underserved populations (I wrote it in our first student success plan) but that language may let us off the hook. Reducing gaps in the measures, rather than eliminating them, means that a slight change can be counted as a complete success. Incremental change is wonderful if we learn from it and build on it, but we

are not done. Further, the ‘closing the gaps’ language implies that we will not really eliminate gaps and may say that we are accepting systemic racism as a given. Additionally, we also are not able to effectively understand the role of first-generation status on student outcomes or use that information for targeted interventions because we do not collect this data in the prospect/onboarding cycle.

Defining and holding a collective definition of Student Success is vital as it allows us to know we are progressing. While we have not articulated a clear definition, we have been using the following to know if we were making progress:

- Students have improved course completion, term-to-term reenrollment, and annual and 6-year retention/graduation rates.
- We will reduce the gaps between underserved and majority populations in these measures (SUNY Empire Student Success Agenda 2020).

“Empire would be well served by asking our own students and other stakeholders how they define success and forming a collective definition.”

These measures imply a definition of student success and seem to be accepted, but there are other values and goals that each student carries with them. EAB research indicates that “students want advisors and faculty to support them in cultivating grit and a growth mindset, striking a healthy balance between academic effort and

other areas of life, seeking enriching experiences, and earning the respect of others” (EAB 2019, 2017). This is like the definition of mentoring for Empire, it means something different to parties on both sides of the dyad and varies within and among the many constituencies. Empire would be well served by asking our own students and other stakeholders how they define success and forming a collective definition.

### **Understanding the Student Experience – from Their Perspectives**

If we know our definition of student success, then we need to ask: What is the ideal student experience? Jennifer Wells was clear about not presenting students with the organizational chart, which indicates a need to understand the student journey from the students’ own experiences. The plural on perspectives and experiences is important here; we do not have a monolithic student body.

SUNY Empire mapped out the early undergraduate student experience in 2019 and made some significant changes in practice and process as a result. That mapping

included the employee stakeholders including a few faculty, but no students. Mapping the student journey, looking from the outside in, would be a significant and positive move forward and could uncover barriers that we do not even consider.

Anthony Jack, the Author of *The Privileged Poor* reminds us that **access is not inclusion**. In his presentation to the group, he compared two groups to white upper- and middle-class majority students at an elite college: The groups are the “privileged poor” and the “doubly disadvantaged” indicating “lower-income undergraduates who attended boarding, day, and preparatory high schools” and “lower-income undergraduates who attended local, typically distressed public high schools.” He found differences between the two groups related sense of belonging and cultural capital and the symbolic boundaries that students established. The doubly disadvantaged were just that, the socio-cultural differences and the boundaries between cultures were barriers that reproduced inequality.

While he uses an elite institution to explore concepts that may have not been clearly articulated, many of his findings apply across US higher education. Ways to support students with socio-cultural differences include bridge programs, which SUNY Empire is building through the opportunity programs. Other ways to support include unmasking hidden curricula and examining the structures and policies that inhibit a sense of belonging and ultimately success. For example, ‘office hours’ is not a common terminology outside of higher education and can be perceived as the time that the professor is in her office working on things. Other language we use is even more arcane: What’s a bursar? Regarding office hours, being explicit about times for student walk-ins or appointments is one small change we can each make. Explicit invites are more welcoming to students who may be intimidated by the trappings of academe. For a quick synopsis of Jack’s work here is a [New York Times article](#).

### **Organizational Capacity**

Setting our student success goals and understanding student needs and perspectives is only part of the puzzle. We also need to ensure that the resources follow the goals and that is not always direct funding to a project. A Gates Foundation funded an [Institutional Transformation Assessment](#) (the ITA) project that produced a set of [Postsecondary ITA Rubrics](#) that can be used at various levels within the organization to look at institution as a whole whether through a large stakeholder group or by senior leadership. The twelve rubrics can also be used separately for more targeted work. The rubrics are intended as thinking and

consensus tools to describe the current state and from that develop a plan. The ITA project will soon provide a data collection platform for a fee that would facilitate gathering data from many people. As we look to expand capacity, these may be useful tools.

One of the places I have not seen sufficient resourcing is in learning design; support is mostly technical in nature and is not strong in ensuring equitable success in teaching and learning. I would love to see more on evidence-based approaches to teaching and learning and support for disseminating success among faculty. I know OAA (Office of Academic Affairs) is trying to move toward broader support for teaching and learning, and that is a big lift. Recognizing faculty experimentation and work in using evidence-based practices would be a great place to start. If it is not measured, it does not count.

### **Data Capacity and Data Informed Decisions**

The biggest surprise for me with what I learned from colleagues in the course was that so many institutional research offices do not have the data access that all employees have at Empire. An employee login will open data dashboards, which show a variety of data sets drawn into our data warehouse from a variety of sources. The data is clean and provides a reliable source of information. Additionally, the leadership that Decision Support has provided around assessing initiatives and building predictive models for success is remarkable. I thought we were lagging and have always wanted more, but many institutions represented in my course, while they may be swimming in data, still have very compartmentalized data sources, little centralized support, and it is not at all curated. They cannot see the forest for the trees. We have geniuses in Decision Support.

Empire did not get there overnight. The decision support team has been building capacity for a long time and knows the business very well. After our student information system conversion in 2018, the team completely rebuilt our data warehouse. Our predictive analytics are also strong, and we have odds ratios for first-term factors (race, ethnicity, and income are top predictors), and for student outcomes in the first term and beyond. We also compare outcomes on matched or past groups, so we know if we have an impact with our interventions.

### **Potential Next Steps**

While SUNY Empire is better off than many institutions, we still have plenty of opportunities for development. I am interested in better understanding where SUNY Empire can build capacity and hope the leadership remains stable for a

while. Considering my perspective on the readings and the presentations, the following are important takeaways for SUNY Empire:

- Include a broader range of stakeholders in collaborations, especially students and the faculty and professionals serving and supporting them.
- Agree about what we mean by student success.
- Assess university capacity for further transformation (ITA).
- Present our work on equitable student success work more effectively, and continuously invite people into that work.
- When describing students, use asset-based language across the college.
- Continue to disaggregate data, even beyond the various IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) categories,
- Collect and use data on first generation status.
- Use sound change management practices.
- Conduct an equity audit for policies (learn what to look for and how to address issues).
- Our ability to use data is growing tremendously and we need to learn to tell the story. Provide data walks at our meetings or virtually. [Data Equity Walk Toolkit - The Education Trust - West \(edtrust.org\)](https://www.edtrust.org/Data-Equity-Walk-Toolkit)
- Map the student journey. SUNY Empire mapped the student life cycle and that has been enormously beneficial, but it is inward looking and not from a student perspective.
- Assess institutional capacity is an effective way to ensure we are resourcing the right places for the new strategic plan.
- Value the use of evidence-based teaching strategies in tenure and promotion.
- Consider orienting all employees to the budget process and how to request resources.

For my little part in this:

- I would like to explore developing a SUNY Empire Equitable Student Success Faculty Community of Practice and welcome other faculty to the conversation to build the framework. This might be good fodder for an IMTL (Institute on Mentoring, Teaching and Learning) or even an IITG (Innovative Instruction Technology Grants) project, and of course may be connected to work I do not know about.
- For my students, this is already starting to shape what I am currently working on and will lead to explicitly embedding equitable student success content in our higher education programs. I am developing a graduate Equitable Student Success course that fits into Empire's higher education curricula.

- I hope to work with our decision support office to create a study to investigate what students value in institutional conditions and their definitions of success. I have found a couple of models in different contexts, but not yet for an institution like SUNY Empire. This would be good for IITG as well.
- I have also rewritten my invitations to office hours and encourage you to do the same.

I certainly welcome thoughts and questions as I have only touched the surface of what I learned and have begun to integrate into my thinking. This was a wonderful opportunity, and I am grateful for the support from the university. If you have an interest in the Community of Practice idea, please reach out.

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## “It’s Vital to Humanity”: An Interview with Steve Tischler

*What follows is an edited interview with mentor Steve Tischler, who retired from the college in October 2021. Thanks to Steve for his willingness to talk about his SUNY Empire experiences and for working on this edited version of our 04 March 2022 conversation.*

**Alan Mandell (AM):** I was surprised, Steve, when I found out that you had come to the college in 1980. An impressive run! What brought you here?

**Steve Tischler (ST):** As a recent PhD, I was desperate for work, truth be told, and I was working as an adjunct at three other colleges. One of my best friends happened to be an adjunct at the Harry Van Arsdale apprentice program and mentioned that program to me. He asked if he could forward my name to the director. And I said “sure!” -- and Empire State University became the fourth college that I was working at during that time. It was the spring term of 1980. That's when it began. I'm delighted that it did.

**AM:** So, your apprentice students met in groups, in classes, and these were in American history?

**ST:** Yes, labor history. And could I tell you stories...

**AM:** Can we just go back for a second? So, your PhD work at Columbia University was in United States labor history?

**ST:** I was actually a Europeanist with a focus on labor history and socialism in the 18th and 19th centuries. I did my doctoral thesis on the evolution of soccer in England.

**AM:** I was unaware of your focus on soccer.

**ST:** I saw it as a vehicle for understanding class relations. I had a lot of fun doing the research; the work was subsequently published as a book. I guess it’s now safe to tell the secret: I never took a course in American history at the college level. When my friend said, “hey, you wanna teach American labor history?” I again said, “sure.” And then I had to read furiously for a couple of months in preparation. I learned a lot of American history--certainly, American labor history.

**AM:** What was your experience as a classroom teacher for electrical apprentices? Were they receptive to the Tischler perspective on teaching American labor history?

**ST:** I'd like to think so. I really learned how to teach there because you had to be able to switch gears if something wasn't working--switch gears immediately. Just as background, and this is something I'd like to talk about more broadly, perhaps later: these students weren't there because they necessarily were interested in labor studies, even though that was the area of study for their associate degree. They were there because they had to be there, and they let you know that very clearly and very loudly.

**AM:** This was a significant decision by Harry Van Arsdale Jr., wasn't it?

**ST:** Yes. In order to get your journeyman's card in Local 3 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, you needed to have an associate degree, and Harry Van Arsdale made that a requirement of the apprenticeship. He worked with Empire State University and established what became known as the Apprentice Program.

**AM:** And student attitudes about college study?

**ST:** Some were OK with going to college. Others were not at all enthused, especially those who lived in the distant suburbs, who, to get to a job site by 7:30 am, would be on a bus or a train by 6:00 in the morning, and then had to stay until 8:00 o'clock at night when classes ended. The director of the program at the time instituted an attendance policy and a "don't leave early policy" that he enforced pretty vigorously, and the faculty was expected to enforce that with students, so if you couldn't keep students interested in the material, you would have a very long night in the classroom. For a student who had a bus that left the Port Authority at 8:20 PM, you can imagine the anxiety *as* 7:45 approached. You really had to work hard to keep the attention of the students, and if it didn't work, damn it--you took your notebook, threw it over your shoulder and worked spontaneously. You had to know your stuff; you had to know the content. That notebook which was now 15 feet behind you wasn't going to help you.

**AM:** There are many improvisatory moments, or so it seems.

**ST:** The experiences made me that much more sensitive to whether students were following what we were talking about. It forced me to look at the material from a

student's perspective. How is this material going to be perceived by the people we're trying to teach?

**AM:** It's so interesting to me, Steve, that Van Arsdale, what we thought of as "The Labor College," was one of the first "learning centers" of the college—opened in 1971 on East 25th Street. My sense is that, for many years, Van Arsdale existed at some distance from the rest of the undergraduate and graduate programs at SUNY Empire, and you're one of the faculty who had very significant experience at Van Arsdale and then went on as a faculty member in other programs/locations. You really knew both worlds.

**ST:** After my first year at "Labor," I was hired on a full-time basis as one of the coordinators of the apprentice program and helped in developing curriculum, finding instructors, and working with them. I did that until 1984, at which point I became part of what we would call the "regular" core faculty of The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies – that is, faculty who taught students other than apprentices. And I remained a full-time member of the Van Arsdale faculty until 2003. But in the course of my stint at Van Arsdale, I did a lot of other things in other in other places. We had what we called "units" in pre-hipster Williamsburg and in Bushwick. We were also connected with the National Conference of Neighborhood Women. I taught in the college's graduate program as well.

**AM:** And then there was your move to our Staten Island location.

**ST:** Yes, I was the first full-time faculty member at Staten Island while that unit was still connected with Van Arsdale. That was in the late 1990s. I was never the coordinator there. I never wanted that job. I stayed there until 2006 and we attracted a fairly large student body. And it was during that time that the Staten Island unit became part of the then "Metropolitan Learning Center." Finally, after some problematic dealings with the Metro dean, I said, "get me out of Staten Island!" -- which in some respects was a silly move on my part. The dean thought she was punishing me. I thought I would be going back to Manhattan, but she placed me in the Bedford Stuyvesant location, which was fine with me. That was my next venture. The college stayed in Bed Stuy for a couple of years and then moved to Downtown Brooklyn. I've been around.

**AM:** I'm so interested in your sense of the similarities and differences among students in these different SUNY Empire locations.

**ST:** To some extent, yes, there were differences, but what I found more and more to be the case is that regardless of whether you're at the Van Arsdale Apprentice Program, Metro in Manhattan on Varick Street or on Hudson Street, on Staten Island, or in Brooklyn, students have similar goals. They were there because the job they had, or the job they wanted, required it. Whether you're talking about para-professional educators on Staten Island; whether you're talking about cops and firefighters who want a promotion who needed a certain number of college credits--whether you were in virtually any job, it became increasingly clear, certainly during my tenure at Empire, that you needed a college degree if wanted to be promoted, or if you wanted to hold onto your job, or if you wanted to get a job. The question really becomes: Are you here to acquire a degree or are you here to acquire an education? And for the most part I would say 80% of the students I encountered in all parts of the college were there to acquire a degree. And that's not in any way to suggest that that they weren't capable, that they weren't smart. The reality of their lives, however; the reality that mattered most to them, was the degree. That reality shaped the way I, and all my colleagues at those various locations, worked.

**AM:** Given this situation, the pressures are certainly huge.

**ST:** That's an enormous weight for a student--and for a mentor-- to carry. It affects everything we do.

**AM:** I know that when I, or I bet anyone with whom you've worked at these different locations thinks of Steve Tischler they would say something like: "Steve Tischler loves his students." And maybe, Steve, it was your acceptance of this practical side of things that made such a difference. You cared about students and the realities of their lives and their goals. You were frustrated with these more romantic notions of mentoring and learning (and with people like me!) that didn't seem to you to be responsive to the students and why they were at Empire State University. You found ways to move from the practical, to really engage students in the learning. The instrumental will always be with us, but, for you, it's something like 'how can I work with students to give them a flavor of a kind of intellectual curiosity that I know in my life?'

**ST:** I love the stuff I teach. I don't mean to overstate it, but I think it's vital to humanity. There's such poverty and such despair in our own society and around the world. I recognize the students' vocational dilemma profoundly, but on the other side, there are issues that we all face that need to be addressed. That's why I got into this racket. I want students to begin to think about why the world that they

live in has turned out the way it has. I'm passionate about that. I care about our students' well-being and their ability to get through the day, the month, the year, but I also care about the stuff that helps to explain the poverty and desperation around us.

**AM:** I was thinking about this recently, Steve. You were so kind to send me the two Tischler-authored textbooks on European and United States history. When I opened this gift from you, I read the "note to students." And there's the great line: "Rumor has it might be you might dislike history courses."

**ST:** Yeah, it's true.

**AM:** What struck me was that you chose such a personal voice: You created these texts to make history meaningful to the students you knew—with whom you had worked and wanted to connect. As you so honestly put it, they might really dislike this stuff, but you wanted to turn the tables in some ways.

**ST:** That was my goal. Frankly, I wrote the books because I couldn't find material that I thought my students would appreciate, and I say "appreciate" in all senses of the word. I'll admit that I was very disappointed when the two-volume text, *Who Built America?* came out. I was profoundly hoping that they would be accessible, written for students, but I think, probably with the best of intentions, the books ended up being written for other historians. And then there was a volume like *Labor's Untold Story*, which was first published in 1955, and works by people like Leo Huberman. Some of these histories were written in the 1930s and 1940s, and while they were accessible, they also creaked. They did not, for example, sufficiently cover the contributions and the role of people of color nor of women. How do you address that? You can't assign books with such glaring omissions. I got tired of the photocopy machine at the office breaking down as I would photocopy articles that I thought would fill the gap, I just **said**, "OK, well, you just have to write your own damn book!"

"It would also be helpful if textbooks were written for students, rather than for the approval and admiration of other professional historians."

**AM:** And here's more from your "note to students" in your *Making Sense of United States History* text: "It would also be helpful if textbooks were written for students,

rather than for the approval and admiration of other professional historians. A down-to-earth approach to the subject matter is useful if you are returning to the college classroom after some years away or are entering one for the first time. We will be direct in our prose and will try to engage you as best we can" (ii). And, Steve, do you think you achieved your goal?

**ST:** That's a hard one, a difficult question to answer. My goal was to try to convince as many people as I could of the value of looking at history in this particular way. I'm sure every historian who publishes something or wants something published wants the same thing. I mean, that's why they wrote the book in the first place! I had a publisher--for about a week. I got a lovely, cheery letter from the acquisition's editor saying yes, we'd love to publish this, and then another note from her a week later saying she had spoken with the marketing folks, and they just didn't know what to do with this book. I'm very lucky that the print shop at SUNY Empire agreed to produce it. I feel I have something to offer students at the college, especially today, and over the last several years, when history has been deliberately twisted. I don't want to go down that road because I'll be frothing at the mouth for the next half hour, but I just think that books like these could be especially relevant at a time when interpretations of history matter so much.

**AM:** You and Barbara Tischler, your wife, got involved in the fortified classroom and the Black Male Initiative work that was started by our colleague David Fullard.

**ST:** When word got out that David was doing this, it intrigued us immediately. And what made it particularly appealing was the fact that there would be built in tutorial help—in writing and in math. Help would always be available to students in the fortified classroom program. Those students in the fortified classroom just did better. I wasn't surprised at all. But to me, what's at issue is that if you see that a program like this can work, why shouldn't you extend it to all students in the college? The short answer is because we don't have the money; my response to that is why are you claiming you can work miracles with students who have been in and out of college, sometimes three or four times and haven't been able to succeed? Students need specific kinds of help, and the fortified classroom was designed to provide that help. Don't all students deserve that?

**AM:** Including students helping one another—a kind of peer-to-peer support system.

**ST:** I can't heap enough praise David's way. Certainly, he's one of the hardest working college instructors, administrators, I've ever met. Talk about commitment to students! The man gives his cell phone number to all his students. He tells them that they can call him anytime, and that means "anytime"! It's a promise to students to provide them with the help they need. We can't offer a really thinned out version of that support and expect that students will blossom; it's just very difficult.

**AM:** In so many ways, Steve, it's always about such basic assumptions—it's about our core values.

**ST:** Agreed! What is a life worth? What is a person worth? Not monetarily, obviously, but what will you do to help that student or that person blossom? If you can't provide that, there's something wrong with the system. The system needs to be re-examined.

**AM:** There was always something about your commitment to students and to mentoring and teaching, and to the supports we were just mentioning that I really think was distinctive, Steve. Many mentors are involved in a million committees and working in various ways on college policies and processes: your focus was always on students and on the community beyond Empire State University. I always thought there was a deep connection between the spirit of your work at the college and the work you and Barbara have done with kids outside of the college. This was not Steve Tischler on 25 college wide committees; it was Steve Tischler working with his students at Van Arsdale or Staten Island or Brooklyn or Manhattan, and Steve and Barbara Tischler running the Giants baseball team for high school kids.

**ST:** One of the things I'm proudest of regarding the Giants, and the folks who don't know what the Giants were, it was a damn good youth baseball organization that also worked with kids academically. Barbara did most of the tutoring and we also did college advising. We took kids all over the Northeast to visit colleges. What we tried to do was show them how they could use baseball to advance other aspects of their lives. But in no way do I mean to diminish the emphasis on baseball. The Giants finished seventh in the National AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] tournament for 16-year old's, and the following year for 17-year old's. Two of our Giant alums were drafted in the first round by Major League Baseball teams, and we've had a number of other Giants players who played minor league ball. So, we recognized and valued getting better at baseball, too. It was a pleasure and, in many respects, some of the happiest years of my life.

**AM:** The connections between that work with the kids and your life at SUNY Empire are right there.

**ST:** Yes, there are connections—points of intersection between how I approached teaching and working with students and working with youngsters who were terrific baseball players and went on to do better things in their lives. I'm very proud of the fact that so many of the Giants did go to college and played baseball there, too.

**AM:** There was such richness in these many years you had at SUNY Empire State University, Steve: 1980 until October 2021. Why did you decide to retire?

**ST:** Part of it is my own failing: I am practically digitally illiterate and given the necessity of remote learning and the diminished opportunity to meet face-to-face with my students, I didn't enjoy the angst. So, a lot of that is on me; I have no one to blame but myself. I know there are plenty of people who do enjoy remote teaching. I wish I were one of them. Beyond that, the call of grandchildren was also a factor. I'll lay it on the doorstep of the digital age and try to slink away. I'd say I miss the personal contact more than anything else.

**AM:** What's the Tischler day-to-day life? Do you have a little project you're working on? Do you feel engaged and connected with the world in a way that you want to be?

**ST:** One of the constantly depressing aspects of life for us all, I think, is the political situation, both domestically and internationally. And I've really been bummed out. I also feel compelled to watch the news until I can't stand it. I literally have to walk away. I read a lot more than I did when I was a mentor. But I have nothing terribly exciting to report in this regard, at least not yet.

**AM:** I was recently working with a student and thinking about suggesting that she use the Tischler volume, *Making Sense of European History to 1914*. As with your U.S. history book, I was struck by its clarity and organization—incredibly accessible. And, of course, I was aware that the book ends in 1914 with a discussion of Imperialism and empire building. And you write: "Much of the [European] public had been led to believe that ordinary folks benefited, too." And then your last and powerful line: "They followed elites over a cliff."

**ST:** Emotionally, I couldn't write about the 20th Century. I mean I have a hard enough time with going out and seeing people who have no place to live—trying as



best they can to survive. I wish I had the wherewithal to address topics that are even more dire, but I give myself a break-- I guess.

**AM:** Thanks for everything Steve.

**ST:** My pleasure. All the best. Take care.

“The fostering of a hybrid professional identity – the life lived both in specialization and in the public sphere – is something I think we as a society need to nurture. The more opinion is grounded on rich experience and deep study, the better the quality of our public discourse about the issues that matter to us.” **Mike Rose**, “Writing about Education”

## Yevgeny's Arancini

Bernard Smith, Director of Academic Review, School of Business (recently retired)



At another time, it could have been yesterday, some grain-seller beat and raped his mom. Today, in Saratoga, Yevgeny makes arancini.

He doesn't measure the water but takes about a gallon and lets it boil then adds a cup of rice and lets it cook for fifteen minutes. That's the recommended time. After it's thoroughly done, he stirs the rice to help release some starch to make it more creamy. He drains the rice.

The fighting in Ukraine breaks Yevgeni's heart. It terrifies him. Putin behaves like Hitler when he stormed Poland in 1939. That triggered the second world war Lebensraum.

Today, he heard an Indian student was killed in Kharkiv. Yevgeny has a dear friend who comes from that city and another friend - a Russian, whose wife is from Ukraine.

Yevgeni's wife, Nava, asks if he needs any help and he says he doesn't. If he does, she says, she'd be happy to give him a hand because she's marking papers and the work's so poor that it's driving her crazy. They both laugh, only it's not a real laugh. It's a laugh they make in their throats with the sound of their voices. He cools the rice by spreading it thinly on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.

Is it because Ukraine is part of Europe that he feels so broken by this invasion? Why has the war in Ethiopia not filled him with the same horror? Kokebe, a student from Ethiopia, whom Yevgeni taught, once gave him a recipe for t'alla, a local beer. One Sunday, they brewed it together in Yevgeny's yard, the student now the teacher. In Ethiopia, 10,000 have been killed and soldiers use rape as a weapon of war.

The rice is cool. In cold water, he washes his hands. He scoops the rice into a large bowl, cracks an egg, and adds a quarter cup of wheat germ and a tablespoon of nutritional yeast, some salt and pepper, and mixes everything with his clean hands.

The rice sticks to his fingers. He sucks them clean. It tastes sweet and nutty. Again, Yevgeni washes his hands.

He listens to the news. Russian rockets and missiles pound power plants, cutting off heat and light for non-combatants. It's February. It's winter. Yevgeni feels sick. He makes arancini while people in Kyiv have little food and not much heat.

Another story. Babi Yar was bombed by the Russians, killing five. Babi Yar, a memorial to the thirty thousand Jews slaughtered and buried in mass graves by the Nazis. Babi Yar, a memorial to hundred and fifty thousand Ukrainians also murdered and buried there. Yevgeni calls himself a Jew, but he is not. He calls himself Ukrainian, but he is not. He calls himself a human being, but what does that really mean?

He prepares three bowls. Into one he dumps a quarter cup of flour. Into the second, he cracks and whips two eggs, and into the third, he grates a cup of breadcrumbs from some rolls he baked and froze. Often, he adds poppyseeds to his dough. These crumbs have as many seeds as bodies buried at Babi Yar.

Yevgeni scoops up a handful of the rice and spreads it flat on the palm of his hand, ready to accept some grated mozzarella. For him, mozzarella is the most difficult cheese to make. Unlike other kinds of cheese, mozzarella has little tolerance for the level of acidity needed or the temperature at which the cheese must be cooked – too little, and it won't stretch, too much, and the cheese tastes gritty.

In another time or was it yesterday, his father was a boy in Bialystok. Today, Yevgeny cannot breathe. We have so little tolerance for others. Tolerance of difference is a fiction, thinks Yevgeny.

Onto the disk of rice he places two cubes of cheese and carefully cups the rice around them, forming balls. When he has shaped all the rice, he rolls each bundle, first in flour, then in egg and finally, he coats each soft globe in breadcrumbs before placing it gently on a parchment covered tray.

Arancini is usually deep fried, but Yevgeni is afraid of hot oil. He is afraid of ovens too, but you wouldn't know that. He'll bake what others fry. He cooks to eat, not lives to cook, or dies to live. Tonight, he'll also bake one wholewheat loaf. The oven, he sets at 400 degrees. The bread will bake for 40 minutes but the arancini for only

20, and Yevgeni will slide the tray of arancini into the oven after the bread has baked for 20 minutes.

It's late. It's after nine and Yevgeni's thoughts are troubled, jumbled. Putin talks of de-Nazifying Ukraine while his actions mirror the Nazis.

Bella, who lives next-door, suffers from dementia. Her world is tiny, no more than five or ten minutes wide. When he visits, he brings her chocolate candy, homemade rye, and kez, a soft cheese he makes from kefir. She calls him husband, but Yevgeni won't disabuse her. Sometimes truth is not important. She tells him stories and he, as if playing improv, accepts her offerings and uses them in his replies. And for a few minutes they exchange stories until she can no longer thread that needle. She falls silent, her eyes dull. Her world now shrunk no further than her flesh.

The news is more than a million have fled Ukraine, but students from Nigeria and India say how hard it is for them to cross the border into Poland. If you're White, you're a refugee. If you're Black or Brown, you're not welcome.

Yevgeni checks the oven and removes the bread and the arancini. He places them on racks on the kitchen counter to cool. In the darkened room he finds Nava half-asleep, and he embraces her. She wakes. He holds her tight, tight while tears roll down his cheeks and wet her hair.

## The Institute on Mentoring, Teaching and Learning (IMTL)

*In June 2023, we held our 12<sup>th</sup> Annual IMTL (virtual) residency. This year-long program of the Center for Mentoring, Learning and Academic Innovation (CMLAI) provides time and mutual support to those who mentor, teach, or are involved in research relevant to teaching and learning, to pursue projects relevant to their professional work. An important IMTL goal is to enhance our mentoring and teaching practices and to get input from each other. Librarians, educational technologists, instructional designers, and academic support staff provide consultation during the residency and throughout the academic year.*

*Included here are short summaries of some of the projects that colleagues took up during the 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023 academic years. We thank everyone for their participation.*

### IMTL 2020-2021

#### **Lynette Stewart and Jelia Demingo**

#### **Content Analysis of Independent Study Syllabi**

Faculty across SUNY Empire State College were asked to volunteer syllabi for content analysis of semantic and latent themes in independent study structure, assignments, descriptions and learning objectives/goals. During the retreat, syllabi will be coded for course characteristics empirically shown to be conducive to creating a learning environment that encourage self-motivation, goal orientation, self-efficacy, self-mastery, and other central facets of self-regulation. This data will be used to help develop a conceptual model of self-regulated learning in an independent study context as part of a larger multi-method project.

**Mark Abendroth, Rhianna Rogers, and Linda Jones**

### **Curriculum Design for Virtual Residency on Sustainability**

For our IMTL Residency project, we built a thematic virtual exchange, "Learning for a Sustainable Future," which focuses on the UN SDGs and sustainability in socio-cultural-environmental contexts. We created a three-week, multidisciplinary curriculum that challenges and supports students as they become global citizens with heightened awareness of sustainability issues and possibilities for sustainable action. Rogers presented our collaborative paper, describing our process of curriculum development, "Using Technological Innovations and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Teaching Sustainable Development: A Virtual Residency Case Study," at the Fall 2020 International Conference on Sustainable Development. In Spring 2021, we submitted an article, "Analyzing Student Participation in Sustainability: An International Exchange Case Study" for publication. Our content analysis of student participation in the IE-VR indicates it is an effective model for transformative learning.

**Eileen M. Angelini, Mark Abendroth, Ajay Das, Patricia Isaac, Donna Mahar, and Tina Wagle**

### **Holocaust Education**

It was a tremendous pleasure to work with Mark Abendroth, Associate Professor of Education, Ajay Das, Associate Professor of Special Education, Patricia Isaac, Associate Professor of Special Education, Donna Mahar, Professor of Education, and Tina Wagle, Professor of Education this past year on incorporating the lessons of the Holocaust into Teacher Education courses. Thanks to their tremendous efforts, they helped me to continue to maintain my promise to all the Holocaust survivors, Hidden Children, Righteous Gentiles, and Resistance Fighters with whom I have worked that their stories would never be forgotten. I look forward to the October 6, 2021, webinar where Drs. Abendroth, Das, Isaac, Mahar, and Wagle's students will share coursework examples.

**Lynn McNall****Oncology Nurses Oral History Project**

Through a qualitative research oral history project, the essence of the beginnings of oncology nursing is being captured through the lens of nurses, during the years of 1975-1986. After the Oncology Nursing Society formed in 1975, the specialty of oncology nursing began to emerge as a professional nursing discipline. Through oral history interviews, the nurses are sharing their personal narratives related to how they obtained their in-depth oncology knowledge, developed their caring attitudes, advanced their professional forward thinking as they became the leaders of robust oncology teams, and provided an accepting atmosphere where patient care was filled with kindness, empathy, and respect during a time when a stigma surrounded the diagnosis of cancer. These oral history reports are being housed in the Henderson Repository of Sigma, where this relevant information will enhance the history and existing body of oncology nursing knowledge.

**Mark Lewis, Norine Masella, Maree Michaud-Sacks, Alena Rodick****Interprofessional Communication for Health Professions: Focusing on Interprofessional Education to Enhance Interprofessional Collaborative Practice**

This project addressed interprofessional education and collaborative practice (IPECP), which helps health professionals to work in teams to provide safe care and promotes positive health outcomes. We incorporated engaging (authentic) assignments into our online Educational Planning course. An unfolding complex case study and medical record were incorporated.

Students engaged in creating videos to recommend care for the patient from their professional perspective, then responded to classmates via discussion. This promoted communication between members of the health team. Gaining knowledge of the roles of other professions leads to respect and increased collaboration. This is supported in the literature. Students provided only positive feedback for the new learning activities in this course.

**Diane Perilli and Brett Sherman****Educational Planning for Multilingual Learners**

Mentor Diane Perilli and Director of Academic Support Brett Sherman collaborated on a project to address language challenges faced by Diane's mentees who are multilingual learners. Recognizing that most of these students have already taken College English at a previous institution, we needed to be creative as to how to help them. Therefore, together we designed an Educational Planning course that included activities to build on English language skills by presenting opportunities with incentives. This involved a writing assignment that was broken down into steps with corresponding workshops. This effort also developed students' awareness of available academic support and resources.

**Lynne Wiley****Modules, Materials, and Micro-Credentials in Basic Ethics**

My project is built on a 2019-20 Innovation Award designed to help students achieve a deeper and more robust understanding of basic ethics. The ITML project goals entailed more fully investigating OER and online resources; creating a repository of materials for faculty; exploring options for partnering with faculty and departments; looking into a micro-credential in ethics; and improving my own courses. The micro-credential still needs attention, but each of the other goals was achieved. I conducted an exhaustive study of online and open resources (finding most insufficient or unsuitable); examined every general site video on ethics; probed for new sites and materials; used my own moral philosophy course to experiment with learning activities; presented to students and faculty; and held discussions with IMTL faculty and staff about course, divisional, and college level professional and academic development in basic ethics, as well as practical suggestions for co-listing courses, collaborating on modules, and ensuring that liberal studies in ethics can meet professional/applied criteria.



## IMTL 2021-2022

### **Tracy Galuski, Joan Buzick, Melissa Wells, Teal Abel**

#### **Educational Studies Workgroup**

The Educational Studies Workgroup (Teal Abel, Joan Buzick, Tracy Galuski, and Melissa Wells) focused on the development of the Early Childhood Education Program Announcement/Proposal. During the IMTL the group gathered and reviewed relevant documents from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP), and New York State Education Department (NYSED). Utilizing these resources as a guide, the group developed a framework for the program, mapped out current courses, and developed descriptions and outcomes for new courses that would be required. Just recently the proposal was approved by SUNY, and the group is moving onto the final program proposal.

### **Diana Centanni**

#### **Exploration of the First-Term Advisor Relationship and Its Influence on Student Engagement for Undergraduate Distance Learners**

The goal of this exploratory case study was to better understand the academic advisor's influence on engagement (cognitive, affective, behavioral) in a student's first term of study. A qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire, created an opportunity to hear student voices and uncover perceptions and experiences realized by distance-based undergraduate students after the initial phase of the advising relationship. Findings indicated that students did view their mentor as a supportive, responsive, trustworthy advocate. The biggest advisor influences were on affective and behavioral engagement, with cognitive engagement not significant. Likely this is due to the type of learning and engagement that takes place in the first term. One unexpected finding surrounded students' self-perceived feelings of failure prior to meeting their advisor for the first time. Students worried a lot about past educational failures and felt a sense of reassurance when they met with their mentor. This is an important practice-based consideration to think about when working with a new mentee. They are new to us -- and to SUNY Empire -- the educational experience doesn't feel new to them. It's

important to recognize and reinforce their decision to come back and surround their decision with compassion, understanding, and an asset-based outlook for the future.

## **Lue Turner**

### **User-Friendly Educational Planning**

My goal was to create a Moodle shell of resources that my Educational Planning students could utilize throughout the course. The shell would contain a repository related to degree planning that I often need to email them. This would allow students to have more structure in Educational Planning, and it would also save me time and email clutter. I started creating my own Moodle shell—and then the college announced we were switching to Brightspace. I did not keep creating a Moodle shell, as at that point there was not enough knowledge about transferability and integrity of transfer. Instead, I continued to collect resources, added electronic resources to my LC (to get ready for Brightspace), and refined my process of working with students. I have been successful in assisting students through the process in about 11-12 weeks.

## **Himanee Gupta, Nadine Wedderburn**

### **Cultivating Home: Local Farms, Global Diasporas, and Transnational Labor**

Our project explores the Schenectady farmers market as a multi-diasporic space where experiences of belonging, race, ethnicity, class, power, and privilege interact. We enter the market as farmer and market vendor (Himanee) and regular shopper with 'market memories' of home (Nadine). We converse informally and formally with farmers from Jamaica who work as seasonal laborers at a well-known apple orchard and increasingly are becoming its public face at the market. Writing autoethnography together deepens our analyses through reflection on our individual experiences within broader cultural contexts and helps us rethink our located-ness as racialized women faculty in Upstate New York.

## IMTL 2022-2023

### **Norine Masella and Cynthia Patrick**

#### **Diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice (DEISJ) in health professions education: A review of the literature**

We reviewed DEISJ literature related to health professions and higher education settings. We presented preliminary ideas at the Online Learning Consortium Accelerate International Conference in November 2022, and then began collaborating to develop an upper-level course titled Contemporary Applications of DEISJ in the Health Professions. We are planning to submit it for review to meet SUNY general education requirements and have applied to continue this work into the next academic year, with the goal of offering the course in spring 2024.

### **Rebecca Elisio-Aras and Lue Turner**

#### **Work Relationships and Boundary Blurring as Factors in Work Satisfaction and Productivity for Female Faculty Members in Academia**

The project started for ITML in 2022-2023 as a look into how COVID-19 has affected women in academia in terms of how role strain (work and increased home responsibilities) influenced work satisfaction. Having found that some of our research questions were previously investigated, we are now aligning our research to look at how relationships with co-workers, supervisors, and management are also key in determining work satisfaction, which then impacts work productivity. Our current goals for this project are to determine (1) how work relationships make or break productivity for women in academia, and (2) how work strain/fatigue and boundary blurring impacted female faculty prior to/and during COVID.

## Mentoring Autistic and Neurodivergent Students: A Universal Design Approach

Lauren Lestremou Allen and Noor Syed,  
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Greater numbers of Autistic students are entering higher education (Kuder & Accardo, 2018); however, Autistic individuals continue to attend and graduate from college at rates lower than students without disabilities. Research indicates 62.7% of all high school graduates enroll in a two- or four-year college within six years of graduating high school (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). Comparatively, however, only 32% of Autistic individuals enroll in higher education (Wei et al., 2013). This discrepancy is concerning, as approximately one in 36 children aged eight in the United States has a diagnosis of autism, marking an increase in prevalence from 1 in 44 in 2018 (Maenner et al., 2021; Maenner et al., 2023). The increase in the prevalence of autism identification, coupled with increases nationwide in college enrollment, cement the need for Autistic individuals to be considered in the ongoing conversations surrounding diversity and inclusion in higher education.

The Autistic Self-Advocacy Network explains autism as a developmental disability that may result in differences in how Autistic people think, communicate, and interact with the world (2022). Autism is included within the umbrella term of neurodiversity, along with other brain-based conditions such as learning disabilities, intellectual disability, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, and mental health conditions (e.g., anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder).

“The increase in the prevalence of autism identification, coupled with increases nationwide in college enrollment, cement the need for Autistic individuals to be considered in the ongoing conversations surrounding diversity and inclusion in higher education.”

In the bestselling book *NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity* which popularized the term neurodiversity, Steve Silberman (2015), stated that these differences should be “regarded as naturally occurring cognitive

variations with distinctive strengths that have contributed to the evolution of technology and culture rather than mere checklists of deficits and dysfunctions” (p. 16).

### **Autistic Student College and Employment Outcomes**

It is estimated that 0.7% to 1.9% % of college students identify as Autistic (White et al., 2011), while students with disabilities account for approximately 19% and 12% in undergraduate and graduate programs, respectively, in 2015-2016 (USDE, n.d.). These numbers are believed to be an underestimate, however, as self-disclosure serves as a barrier for Autistic students. During college, Autistic students and students with other disabilities reported lower grade point averages and higher rates of course failure, remedial course enrollment, and academic challenges, despite similar levels of reported engagement in academic work (McLeod et al., 2019). Students with disabilities, including autism, graduate with a bachelor’s degrees at a rate of approximately 38.8% (Newman et al., 2011) as compared to approximately 60.4% of all college students (Hanson, 2021).

The implications of Autistic and Neurodivergent college students failing to complete their degrees and ultimately transitioning into the workforce are far reaching. Estimates suggest that nearly half of Autistic adults in their early twenties are unemployed (Roux et al., 2015; Shattuck et al., 2012) and, of those employed, approximately 80% are employed part-time (Roux et al., 2015). Beyond this, underemployment, which includes underemployment by hours, income, skills, or status (Friedland & Price, 2003), is common for Autistic individuals (Ohl et al., 2017). Educational and employment outcomes after high school continue to be worse for Autistic individuals with lower socioeconomic status (Shattuck et al., 2012).

### **Purpose**

Educational and employment outcomes highlight the critical economic and personal implications (Petcu et al., 2021) at stake necessitating effective practices to support Autistic and Neurodiverse students to attend and graduate from college. One tenet of the Neurodiversity movement and that of the Autistic Self-Advocates is that people with disabilities know what is best for them (Wolff & Hums, 2017). The Autistic Self-Advocacy Network’s slogan, “Nothing about us without us” (ASAN, 2022) conveys this call to action. For this reason, the information discussed in this paper will outline the college experiences and perceptions of services and supports as reported by Autistic or Neurodiverse student voices as well as disseminate critical topics within the Autistic and Neurodiversity advocacy movements. Together, this

information will be used to inform a Universal Design approach to equip faculty, who are an essential piece of the college support networks for students, to provide mentorship to their Autistic and Neurodivergent students. Differences between K-12 and higher education, barriers and supports in college for Autistic and Neurodivergent students, considerations for mentoring Autistic and Neurodivergent students, and recommendations for faculty to implement a Universal Design approach to mentoring will be discussed.

### **Transition to College from High School**

To gain an understanding of the challenges Autistic students encounter in the transition to higher education, it is first helpful to consider differences that exist between the K-12 world for students receiving special education services and the college environment. As outlined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B, individuals with disabilities aged 3-21 are *entitled* to a free, appropriate, public education and related services to prepare them for continued education, employment, and independent living (2004). Students with disabilities in K-12 education are supported by multidisciplinary teams, who are responsible for the planning and implementation of individualized services and supports to aid the student with disability (Mamboleo et al., 2015). Students and the other members of their teams meet annually to review and develop their individualized education plans, which outline the specialized instruction, accommodation, and related services they will be provided.

Contrast this experience with that of college, where services and supports for students with disabilities, including autism, continue to be regulated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), but are no longer regulated by IDEA (Davis et al., 2021). Whereas IDEA provides educational services, the role of ADA and Section 504 is to protect individuals with disabilities from discrimination by removing barriers that prevent individuals from participating fully in work or school. In college, predominately, this removal of barriers occurs through the provision of reasonable accommodations (Smith, 2001). To obtain these accommodations in college, the student must (a) contact disability services, (b) provide documentation of their diagnosis(es), and, in most cases, c) notify their professors across their classes to advocate for their reasonable accommodations to be provided. In practical terms, students now face a lack of individualized support and have suddenly been tasked with being their own advocate, with inadequate transition planning to prepare them for these changes.

## Barriers and Supports in College

The many changes that Autistic and Neurodivergent individuals encounter upon their transition and time in college contribute to negative experiences, which may serve as barriers to success in college. These include:

- Mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and stress (Davis et al., 2021; Gelbar et al., 2014; Van Hees et al., 2015). Students reported that the “simultaneous combination of tasks and challenges” across education, student life, and daily living demands was responsible for the mental health issues they had experienced (Van Hees et al., 2015, p. 1677).
- Social difficulties such as interactions with peers, faculty, and staff, managing social conflict (Davis et al., 2021; Van Hees et al., 2015; White et al., 2016); and finding ways to make friends (Van Hees et al., 2015);
- Academic challenges, such as management of course demands, understanding policies and expectations, writing, and completing group projects (Davis et al., 2021; White et al., 2016);
- Self-determination, including goal- and self-regulated behavior and executive functioning, such as time management, organization, daily living responsibilities (Davis et al., 2021; Van Hees et al., 2015; White et al., 2016); and
- Challenges with self-disclosure of disability (Davis et al., 2021).

Although post-secondary institutions may have a variety of services and supports for Autistic and Neurodivergent students, these supports and services are often underutilized. Students may lack awareness of these resources (Van Hees et al., 2015) and/or they have not found the services and supports helpful (Anderson et al., 2018). Services and supports that students have found to be effective across academic domains have centered on accommodations. Extended time to complete exams and small group testing are frequently utilized and have been found to be highly effective (Accardo et al., 2019; Anderson et al., 2018; Barnhill et al., 2016; Davis et al., 2021; Jansen et al., 2017). Autistic students have also identified receiving copies of lecture notes and priority registration to be beneficial (Accardo et al., 2019). Universal Design for Learning strategies commonly cited as effective to allow for varied preferences, assistance to structure assignments, tutoring support, writing center, support to connect with instructors, recorded lectures/lecture transcription, and reduced course load (Accardo et al., 2019; Barnhill et al., 2016; Anderson et al., 2018, Sarrett, 2018).

Non-academic supports found to be very helpful include counseling (Accardo et al., 2019; Anderson et al., 2018; Davis et al. 2021), which aligns with the mental health issues cited as a significant barrier for Autistic college students. Peer mentors are

another beneficial support that is commonly reported by Autistic college students (Accardo et al., 2019; Anderson et al., 2018, Davis et al., 2021). Students also report consultation and collaboration with disability support personnel to be supportive (Anderson et al., 2018). Practices to support student connection such as clubs or support groups were identified, with the need for these initiatives to be driven by Autistic student input (Sarrett, 2018). One focus group member noted that,

Neurotypical or abled students are welcome to come and listen and learn something. But we [Autistic/disabled students] need to be in charge of the space and event and they need to always be viewed as a guest, in order for it not to verge into patronizing, othering, charity territory (Sarrett, 2018, p. 686).

Although a variety of other social supports have been offered, predominately focusing on social skills support, these reportedly do not address the self-indicated mental health needs experienced by Autistic students (e.g., anxiety, depression, loneliness; Davis et al., 2021). Additionally, students reported finding group-based skill building trainings to be ineffective, preferring instead for more individualized consultation with college personnel or support groups with peers (Van Hees et al., 2015).

This individualized consultation may take the form of mentors and coaches, who have been identified as an effective support for both academic and non-academic needs (Accardo et al., 2019; Bailey et al., 2019; Barnhill et al., 2016; Davis et al., 2021). Faculty were noted to have frequent contact and the most significant academic interactions with

Autistic college students (LeGary, 2017). Students have expressed, in some cases, a preference to connect with faculty or graduate students (Accardo et al., 2019), identifying faculty as a “key source of social support” (Bailey et al., 2019, p. 1090).

“Faculty mentors are in a position to deliver personalized support that students desire.”

In this way, faculty mentors are in a position to deliver personalized support that students desire (Accardo et al., 2019; Van Hees et al., 2015). However, when faculty fail to adequately understand autism, accommodation policies, or implement accommodations, faculty can serve as a hindrance (Bailey et al., 2019; Van Hees et al., 2015). Therefore, students describe it critically important for college personnel to have an understanding about autism generally as well as the Autistic college experience (Davis et al., 2021; Sarrett, 2018). Professors likely need training to



effectively work with a Neurodivergent student population (Bailey et al., 2019) and college personnel have welcomed additional training (Glennon, 2016). As a result, considerations and recommendations for mentors will be discussed.

### **Considerations for Mentors**

Faculty mentors are in a unique position to demonstrate a commitment to understanding and to provide guidance for students who identify as Autistic and Neurodivergent. Aspects that faculty should consider in their mentorship of Autistic students include: (a) Conceptualization of disability and the “Double Empathy Problem” (Milton, 2012), (b) Neurodiversity-affirming language including identity-first language, and (c) disability disclosure and the mental health implications for Autistic and Neurodivergent students.

### **Conceptualization of Disability**

Mainstream views of autism center on the medical model view of disability, which conceptualize autism as pathological and with associated deficits (Shuck et al., 2021). The medical model places the onus on the Autistic individual – requiring them to change to meet the demands of a society tailored to non-disabled individuals. The social model of disability, on the other hand, advocates for acceptance that difficulties arise for disabled individuals when the environment presents challenges (Leadbitter et al., 2021). Krcek (2012) clarifies that within the social model, “society...disables the individual” (p. 7); the social model and implications of the neurodiversity movement require that all members of the interaction or environment to adjust to improve access and success for all parties.

The typical narrative, aligned to the medical model of disability, describes the “deficiencies” in the communication and social domains for Autistic individuals. Milton (2012) offers the “Double Empathy Problem” (p. 885) as an explanation of the breakdown that occurs for *both* the Autistic and non- Autistic individuals in a social interaction. The Double Empathy Problem challenges the historically accepted view that Autistic individuals have difficulty with perspective taking or that the difficulty that occurs during the interaction is a result of only one member in the interaction, namely, the Autistic individual (Milton, 2012). As a result, a more accurate understanding reflects the differences in communication that exist between Autistic and neurotypical communication styles, as opposed to deficient communication by the Autistic individuals. Accepting this conceptualization requires individuals who identify as neurotypical to consider their own role in welcoming variations in communication and behavior, whether due to disability or another difference.

## Neurodiversity-Affirming Language

Language surrounding autism is inextricably weaved into broader societal conversations about disability. In his seminal, *Don't Mourn for Us*, Sinclair (1993) shared that,

Autism is a way of being. It is pervasive; it colors every experience, every sensation, perception, thought, emotion, and encounter, every aspect of existence. It is not possible to separate the autism from the person – and if it were possible, the person you'd have left would not be the same person you started with.

Identity-first language aligns with Sinclair's conceptualization and favors use of "Autistic person" instead of "person with autism," which aligns with person-first language. On the other hand, person-first language, which originated in the 1970s (Botha et al., 2021) represents the standard in most training and professional circles and largely continues to be cited as preferred by caregivers of Autistic individuals.

Preferences by Autistic self-advocates suggest a preference for identity-first language. In a recent survey, 88.6% of the over 800 Autistic adults surveyed reporting preference for identity first language and the survey findings highlighting that "times and attitudes" have shifted (Organization for Autism Research, 2020). However, despite the overwhelming preference for identity-first language (OAR, 2020), Dwyer (2022) aptly notes that consensus has yet to have been established.

For this reason, one may consider adjusting default terminology to identity-first; however, matching the use and/or expressed preferences of the individual and/or relevant parties with whom you are working is encouraged. Also, neurodiversity-affirming language includes refraining from use of functioning labels (e.g., high functioning, low functioning; National Centre for Mental Health, 2019) and, instead, advocates encourage use of support labels (e.g., low support, high support) for a given area or domain of functioning (e.g., academics).

Autism identity is complex and highly individualized (Frost et al., 2019). Autistic adults are not a monolith and continued awareness of the variability that exists in preferences and experiences by Autistic adults is paramount. Based on Autistic college student report, personal strengths and challenges, comorbidities, and intersecting identities influence Autistic identity. One respondent shared,

I don't want to be stereotyped [...]. I'm Black too, so people have certain stereotypes and certain types of ideals associated with that, so, all of a

student when you also say that you're Autistic, it's like that's another building block for them (Frost et al., 2019, p. 271).

Development of a positive Autistic identity has particular relevance for the experience of Autistic individuals in college as it is tied to an increased willingness to disclose one's disability (Frost et al., 2019).

### **Disability Disclosure**

Students with disabilities continue to be underestimated in college and university settings due to barriers preventing individuals from self-disclosing their disabilities. Across the 29 colleges and universities offering specific supports for Autistic students that were surveyed, reported that fewer than 1% up to 18% (median = 5%, mode = 7%) of those students who disclosed a disability identified as Autistic (Barnhill, 2018). Self-disclosure literature reveals that individuals must consider benefits and risks when determining whether to disclose. Autism and other neurodivergencies are considered to be an "invisible condition" (Huang et al., 2022) and, as such, self-disclosure is typically required for others to be aware the disability is present. However, decisions regarding self-disclosure are complex.

"Students with disabilities continue to be underestimated in college and university settings due to barriers preventing individuals from self-disclosing their disabilities."

Complicating these decisions, college students with disabilities are required to disclose in order to access accommodations in college through protections within the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. In a study conducted by Sarrett (2018), one focus group member shared "Everyone needs accommodations, and everyone is special, so using those words for us reinforces separate and unequal" (p. 687).

Individuals report that it is difficult to know if disclosure should occur and, if so, to whom they should disclose (Johnson & Joshi, 2014). Few students disclose at enrollment (Cai & Richdale, 2016) and many have reported preference for delaying disclosure until a close relationship was established (Frost et al., 2019). Among individuals connected with disability services, students described having delayed disclosure due to wanting to attempt college without additional support, fear of stigmatization, perception that disclosure was unnecessary, diagnosis occurring after enrollment, and disclosure process being unclear and/or too difficult

(Anderson et al., 2018). A perceived lack of understanding by others about autism, privacy concerns, and the desire to make a “fresh start” have also contributed to Autistic college students’ resistance to disclose their disability (Van Hees et al., 2015, p. 1680). Conversely, Autistic students reported disclosing after experiencing difficulty managing continued stress, when they felt safe, or when accommodations were needed (Van Hees et al., 2015, p. 1680). Some Autistic college students reported having disclosed and others not having disclosed in order to support understanding and avoid judgment by others (Frost et al., 2019), again emphasizing the individualized nature of these decisions.

Importantly, when individuals who identify as Autistic refrain from disclosing their disability, they have reported often engaging in “camouflaging” (i.e., engaging in behaviors to “mask” autism during social interactions, Hull et al., 2017, p. 2523). Camouflaging has been found to be negatively correlated with well-being, with individuals engaging in camouflaging reporting higher levels of anxiety, depression, exhaustion, and stress (Hull et al., 2017; Lai et al., 2016). This exacerbation should be considered in the context of the already elevated rates of co-occurring mental health conditions (i.e., anxiety disorders, depressive disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorders, bipolar disorders) that Autistic individuals experience (Lai et al., 2019). Even when students perceived instructors as willing to provide accommodations and support them, students continued to prefer not to reveal their disabilities (Mamboleo et al., 2015). Therefore, for college faculty, relying on students with disabilities to access support and services only after disclosure is insufficient. Instead, faculty should consider a Universal Design approach to reach their students with disabilities, while also enhancing the success of all students.

### **Universal Design Approach for Mentorship**

Universal Design allows faculty mentors to respond in an inclusive manner to all students. Ron Mace, an architect who was disabled and used a wheelchair, coined the term “Universal Design” in 1988 for its application within architecture as an approach to not only maximize architectural aesthetics and usability by all individuals (Center for an Accessible Society, n.d.; Center for Universal Design, 2008). Mace understood that “no ‘average’ actually represents the majority because too many people have vastly differing requirements” (1988, p. 5) and was an early pioneer for the idea that designing for the needs of all, including people with disabilities, improves the experience for everyone (Center for an Accessible Society, n.d.; Center for Universal Design, 2008).

Although efforts historically have focused on autism awareness, the emphasis must shift instead to acceptance, inclusion, [and equity] for Neurodivergent or disabled individuals (Frost et al., 2019). Through Universal Design, students with disabilities avoid stigmatization, reduce the need for individualized accommodations, and an inclusive environment is fostered, which benefits all students (Burgstahler et al., 2015). Toward this goal, a proposed Universal Design approach within mentorship for Autistic and Neurodivergent students requires faculty to focus on inclusivity through culturally responsive practices, building trust in the relationship, and an appreciation for diversity in communication.

Autistic college students have shared their desire to be “known authentically, treated equally, and understood by others” (Frost et al., 2019, p. 273). Culturally responsive practices build understanding that others’ experience may be wholly different than their own. These practices have application within the context of working with Autistic and Neurodivergent students given a conceptualization of students with disabilities as a cultural group (Darrow, 2013). Villegas and Lucas (2002) describe culturally responsive practice as a commitment to (a) learning about students’ lives and values, (b) sociocultural consciousness that accepts no one’s worldview is universal, (c) diversity-affirming views, and (d) advocacy for all students and a belief that all students are capable. Across these strands, culturally responsive faculty seek genuinely to listen and to learn about their mentees and to engage in actions to support equity of Autistic and Neurodivergent students.

Autistic college students have noted the benefit of having faculty as part of their support system (Accardo et al., 2019). Faculty as sources of support, among others, combat the negative mental health experiences reported by Autistic college students. Foundational to these culturally responsive practices is the development of relationships. Although few researchers have evaluated how faculty should develop relationships with their Autistic student mentees, themes including the importance of contacts being frequent and supportive have emerged. For example, students reported scheduling check-in meetings and other opportunities to connect with faculty as beneficial (Accardo et al., 2019). Faculty, too, reported the utility of these check-in meetings, noting that they should occur frequently in an ongoing, regularly scheduled manner, and occur in a one-to-one format to support relationship development with mentees (Brown & Coomes, 2015). Highlighting the benefit of this approach, one Autistic college student shared, “instead of telling me to “just ask” ...something I have always struggled to do, they should be checking [on] me...Essentially, they are just treating me the same as regular students and so I feel they don’t understand” (Anderson et al., 2018, p. 654).

Faculty can structure conversations such that they ask questions to convey genuine interest in learning about the student, their experience, and what supports may be beneficial. In this way, faculty proactively engage students, acknowledge, and address the barriers that may exist, and provide a way for students to convey challenges and ask for help. One Autistic college student shared that,

I can simply go to the consultation without any obligations, and she will ask how she can help. So yes, some guidance is good and necessary, rather than send an email if you have a problem. I do not find it easy to ask for help, because I cannot always explain what I need, sometimes I do not even realize I need some support (Van Hees et al., 2015, p. 1682).

This approach is inclusive and serves to establish trust in the relationship, laying the groundwork for ongoing mentoring to be effectively provided. A variety of action steps can be considered by faculty to develop and advance the mentor relationship and deliver ongoing support and encouragement for students.

### **Action Steps for Faculty**

1. **Share Expectations:** Strive to make initial contact with mentees through email to outline your role as a faculty mentor and their role as the student. Clarifying expectations in terms of the scope of the mentor-student relationship, the purpose of communication and meetings, and the options for frequency and form that communication and meetings can take will reduce ambiguity that may serve as a barrier to building the mentor-student relationship. Mentors may also find it helpful here to share proactive expectations detailing the time a student could expect to receive a response to an email. In sharing this information proactively, faculty can more confidently provide feedback or support students to make adjustments if required.
2. **Student Survey:** Some faculty may wish to consider the use of a survey with all student mentees early on in their mentoring relationship to provide the student an opportunity to share a variety of information. Some areas that can be included within the survey include: preferred names, preferred pronouns, goals or hopes for the mentor-student relationship, areas of perceived strength and difficulty related to college experience, areas the student would like additional assistance, communication preferences, and an opportunity to share any other variables that may impact their college experience. This format may provide students with the structure to share information they may wish to but, otherwise, would not.

3. **Attempt Ongoing Contact:** Continue to periodically attempt contact, even if not initially successful. This approach recognizes that some students may overlook initial communication, be uncomfortable communicating or meeting initially, or feel there is no need to share information, but be open or interested in meeting at a later date.
4. **Student Choice in Frequency of Contact:** Faculty can offer to schedule introductory and recurring meetings at a frequency that the student prefers (e.g., monthly; beginning, middle, and end of term). This approach ensures that frequency of contacts supports relationship development and addresses needs that may arise at different points in time.
5. **Student Choice in Format of Contact:** Faculty can ask the student for input on preferred format of the meeting (e.g., email communication, video call). This approach recognizes that some options, such as a video call, may be intimidating to some students due to the technological variables involved and/or the added dimensions of the social interaction. It also provides the student with choice and strength-based options.
6. **Develop Note-Taking System:** The faculty may choose to log student preferences for communications and meetings as well as more personal preferences including pronouns and identity-related language. Additionally, this can allow the faculty to check in about information the student shared during previous communication or meetings.
7. **Welcome Differences in Communication:** Commit to learning about the student and exchange of information by asking guiding questions (e.g., What is going well in your course? What has been difficult this week?). This approach recognizes that the student may find the meeting expectations or content to be shared ambiguous and/or may have difficulty or be uncomfortable directly sharing areas of strength or challenge. Reflect on the “Double Empathy Problem” and its implications for expecting and welcoming differing communication styles.
8. **Show Grace to Your Students:** It is hoped that this paper has outlined variables related to the college experience for Autistic and Neurodivergent students. This overview may provide context for why some students prefer not to disclose their disability, may have difficulty asking for help, or why communication styles may differ, among other topics discussed. However, Autistic and Neurodivergent students may be late for a meeting or fail to respond to communication due to any number of other competing personal and/or professional demands on their time

and well-being, in the same way that any student may, independent of their disability identity.

9. **Show Grace to Yourself:** No one is expected to be an expert in someone else's experience. Additional guidance is available as needed from college offices supporting students with disabilities such as disability services.

10. **Maintain High Expectations:** Faculty can and should maintain the high expectations they have for all students while welcoming the different paths students may take to meet those expectations and the varied supports available and that they can provide that may create a more equitable path for success for students.

## Conclusion

Although increasing numbers of Autistic students are entering higher education, their enrollment and graduation rates continue to lag their Neurotypical peers, which has long-lasting implications for employment. Autistic students have reported a variety of barriers to their success in college such as mental health issues, social challenges, academic difficulties, self-determination and executive functioning, and disability self-disclosure. Across these areas of need, Autistic students have reported the benefits associated with academic support such as accommodations, Universal Design for Learning, tutoring, and reduced course load. Non-academic supports the students reported effective included counseling, peer mentoring, consultation with disability services, and student connection opportunities such as support groups.

“Although increasing numbers of Autistic students are entering higher education, their enrollment and graduation rates continue to lag their Neurotypical peers, which has long-lasting implications for employment.”

Spanning these domains, faculty and coaches stood out as pivotal, due to the ability of faculty to provide personalized, one-to-one, and ongoing consultation and support. For this reason, faculty mentors are well positioned to foster culturally responsive and inclusive relationships with all students through a Universal Design approach to mentoring. Faculty are encouraged to

consider background topics related to models of disability, the neurodiversity movement, identity-first language, and disability self-disclosure to better understand their Autistic and Neurodivergent students. Through the Universal



Design approach to mentoring, faculty can seek to connect with students in an ongoing manner aligned to student preferences and communication styles and to provide support to the student through ongoing learning and compassion.

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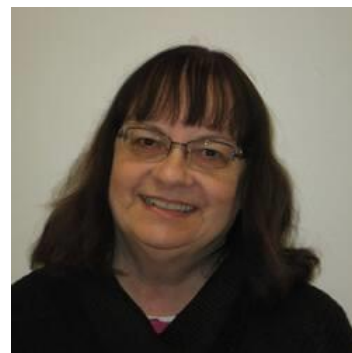
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"As we build an ethic on caring and as we examine education under its guidance, we shall see that the greatest obligation of educators, inside and outside formal schooling, is to nurture the ethical ideals of those with whom they come in contact." **Nel Noddings**, *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*



## Major Changes: Why and How Our Students Change Academic Direction

Maureen Kravec, Arts and Humanities



### Introduction

The educational journeys of adult students are often full of twists and turns, sometimes unexpected ones. Adult learning theory emphasizes the growing wisdom and reasoning ability of students as they gain experiential learning (Knowles, 1984; Mezirow, 1991). It assumes students will have developed a greater interest in learning because as adults, they have more knowledge of the sort we sometimes consider wisdom to help them determine which path they wish to pursue. Nevertheless, this growing store of wisdom does not always translate into certainty about an academic path. The data suggest that many of our Empire State University students continue to change their plans while enrolled. Since the Banner system (a commercial Enterprise Resource Planning [ERP] system, designed for higher education) was implemented at SUNY Empire in fall 2018, we have been able to collect data on at least some of these decisions. This information should be helpful to administrators, faculty, and staff as they plan; it can answer “who” and “what” and make inferences about “why” students decide to change course. Qualitative data can offer even richer information about how students make their decisions, and thus how we can better meet their goals.

### Background

Nationwide data indicate that among students of all ages with declared majors on first college enrollment, 30% will change majors at least once, and one in 10, more than once (Beginning postsecondary students' longitudinal study, 2017). Sklar (2018) cites studies that place the percentage of students who change majors even higher, at 50-80%. The main research question is: Do Empire State University students, whose median age is 35 (Decision Support, 2022), follow a similar trajectory?

It is important to understand whether students view their decision to change fields as positive, neutral, or negative. Existing, most of it on traditionally aged students, has produced mixed results. Bäumle, Grunschel, and Dresel (2021) conducted a study of phases of decision making and factors involved in students choosing to

drop out or to change major field. Their survey of 1005 students at a German university, average age 23, finds that negative factors such as anxiety over lack of “fit” and academic self-concept (p. 861) correlate with both dropping out and changing major. They also note that the study was conducted at a large campus-based university. They found that students usually consider their “fit” within a program and do research before deciding to drop out or change major field. A possible critique of applying the results of this study to adult students is that young, campus-based students may feel the decision to leave the university or change their first-choice major represents a failure or departure from an educational dream.

Sklar (2018) conducted a statistical study of a cohort of first-year, first-time students throughout their academic careers in STEM majors at California Polytechnic State University. He found that lower academic achievement in high school and college courses was the only significant correlating factors in changing major. He concludes that advisors should be proactive in discussing academic choices with students (p. 57). Foster (2017) took a different approach, using the “Big Five and five narrow trait” personality model to study factors associated with changing major in a group of 437 American college students. Unlike Bäumke, Grunschel, and Dresel (2021), Foster did not link the outcomes of leaving college and changing program but considered only the latter. He found that “Career Decidedness and Optimism were positively related to academic major change, regardless of class ranking” (p. 363). “Openness” correlated positively for sophomores and negatively for juniors. Extraversion and Sense of Identity correlated positively to academic major change. Those who changed major at least once had overall higher Emotional Stability. Conscientiousness, Extraversion and Agreeableness were also significant factors at certain stages of the academic career. Students who changed majors two or more times scored higher in Self-Directed Learning and Work Drive. Optimism was also a significant factor in changing majors. Foster’s study suggests that changing fields need not be a negative experience and on the contrary, actually may reflect the student’s research, optimism, and self-directedness.

In 2018, I wrote a speculative article for *All about Mentoring*, discussing my own observations in 25 years as a mentor and questioning whether my experience reflected trends college-wide (*All About Mentoring*, # 51). During the academic year 2020-21, the college granted me a reassignment with the Center for Mentoring, Learning and Academic Innovation (CMLAI) to conduct a survey and follow-up interviews with students whose records indicated that they had changed their Area of Study (AOS) or Structured Program (SP) between the time they had matriculated



and had their academic program approved.<sup>1</sup> The goal was to gather data from across the undergraduate programs (excluding Nursing), not to analyze “migration patterns” among specific programs, but to explore the phenomenon of change and explore students’ experiences.

## Methods

The current study revisits the issue of students who change their AOS based on statistical data, survey results, and interviews with 10 students. With essential assistance from CMLAI Director Dr. Shantih Clemans and Database Specialist in Decision Support Dr. Roopa Kunapuram, I developed a proposal for a mixed-methods study involving gathering the statistical data from Banner, surveying students on the list, and conducting qualitative interviews with those who volunteered to participate. The IRB approved the proposal and started collecting data at the end of the fall 2021 term.

We began by obtaining and exploring data on the 1350 students who had recorded a substantive change of program with the Registrar’s Office between the inception of Banner in fall 2018 to March 31, 2021.<sup>2</sup> In the second stage, these students were invited to complete a survey (see

“Because abandoning an initial academic plan can be either stressful and discouraging, or neutral or largely technical, or positive--relieving and empowering to a student, it is important for faculty, staff, and administrators to understand student perspectives.”

Appendix A) the survey, at the end of which they were asked if they would like to volunteer to be interviewed. A phenomenological approach allowed for collection of richer, more detailed data on the experiences of students (Creswell, 2021). Because abandoning an initial academic plan can be either stressful and discouraging, or neutral or largely technical, or positive--relieving and empowering to a student, it is important for faculty, staff, and administrators to understand student perspectives. How do the students who change academic direction view their own experience at the college?

## Written Student Responses to Emailed Survey

First, all students who had officially changed their Area of Study from the inception of Banner in fall 2018 to the end of the fall 2021 semester were sent a 12-question survey (See Appendix A).<sup>3</sup>

The 12-question survey, with space to comment at the end, was emailed to students between the fall 2021 and spring 2022 terms. Forty-nine students responded, and of these, 13 consented to be interviewed. Ten followed through with the interview. (The survey is in Appendix A.)

Although 49 respondents do not provide a robust population for statistical analysis, the answers from this group reveal three key concepts. First, the students emphasized the importance of being able to discuss plans with a mentor. Second, some of them conducted research by reading or speaking with individuals in the field, as Bäumke, Grunschel, and Dresel (2021) found was part of their subjects' decision-making process. A third reason or change was to take advantage of different modes of study, potential to include prior learning credits, and to choose individualized or structured degree options.

Four of the students changed AOS after an initial discussion with their mentor. Seventeen stated that they made the decision during their Educational Planning course, and nine switched AOS after taking the course. Six changed fields upon returning to the college after stopping out. The largest number of respondents (15) stated that they had changed AOS because they had found a "preferable" area of study. Fourteen chose the response, "New degree path offers more personal satisfaction," while eight credited taking a course that had interested them and set them on a new path. Three chose the response that their initial choice was not as they had expected, and one respondent found a specific course in the original AOS too difficult. "Other" reasons (not specified) garnered 14 responses.

Twenty students reported that their change was "a minor adjustment," while 14 reported it as major, and 9 as "somewhere in between." Fourteen of the respondents considered leaving Empire State during their period of uncertainty about their original AOS choice. This amounts to 31%, a concerning number. Responding to the next question, "What made you decide to continue with your degree path at SUNY Empire State University?" three students cited affordability, while three more found that more of their credits would transfer into ESU's programs than into other colleges. One student replied simply, "Fellowship." An important question remains unanswered: how many students actually do leave because they are uncertain whether their current degree is right for them?

The COVID caused many changes in employment, course delivery, and personal lives, therefore one survey question asked whether the pandemic had affected students' academic choices. Forty said it had not, while five chose the response: "It

helped shape my choice,” and two reported that it had caused them to switch programs, one because it had been difficult to complete an internship in her original field. Two respondents did not answer this question.

In their written responses at the end of the survey, some students made suggestions and gave more details about their own experiences. Some offered ideas that could help prospective students with their initial AOS selection. One suggested, “An online tool like an E-Advisor may be helpful for students, one that asks questions regarding their interests to help narrow down their AOS.” Another offered, “Maybe have a program match quiz. Students could answer questions that would help them find the best major.” Another student commented on the value of taking a variety of courses, while several others stated that taking a few courses had allowed them to narrow down their interests. Another student suggested, “First year I would try to take courses that would satisfier any curiosity that you may have of certain career goals and then determine what area of study.”

Ten students reported considering including a certificate in their program. The survey asked only if they had considered a certificate, not whether they had, and decided to include one.

Several students commented on the value of completing formal or informal educational planning and seeking advice. One reflected, “I will admit that doing my own research into my career path was confusing. My mentor helped me sort out things of which I was unsure. My academic planning course then helped significantly as well.” Another wrote, “My suggestion would be to have mentors or staff available to help students find out more information about their interests. It can be intimidating trying to sort it all out on your own at first.” The importance of “communication” was emphasized by another student, and one stated that learning to explain her own goals helped her mentor to guide her to the right program. Another student commented, “Just having an open and honest communication with your mentor is truly important. Not sure about other mentors but mine is amazing and really was supportive but honest.” One student felt it should be “easier to change mentors” to find someone “aligned with the student’s interests.” “There should be evaluations for mentors!” stated another, who felt he had not had enough constructive assistance. Another student stated that she changed because she sought course offerings in her preferred mode of study that allowed for more independent and group coursework.

Sometimes, students change direction for practical reasons such as earning potential. One explained, “My original field of study was Historical Studies, but after

finding out I was pregnant with my daughter I decided to switch to Accounting. There was a better chance of finding a high paying job soon after completing my degree, and also more options for work in that field compared to a more specified field like museum curating (which was the initial plan).”

Finding a subject of personal interest motivated another student to make the opposite sort of change, from Business, Management and Economics to Historical Studies: “After speaking with a local historian and another public advocate, I changed my major. The mentality of my new mentor, in my new field of study, and of the professors that I correspond with, is always pleasant and informative. This is what I came to SUNY Empire for.” Some others selected a field related to their original choice but more closely aligned with their interests: switching from Business Administration to Human Resource Management, or from preparation for a graduate program in Special Education to foundational work toward a master’s degree in School Counseling.

Two students said they switched fields because there were not enough courses offered in their initial area of interest. For example, one student could not find enough photography courses. She expanded her degree to concentrate in Photojournalism, which might give her different employment opportunities but less training as a photographer. Another student stated that she changed because she sought course offerings in her preferred mode of study that allowed for more independent and group coursework.

Finally, one student, who began her studies in 1973 and returned because she wanted to complete a degree, stated that many of her original credits were not applied and the process has been frustrating. She persevered because finishing her degree had been a lifelong goal.

### **Student Interview Responses**

In the next phase, each student who agreed to be interviewed was contacted by email; 13 responded, and 10 ultimately were scheduled for individual 45-minute telephone or Microsoft Teams sessions to cover any issues they wished to discuss in detail. Most of our discussions were shorter than 45-minutes and focused on a point the student wanted to emphasize. Overall, the interviewees expressed positive feelings. Only one, a mid-career male, described a disappointing experience, stating that he felt he had taken “too many credits to let them go to waste” and so finished a degree he no longer felt matched his interests.

Interestingly, he felt he could not pursue his chosen field, but finished a degree in which he had more transfer credits.

The first student interviewed worked in an early childhood setting. She stated that she had begun taking courses in Humanities. When she matriculated in a program, she had an initial discussion with her mentor and learned that she could study Human Services with an Early Childhood concentration. This path appealed to her because it would allow her a choice to remain in early childhood education or to work in human services with children and families.

Another student, who had retired from military service, initially planned to study Information Technology [IT] but changed his AOS to Historical Studies for two reasons. The first was that he found he would have to take more courses in the IT field than he had realized. He covered his second reason in more detail. He found that he loved studying history, attending residences, and in particular, discussing the subject with faculty. He states that he looks forward to continuing in the field of Public History.

Another student, a woman in her twenties, had entered ESU with two associate degrees, one in Liberal Arts and another in Graphic Design. She planned to build on her graphic design experience by earning a B.S. in Marketing. She said that her grades were acceptable, but that she struggled to complete assignments. During this time, she provided home care for her terminally ill grandfather. Although this experience distracted her from her Marketing studies, she said she learned a great deal about services available for older adults and found she enjoyed making a difference for people. After stopping out for two terms, she returned as a Community and Human Services student. Her grades improved to A's and B+'s. Her mentor helped her to salvage as many credits as possible from her previous studies. She believes her business and graphic design courses will add more breadth to her degree in Human Services.

Another student, who stated that she was 27 years old, was employed full-time in a nonprofit agency. She had mulled concentrating in Social Sciences or in Interdisciplinary/Multidisciplinary Studies. She credited her mentor with helping her to choose the latter, which she feels will offer her a chance to explore questions of diversity and social issues from various academic perspectives.

Two of the students who had chosen to transfer into a structured program commented that they believe their new programs better reflect their goals and specific coursework they want to pursue.

So clearly, while students change degree programs for many reasons, the program-switchers, regardless of their primary reason, seek degrees and career paths that are intellectually and personally satisfying.

### **Mathematics Preparation Not a Significant Issue**

One concern raised in my 2018 *All About Mentoring* article was not borne out in this study: that difficulty with mathematics or technology courses would discourage students from pursuing their initial academic goal. U.S. Department of Education data show that 52% of students who initially declare a mathematics major switch within three years, which suggests that they find it either more difficult or less interesting than they had anticipated (2015). Jamieson and Fusco (2014) cite “mathematics anxiety” as a major drawback for nontraditional students. However, two recent trends—the efforts of our own Mathematics faculty to apply learning theories to developing math courses for adults (for example, Warren and the recent New York State Education Department rules encouraging all students to take some college preparatory mathematics courses—may have had positive results. Yet, since the respondents in our survey have achieved a concurred degree program, it is possible they represent the most successful students, and that fear or lack of preparation with mathematics still causes problems for some students at an earlier stage in their ESU careers.

### **Conclusions**

Our students themselves, as well as the data provided through the Banner program and Decision Support, provide rich sources of information on student choices. Each research approach in this study provides a different perspective. Statistical data offer insight into trends across the college. Program changes and enrollments can be analyzed according to age, gender, race and ethnicity identification, and location. This information should be useful to administrators in planning. Yet statistics alone can leave us with many questions about why our students make their choices. Qualitative research in the form of case studies, surveys, interviews, and focus groups can provide insights into the student experience and are worth the financial and time investment for the college.

Our respondents felt that students should be encouraged to explore areas of interest to assist them in making choices and to add breadth or a second area of specialization to their programs. Not every course has to be in the “major” or concentration. For example, one student chose to take creative writing courses as electives: “There are a lot more careers I can get with my degree along with writing my own fiction books.”

Finally, students stressed the value of the educational planning process. While “educational planning” as a course can be frustrating to some students, it can be essential for others. Several students emphasized the importance of early advising (as Sklar’s study also recommends, 2018). Their own planning often begins informally before the first registration and continues beyond the formal ending of the Educational Planning course. Students engage in such activities as planning for graduate programs, licenses, or certifications, studying changing trends in their fields, and finding ways to satisfy their intellectual curiosity. Some speak with professionals in fields that interest them.

Several keywords, “relationship,” “communication,” “fellowship,” suggested that even in distance learning, students sought a meaningful connection with others. Many student comments dealt with the helpfulness—or unhelpfulness—of the person designated as their official guide. As one student suggested, changing mentors (as in changing doctors or counselors or plumbers) should be acceptable. Snyder-Duch and Schwartz (2017) discuss the value of “relational advising” in retaining students. As the university moves more toward distance learning, its community already has a history of learning how to mentor and advise at a distance, and this rich trove can be mined and expanded as modes of learning evolve.

A final conclusion related to the time frame of choosing, refining, or changing area of study. Students cited the flexibility and choices available as reasons they chose to enroll in and remain at Empire State University. A few respondents reported finding out about a preferable academic path only *after* being at the college for some time. Whether through the website or early advising, students should be made aware of the possibilities open to them. Also, two students complained that they could not find enough courses in their area of interest. It may be important for the college to remain open to offering independent studies for motivated students, leaving mentors some flexibility to schedule them.

Individuals change through the lifespan, and so do career trends. It is important to recognize that students of all ages need to remain current. As the university has moved even further into online instruction, its community can explore the ways in which changing technologies are affecting our communication with one another and continue to develop effective channels for academic support. It is still, and always will remain an honor to be present with and sometimes guide students as they plan their academic paths.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The University offers twelve Areas of Study, as its website explains: “Rather than have a prescribed associate or bachelor’s curriculum, your degree program can be customized to focus on an area of study necessary to achieve your objectives” (2023). Each area of study features guidelines that may be fulfilled by coursework at Empire, transfer credits, examinations, or experiential learning. Each degree, with the student’s rationale essay explaining how the degree was designed, is reviewed an Academic Review Committee. When the degree program is reviewed, any questions have been resolved, and the Registrar’s Office has approved it, the program is considered to be “Concurred.” The college also offers structured programs with specific course requirements. These programs still allow for choice of electives in addition to the SUNY General Education requirements and courses required for the program.

<sup>2</sup>As stated, the Banner program allowed us to isolate the records of students who changed area of study or structured program; however, students make various kinds of changes, some of which we sought to eliminate from our study. For example, some students begin an associate or Bachelor of Arts degree but switch to an associate or Bachelor of Science, and vice-versa, simply because of the number of liberal and non-liberal credits required for each. The Banner program can sort out these students. Other AOS changes simply reflect a change of degree level. A student may complete an associate degree in General Studies and continue toward a bachelor’s degree in a more specific field, thus becoming a “Change of Program” statistic; or, too, students graduating from the undergraduate program into one of Empire State’s master’s programs will automatically be listed as having changed academic program titles when they begin their graduate work. In addition, changes in concentration titles within the same area of study were not included in the Decision Support data; these are often made at the Academic Review Committee stage, usually to reflect a more precise description of the concentration rather than a substantive change.

Upon receiving the survey, eight (8) students asked to be excluded as they wished not to participate or believed our list was inaccurate. Email communication revealed that these students either had changed AOS title when changing degree level, or had switched to a new, more structured program that was so much like their original one that they had not regarded it as a substantive change. Interestingly, however, several students who had made such a switch did regard it as an important one and chose to answer the survey. This kind of change occurred because in the period 2019-2021, several new structured programs, including Accounting, Business Administration, Addiction Studies, and Psychology, became available, and some students transferred from the more general areas of study, such as Business, Management and Economics and Human Development, to those structured programs.

Because these choices are now available to all new applicants, it will be interesting to observe transfer patterns when these new programs stabilize; however, the present study focused more closely on the students who made fundamental changes.

Furthermore, many of our students are planning for graduate study or eventual professional licensure or certification, other changes that might appear fundamental may simply be the result of further research or consultation with SUNY Empire faculty or with professionals outside the college. For example, a student seeking a path leading to secondary certification may apply initially to the undergraduate Educational Studies Program. Since secondary certification currently requires that the student complete at least 30 credit hours in the subject to be taught, some students may transfer into those arts and sciences subjects, or into Interdisciplinary/Multidisciplinary Studies, to meet entrance requirements for a master’s in teaching program. Although an extremely important decision, this change of major actually assists the student in reaching the initial goal.

While the data reveal that a significant number of Empire State University students do indeed change areas of study, the data alone do not reveal the reasons.



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## APPENDIX A—Survey Questions

Survey Questions for Research Project exploring the experiences of students who change Areas of Study or Structures Program while enrolled at SUNY Empire State University.

Research Project: Factors Influencing Empire State University Students in Changing Their Areas of Study After Initial Application

Primary Investigator: Maureen Kravec, Ph.D.  
Faculty, School of Arts and Humanities

Contact Information: Maureen.Kravec@esc.edu  
680-333-0189

Purpose of Proposed Research: Choosing an Area of Study or Structured Program is one of, if not the most important decisions students make during their college careers. Students may change AOS for a number of reasons, from discovering that a different area of study than the one chosen in the application is actually closer to the student's goals, to finding a different field or area of interest. The goal of this study is to identify the prevalence of AOS changes, as well as factors influencing students to make this decision. We hope this information will lead the college to enhance its support of students in this process.

Please answer these questions if you are a matriculated undergraduate student who has changed your Registered Area of Study during your time at Empire State University. Every student chooses an area of study. The one you were admitted under will be listed in your Student Profile. Please note that no personal identifying data will be included. Your response will be confidential. If you wish to withdraw from the study after completing the questionnaire, you may email Maureen.Kravec@esc.edu, and I will withdraw and destroy your data/

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. There is room to write comments if you would like to do so.

Here is a list of the Areas of Study and Structured Programs that SUNY Empire State University Offers [Accurate at time of Survey]:

Arts

Business, Management and Economics

Community and Human Services

Cultural Studies

Educational Studies

Historical Studies

Human Development

Interdisciplinary Studies

Labor Studies

Public Affairs

Science, Mathematics and Technology

Social Sciences

Structured Programs [Accurate at time of Survey]:

Accounting

Addiction Studies

Allied Health

Business Administration

Human Resource Management

Management

Nursing

Psychology

Security Studies

1. **What was the area of study you chose when you entered Empire State University?** (See list above.)
2. **Did you change from the area of study (AOS) or registered program on your application to another area? Yes, No.**

**If yes, go to the next question. If no, you do not need to complete this survey.**

**3. What area of study do you change to?**

**4. When during your college career did you make this change?**

- a. Before enrolling in first term of studies at ESU
- b. In initial discussions with mentor or student services.
- c. During Educational Planning/Academic Planning course.
- d. After Educational Planning/Academic Planning course
- e. Upon returning to the college after some time away.
- f. Unsure/I do not know.
- g. Other (please list/please describe).

**5. What factors or circumstances contributed to your decision to change your area of study?**

- a. Discovered that there was a preferable option to the one I chose when I applied.
- b. Found I enjoyed a course or courses and developed a new interest
- c. Found the AOS I originally chose was not what I expected it to be.
- d. Found one or more courses in original AOS to be too difficult/not engaging
- e. Employment opportunity in new AOS arose.
- f. Funding was available for new AOS but not for original one.
- g. Opportunity to use more transfer credits in new AOS.
- h. Chance to learn new things in new AOS.
- i. Opportunity to use prior learning in the new AOS.
- j. New degree path offers more personal satisfaction
- k. New AOS allows me to serve others.my community.
- l. New AOS holds promise of higher pay than original one.
- m. Unsure/I do not know.
- n. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Were any of the following helpful to you in deciding to change your Area of Study (AOS)?**

- a. Written materials provided by the college
- b. Discussion with mentor or other faculty/staff
- c. Advice from employer or someone in the field
- d. Your own research
- e. Other

**7. Has the COVID-19 epidemic affected your choice of academic program or ability to complete the required or desired coursework:**

- a. Yes. It helped shape my choice of an area of study.
- b. Yes, it made me decide to witch away from my original area of study.
- c. No.

**8. How would you characterize the nature of your change to a new area of study area of study?**

- a. A minor adjustment that gave me a more precise path to my goal.
- b. A significant change in direction based on interest or career.
- c. Somewhere between.

**9. Are you currently serving in the armed forces, or are you a veteran?**

**10. What was your level of education before you entered Empire State University?**

- a. GED or other equivalency degree
- b. High school diploma.
- c. Some college or postsecondary training but no degree

- d. Associate degree
- e. Bachelor's degree or higher in another field

**11. Did you consider incorporating one of our Certificate programs into your degree?**

**12. Did your uncertainty about your original degree path cause you to consider leaving Empire State University at any point? If so, why?**

- \_\_\_ a. Dissatisfaction with original degree path
- \_\_\_ b. Confusion about degree guidelines or process
- \_\_\_ c. I did leave but returned later to pursue a different degree.

Please take this time and space to write any other comments you may have about your experience changing areas of study at SUNY Empire State University. For example, you may want to list your original area of study and the one you are now pursuing or explain in more detail why you made your particular choice.

Please include suggestions or recommendations for SUNY Empire State University to help students find the most suitable area of study.

“...we need to...spend time with the people we’re teaching. Talk with them. Listen to them. Encourage them to find their own interests and develop them, and not to push stuff on them all the time. The way we’re working now is just...not necessary, and it isn’t the way people develop intellectually.” **Nel Noddings**. Stanford University: An Oral History

## Women at Work: A Photo Essay

Karen Garner, Historical Studies



In the past academic year, I had the great opportunity to revise and teach an online course, *Women and Work in American History*. Many of the course themes and concepts resonated with the students, most of whom were ‘working women,’ juggling multiple roles, performing productive and reproductive labor, in paid and unpaid positions. In many ways they were ‘recognizable’ Empire State College students, representing the range of ages, races, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds that make up our myriad student body. They were also each unique in the ways they presented themselves and articulated their goals and dreams. And, they had made a major life decision to continue their higher education at a time when the country was reeling from the effects of the runaway COVID-19 pandemic.

As their culminating assignment for the course, I asked the students to read a photo essay compiled by Leah Nash for the *New York Times*, that was published on July 4, 2020.<sup>1</sup> In her introduction, Nash noted the new social recognition of the “value” of women’s work, as many women were employed as ‘front line’ workers, risking their own health to continue their paid jobs in the public sphere during the pandemic. Other women shifted their workplaces to their homes as some taught their school-age children and cared for their families. Photos of these women were accompanied by short personal statements, sharing their thoughts about the nature of their work and their personal motivations. I asked the students enrolled in the *Women and Work* course to take photos of themselves ‘at work’ and provide their own personal statements. I gave no further directions as to what should be included or how the photo should be staged. The submissions of eight of the forty-some students who took the class in 2020-2021 are included here. These students are not representative of their classes; instead, they each portray an individual and her self-identity. I was struck by the singularity of the specific details included in each of their responses. To me, these photos and statements express the feelings and evoke a sense of memory of a moment in our collective national history as they also capture a particular moment in an individual’s life story.



***Arielle Bertozzi, single homeowner, landlord, logistics coordinator at a machine factory, care giver for mother and grandparents. 29 years old.***

As a single female who is a homeowner and a landlord, I see and hear stigmas about women all the time. I will call for estimates and get calls back asking for Mr. Bertozzi. At my place of work, even though I am just as busy as all the other men, I am frequently asked to order coffee or be in charge of the "keep the clean office team." There are no men in the office that believe it is a task of a male to do. After work, I care for my mother and grandparents as needed, cooking and cleaning, sometimes giving medications. On top of all of this, I am going to school to finish my bachelor's degree. Some days I am drained and burnt out-, almost depressed- but I know I am valued and needed, so I keep going. I am in school for me to do something to better myself.

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***Jennifer Lydon is a Guidance Secretary in a Middle/High School who has been there since 2019. She works two jobs, has two kids at home and is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in Early Education***

There are moments when I question why I decided to take on so many things at once, at this point in my life. I keep reminding myself that I am doing this not only for me, but for my kids. I want to improve myself and feel more financially independent because I can. My grandmother's legacy of teaching others to persevere is what gives me that extra boost I need at those questionable moments.

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*Christina Luciano*

I started with NYCT as a Trackworker over 21yrs ago and three promotions later I am now a Superintendent. As a mother of two children this has not been easy, but nothing in my life has been easy and failure has never been an option. I make sure the train stays on the track and then go home and make dinner, and even with all that I have accomplished I am going back to school so I can get another promotion.

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***Diana Cruz is a Senior Business Relationship Manager for a large commercial bank. She has been in the banking industry for 24 years and has been working remotely since the COVID Pandemic started. She has been helping businesses survive and stay open by assisting them with SBA government loans and managing their business accounts.***

I am a single mother with two college age children living at home, working a full-time job and in college full-time myself. There were days during the pandemic I had to work fifteen hours a day and seven days a week or businesses would be closed because they could not open or afford to pay their people. I knew the money we were helping them get with the government loans was not only taking care of businesses but impacted employees and their families, we were also helping save the economy. I have been working since the age of nineteen and managing a household, children, bills, cooking cleaning, sports, church, and a small part of my day is for me. I know that in this world of gender pay gaps and unfair treatment for women at work, most women are doing the job of two or three people at a time. If we were paid for all the work, we did we would all be millionaires by now!

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*Kelly Zielinski*

This is me at my remote work and school desk. This little corner of my living room has become my whole world over the past ten months. I have learned a lot about myself this year as I am sure most of us have. When I sat down at my makeshift desk that first day of the shutdown last March, I was not only dealing with a pandemic, but I was also learning how to do my job from home. I work as an accountant at a non-profit agency. We provide emergency services to families in need as well as mental health counseling. My job gives me comfort and perspective as I know my employer is helping people during this time. I finally have found a job that feels like home. I work with a very supportive staff of mostly women. My supervisor has encouraged me to finish my bachelor's degree in hopes of eventually moving into a supervisory position in the future.

It has not been easy navigating school and a full-time job. I thought working from home would be easier, but it has blurred the lines since work and school are always in my living room. I am working a full day, then switching to schoolwork in the evening. All this while cooking, cleaning, and trying to squeeze in time to grocery shop. I've been learning to plan out my day to find time to rest and relax. Sometimes it is easy to forget that rest is just as important. This is a lesson for me and all women on setting boundaries between our careers and personal lives.

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***Katlin Darling***

For this part of the assignment, I am going to take a different approach due to the confidentiality in my classroom. I only have a few students that have photo release privileges, and I felt like it would be very risky, but I wanted to use something to show you the idea of my classroom. It is welcoming, fun, engaging, and interacting – missing: bean bag chairs. I am using my bitmoji virtual classroom as an example. I believe this example will be just as good as the real thing. I chose this exact template because it shows me in front of the classroom as if it was a digital photo. My statement that I connect with this image is, “virtual life is just the same as reality because everything looks like it would in the classroom, but we are just missing the affection and real appearance of each other.” Children today have completely changed their way of life due to the uprising of Covid-19. As we know many children went from in person to virtual for a year, if that. “The value of women’s work, both paid and unpaid, has never been more apparent than during the Coronavirus crisis” (Nash, 2020). I came to my daughter’s rescue many times because her teacher was struggling to help many children in her class. I was gifted to already know how to help her, and I was able to relieve her teacher from some of the stress she was feeling. 17 children and 2 teachers take the inevitable toll during Covid. We may not have been the actual “frontline heroes,” but emotionally we guided our children through this difficult time, uncertainty, and world changing even in our children’s lives.

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*Madeline Lais*

I have dedicated 11 years of my life to the restaurant industry, with the knowledge that the high demands of my job would likely exclude me from the opportunity to raise a family. Watching this industry crumble under the demands and restrictions of the pandemic has dramatically changed my perspective on hospitality. I think too many of us are accepting that a 70-hour work week, with limited to no benefits, is normal. Hospitality workers need to work together to shift the business model into something far more sustainable, and now is our chance.

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***Monica Bethea CPC, mother of four, grandmother of 13, works as a Bariatric Registrar Coordinator in New York.***

**“The Best WOMAN I Can Be Right Now”**

I am a strong woman! I have learned to value myself. I have nurtured, taken care of and ensured my family knows that I love all of them. Now I had to learn to love myself and know that it is alright to do something just for me. Over the past 10 years – after the kids were grown and the divorce – I had to learn to do what was right for just me. Time to look at what I needed, what I wanted to do and do it ONLY for me. I cleared my head, lost all the extra weight I had been carrying around and allowed me to be the best ME I knew was inside. When I became a Union Delegate, it was a defining moment of fulfillment for me. Each day is an opportunity to learn something new and that is what led me to enroll in SUNY Empire. There is so much more for me in this life, and I have to grab it with both hands!

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## The Emergence of the Process Improvement Committee: Technology Transfer at its Best

Julie Shaw, Social and Behavioral Sciences

John Lawless, Social and Behavioral Sciences

Pamela Enser, Registrar

Stephanie Thomas, SUNY Empire Project Management

Cynthia Burgher, User Support Services

Cindy Bates, Arts and Humanities

### Introduction to the Emergence of a New Idea

This article is an historic record. It encapsulates a particular time in the very near past that the Process Improvement Committee, now established at the college, was implemented. It is a synopsis of a panel presentation at the SUNY CIT conference (Conference on Instructional Technology) in March 2021 that shared the initiation of the PIC process at SUNY Empire. The PIC came together so quickly and smoothly that it seemed other SUNY institutions might emulate it. The title of the presentation referred to the Process Change Request (PCR) process. The committee's name has since been changed to the Process Improvement Committee (PIC). The panel topics were: 1) Origination of the concept (Julie Shaw); 2) Administrative Liaison (John Lawless and Pamela Enser); 3) Process Management Model (Stephanie Thomas); 4) Technical Implementation (Cynthia Burgher); and 5) College response (Cynthia Bates). What follows is an abbreviated version of that panel presentation. We believe that if the PIC helps our environment manage college-wide processes, it might help your process management as well. We hope you enjoy our 'presentation'! Our panel title is: Managing and Improving Processes for College-Wide Academic and Administrative Changes Using the Process Change Request (PCR) System

### How the Process Improvement Committee Emerged: Julie Shaw

Hello Everyone! Welcome to our panel presentation on the newly formed Process Improvement Committee at SUNY Empire State University. I am Julie Shaw, Professor in the Department of Psychology and Human Development at SUNY Empire State University. Because in my pre-academic life as a systems programmer at IBM, I contributed to the Endicott VM Programming Laboratory, becoming the first IBM location to gain ISO 9001 Certification in Process Management. I saw the power of process management there and brought that experience with me when I joined SUNY Empire as faculty.



## **Existing Administrative and Technical Supports for Technical Transfer of Process Management**

When SUNY Empire experienced complex administrative and technology changes with the recent onset of ESC 2.0, leading to extensive confusion and anxiety, I wondered if we could implement a similar process improvement system here. Fortunately, SUNY Empire supported this technology transfer in two important ways. First, administrative support was provided by the college-wide Climate Committee, implemented by then Academic Provost Dr. Meg Benke, to address college climate issues. The concept of the PIC was accepted and resourced there. Second, technical support was provided by the existing IT process for managing technical questions and problems, upon which a parallel structure for process suggestions could be built. These two foundations, administrative and technical, provided fertile ground for technology transfer of a process management concept from a business (IBM) to an educational institution (SUNY Empire).

## **Proposed Steps in the PIC Process**

The concept of the PIC had four steps: Capture, Prioritize and Assign, Address, and Communicate the Process Improvement suggestions.

- Capture. The process suggestion must first be expressed by the submitter as a Process Ticket and then expressed in a form addressable by the college. Having these two views on an issue is our first goal.
- Prioritize and Assign. When a process issue is captured, it is prioritized from two perspectives: the user's perspective and the college perspective.
- Address. The Process Tickets is responded to and acted upon if possible. All PIC members contribute perspectives that inform possible solutions.
- Communicate. Communication has at least two goals: 1) submitter feels satisfaction with the response; 2) those impacted are informed of any changes to their work.

## **What are the advantages of having a college-wide process improvement committee?**

- College-wide Reach. Any college employee may submit a Process Ticket and college employees may do it on behalf of students.
- Documented Process. The Business Process Model documents the current process, is changeable as needed, and provides a guide for technical implementation.

- Anonymity of Submitter (optional). Process Tickets may be public. When anonymity is desired, however, a PIC member may anonymously submit a Process Ticket for another.
- Record Retention. The PIC process keeps historical records of all Process Tickets in a designated database with associated keywords useful from different perspectives.
- Bundling. Some groups of suggestions disclose a syndrome or expose an ailment that requires attention. A periodic review of issues can be scheduled to consider their bundling.
- Communication. Suggestions are stored for ready reference for college announcements, training documents, administrative record, verification of response to faculty, professional, and support groups, and for Middle States Review.
- Familiarity of the PIC process. Because our process improvement process is parallel to our IT Tech process, it is affordable to implement and easy for college employees to learn.

### **The Role of Administrative Liaison (AL): John Lawless and Pamela Enser**

Hello, I am John Lawless, Professor of Behavioral and Social Sciences. I was Interim Vice Provost for Academic Administration when the PIC was first established. In that role, I was the first Administrative Liaison for the PIC, leading its establishment and working to see its successful implementation.



Good morning and welcome. I am Pamela Enser, Registrar at SUNY Empire State University. I currently serve as the Administrative Liaison for the PIC representing the college administration. In this role, I engage appropriate administrators, and communicate PIC information when their assistance is needed.



The Administrative Liaison serves a pivotal role on the PIC, assuring that, where possible, there is follow-through on suggestions made and issues raised. The Administrative Liaison:

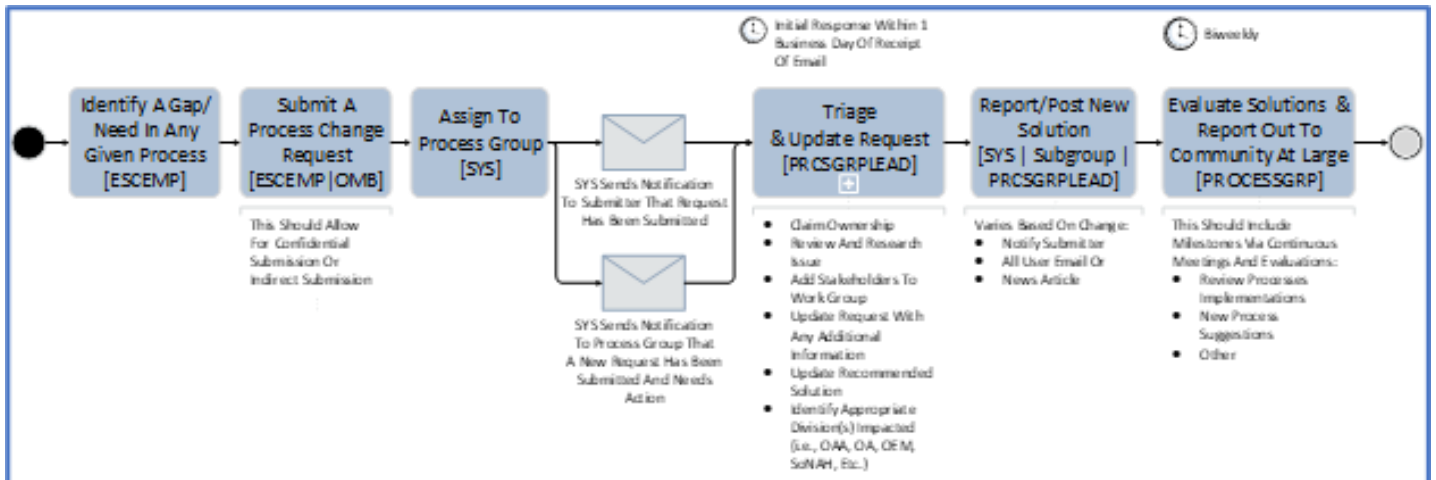
- Provides a holistic view of college processes across what can be silos within the college, frequently connecting different perspectives: Registrar, Office of Academic Affairs, Information Technology, Support Staff, Professional Employees and Faculty
- Establishes effective feedback loops with administration and college processes. Changes made to all levels of process, such as those suggested through PIC, must align with current priorities – or priorities to be realigned with what is learned through PIC suggestions.
- Links PIC work with available resources connecting college priorities to Process Tickets, highlighting them with administration, and dedicating resources to address them. PIC issues are prioritized across administrative offices, integrating possibly disparate resources with opportunities, while reducing possible duplication of efforts.
- Bring administrative attention to issues that would modify college priorities by recognizing and prioritizing process suggestions that lead to improvements, identifying key personnel whose involvement enables solutions and who can dedicate time to address a concern.

### **Building the Business Process Model: Stephanie Thomas**



Thank you for joining us today. My name is Stephanie Thomas. As Business Process Manager for SUNY Empire, I facilitated development of the PIC process, documenting the flow from how suggestions are submitted to how we would communicate results to the college community. Because I loved this work and this team and saw the value of the PIC for the college, I stepped in as PIC Project Manager. If this were a baseball game, I came to set up the field and stayed for all nine innings.

Using a 'Team Hands-On Approach,' I employed the Business Process Modeling (BPM) method to document process roles, steps, and responsibilities to create a blueprint for the Instructional Technology (IT) team. We replicated the current IT Tech Ticket process when possible.



The BPM process chart above shows the six essential steps in the Process Improvement Process: Identify a Gap/Need; Submit a Process Ticket; Assign a Process Group to review; Triage and Address; Report/Post Results; Evaluate Solutions and Report to Community. Note how close this process flow is to the initial vision.

1. Identify a Gap/Need. This PIC process starts when a college employee identifies a gap or need in a current process and/or a suggestion for change to existing processes.
2. Submit a Process Change Request. The Process Ticket online form is submitted. The employee can submit the request or approach a PIC team member to submit it anonymously.
3. Assign to a Process Group. Once submitted, the system refers it to the PIC team member managing Process Tickets that month (there are 12 PIC team members, one for each month).
4. Triage (Prioritize) and Follow up. PIC responses to the PT are offered to the submitter as quickly and as transparently as possible. A PT can immediately be enacted when: its implementation exists but needs better documentation; it uses available technology; it is a rich idea that will positively impact many employees, and/or it fits administrative priorities. A PT cannot be enacted when: suggested implementation requires retiring technologies; it requires high resources for small gain; it will be bundled and addressed in a group of associated issues; or it is postponed until future technologies are introduced.
5. Report/Post a Solution. Once a response is determined, it is added to the database, available for reporting out via the many communication vehicles used by the PIC.

6. Evaluate the Solution and Report out. Evaluation of solutions are made at periodic meetings (based on need) as part of a meta-process for evaluating college-wide processes as well as evaluating the effectiveness of the PIC. Over time, statistics will be gathered as well.

The steps above, with contributions from all PIC team members, capture the PIC process as now envisioned, As the need for changes to this process emerges, the BPM tool can be updated.

### **Access to the PIC Website through the MYESU button**

Because a valuable process is a useful process, the PIC process is available to college employees via the Process Improvement Committee button on the MYESU page. This leads to the PIC website that provides: an overview of the PIC process; a button to send a Process Ticket (PT); a list of PIC members (who can be contacted for anonymous PTs); and FAC (Frequently Asked Questions). Send a Process Ticket if you have ways to improve the website!

### **Instructional Technology Implementation: Cynthia Burgher**



Good morning. I am Cynthia Burgher, Director of User Technical Support Services SUNY Empire. In this role, I provided technical guidance to implement the BPM documented process into a fully effective technical solution. I found this work to be engaging, while enhancing my understanding of the business practices of the college from varied perspectives.

The comprehensive BPM model for the proposed PIC demonstrated close alignment with the existing IT service management framework. Consequently, implementing the PIC process with an ITS solution went smoothly.

- Established Systems and Resources. Established ITS systems, particularly ServiceNow, were used to implement the PIC process. Resources required were also in-house: ServiceNow developers and analysts; PIC members, Project Manager (BPM), and Website support.
- Working Licenses. The college already had licenses for the applications that would parallel the ITS Incident Management process. The annual licensing cost for the PIC was ~ \$5000/year with future costs of ~\$500/year per new PIC member.
- Minimal Costs for Maximal Benefit. Because the cost of implementation of the PIC in ServiceNow was low in relation to its anticipated benefit, the college CIO absorbed the licensing costs for the PIC

as part of the ITS initiatives of return on investment from our enterprise tools. We cloned a version of the ITS incident management function now in use with the college community. Because it was a clone, we maintained advantages of the key features of the Service Now platform: a robust reporting capability; ability to build an extensive knowledge base of articles and to identify trends; capacity to communicate and document information in a permanent single source. A future state would allow for implementing automated surveys to assess the impact of the committee.

- Familiar and Flexible User Interfaces: Process Ticket and Dashboard. Process tickets for the PIC used familiar interfaces for the end user, including notifications and dashboards. Minimal training was required for both staff and users. Over time, we developed a real-time dashboard so the PIC can monitor and interact with all ticket activity. The Process Ticket form captures key information using form variables that enhance reporting and identify trends. Communication and interaction between committee members, customers and other staff assigned to the ticket are possible allowing for cross collaboration on a ticket.

The technical implementation of the Process Improvement Committee process was a success story. It was established in 1 ½ years from conception to release with 8 months of that time for training for PIC readiness. This is a story worth sharing!

### **A View from Our Customers: Cindy Bates**



Good Morning! My name is Cindy Bates, and I am a faculty member in the School of Arts and Humanities. I teach primarily theatre and film courses, and I also work as a theater director. When I was co-chair of our Faculty Conference, I joined the efforts of developing the PIC because I had seen and heard first-hand how simultaneous structural, administrative, and technological changes had negatively impacted college morale. Developing the PIC ticketing system seemed like an excellent way to give agency to college employees who want to make our systems work better.

My role on this panel is to share a few examples about how the PIC has handled some process improvement suggestions. Creative, grounded, and useful ideas have come from our support staff, professional employees, and faculty alike. While most suggestions apply to employee processes, our work ultimately supports students by helping us give them the best college experience possible.

Example 1: Archiving PLA (Prior Learning Assessment) Essays. As “the SUNY School for Adult Learners,” many of our students are attracted to earning college level credit for knowledge gained outside the classroom. This process is called Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), and it involves students writing an essay about their knowledge in any given area and gathering any supporting documentation into an application. Sometimes students start a PLA but then decide for any number of reasons not to finish it at that time. One Process Improvement Ticket suggested that unfinished PLA applications be placed in an “archive” in our PLA tool, so they are readily available if and when the student and mentor are ready to return to them. Mentors work with many students and can end up with long lists of unfinished PLA applications. Storing the unfinished PLAs in a separate place in the PLA tool makes the PLA process more effective for our students – and for our mentors who support them.

Example 2: Implementing Digital Signatures for College/Student Forms. Another process improvement suggestion was to create a college-wide digital signature process for all forms. During their education with us, students may have to sign many forms, such as those for disclaimers, adding/dropping a course, or financial interactions. Signing these forms was less problematic when students had direct contact with personnel at college locations. But the advent of COVID as well as the trend towards serving students at a distance changed all of that. The idea for digitally signed forms was immediately seen as useful and implementable.

### **Closing Points**

What we really want to drive home is our belief that the PIC serves our students. We strive for continuous improvement of the PIC even as we seek continuous improvement of the college. Educating our community to the advantages of the PIC is a gradual process but it is happening naturally as process issues are resolved and process initiatives are enabled. With time, the PIC process will become even more effective in serving our students with excellence.

Thank you for being here. It has been exciting for us to share a SUNY Empire college initiative that may be useful to you as well.

### **Who are the Members of the PIC?**

Important to the success of the PIC is that its members include representation from diverse regions and college roles (support, professional, faculty, and administration) so that as many voices can contribute to an understanding of a process issue as possible. Each member of the PIC team has made a difference in the successful outcome of this project. Alphabetically the team has included the

following: Teal Abel, Cynthia Bates Cynthia Berger, Edward Cage, Filomena Cartwright, Pamela Enser, Cynthia Flynn (now retired), Lisa Johnson, Thomas Kerr, John Lawless, Sarah McMichael, Julie Milner, Robin Oliver, Ed Peck, Connie Rodriguez, Julie Shaw, Stephanie Thomas, and Laura Wait.

### **Viewing History: How is it Useful?**

Did you enjoy this (quite) edited version of our presentation? It was helpful for those of us actively involved with the PIC to take this time to reflect upon, and communicate about, our roles in its establishment. Altogether it flowed as smoothly as could be imagined, as if orchestrated by our shared vision. Each aspect of implementation of the PIC was strong: the need (the college), the vision (Julie), the administrative support (John and Pam), the process documentation (Stephanie), the technical implementation (Cynthia), and the customer communication (Cindy).

This introduction sets the foundation for a useful and powerful tool for the good of the college. Of interest will be follow up articles about how the PIC has improved, expanded, and matured. New authors will share new directions – some of which could be anticipated, and some of which will likely surprise us.

“We do live in uncertain and unsettling times, but one can imagine all sorts of responses, and we have been taking—and have been led to take--those that are fear-based, inhuman, less than noble. We yearn for more and as a society deserve better.” **Mike Rose**, *Why School?*

## Isolation Series

Renee O'Brien, Arts and Humanities



From *Isolation Series*, 2020, Digital Zone Plate Photograph

### About Isolation Series

This work is part of an alternative photographic process. In 2004, I had some images in *ALL ABOUT MENTORING*. That was done in film. I moved into using a digital camera about 10 years ago; and I converted my digital camera into a digital pinhole.

These were all long exposures—sometimes the lens is open for 30 seconds; sometimes a minute. I adjust the shutter-speed waiting for the light to create the image on a light sensitive surface; it's very much like a drawing process.

The camera sits on a surface; I don't hold it. It is on the table. The table is the tripod.

These photos relate to an era in photography—an era that reflects my sensibility. The photo is a painting on a surface.





The ISOLATION Series is a digital zone plate project that I started during the first spring of the COVID pandemic (2020). Isolated in my studio, I documented my sheltered world filled with paraphernalia, some useful, others memorable and a few seemingly useless. It was a meditative experience paralleling the photographic process.





I was in a studio on my own during COVID. I was watching the world outside while in my living space. These masks and manikins were my company.



The zone plate is a piece of transparent glass inscribed with concentric opaque circles. Making photos with a lensless camera fitted with a zone plate body cap is a slow, intuitive process that is both contemplative and serendipitous. The resultant images have a glowing, soft-focus look and an impressionist, painterly aesthetic that harkens back to the 19th century Pictorialists who bantered about the way one experiences the world and the relationship between perception and reality.



Some of the objects around me are my art supplies--part of my creative life. And then the books; I call myself an artist-educator-photographer. These are my materials.



I looked out the window. At one point, the WIFI company had to come; another time I was working on my table and drawing and looking through a window to the world.





This work is part of an alternative photographic process. In 2004, I had some images in *All About Mentoring*. Those images were done in film using a digital camera about 10 years ago. I converted my digital camera into a digital pinhole.

My camera was part of my world. It was with me. It was my partner in the experience of looking around while I was isolated in COVID.

### **About The Artist: Dr. Renee O'Brien**

Dr. Renee O'Brien, artist-photographer-educator, is Professor of Photography and Arts, Media & Culture Division Chair at SUNY Adirondack, Queensbury NY and mentor/adjunct instructor for SUNY Empire State University, Saratoga Springs NY. Beginning at Empire State's Center for Distance Learning, Dr. O'Brien has advised a host of graduates, developed an array of arts courses, and continues as facilitator and instructor for courses in the School of Undergraduate Studies and Division of Arts & Humanities. In 2018, Renee O'Brien was inducted into the National Association of Women Artists (NAWA), the oldest women's fine art organization in the country.

Dr. O'Brien completed her Ph.D. at New York University and published her dissertation, *The Post-Romantic Vision of Contemporary Pinhole Photographers*. During this time, she experimented with alternative photography techniques, hand-made cardboard pinhole cameras, and film cameras fitted with a brass pinhole. Later she made the transition from analog to digital and fitted the body of a digital SLR with a digital zone plate body cap.

## The Art of Business

Elaine Handley, Faculty Emerita



*In May 2001, mentor emerita Elaine Handley offered these words at the graduation recognition celebration of students who had completed their studies in Empire State University's FORUM program. FORUM (which had its start in the mid-1980s) welcomed managers from a wide array of companies to ESU to earn their degrees using a weekend residency model (three/term) complemented by guided independent studies and individualized degree programs. Thanks to Elaine Handley for offering us this "Found Thing."*

Congratulations. You now possess a liberal arts degree. Machines may speed up production, systems reengineering may let things run with fewer handlers, but our burgeoning information age ultimately depends on certain uniquely human

capacities: creativity, communication, and judgment. By virtue of your liberal arts education, you are now credentialed in all three.

"Communication is the crux of the Empire State College model of mentoring. It is through frank exchanges between you and your mentor that you were able to establish your academic needs and goals."

Creativity brings together ideas or concepts that otherwise might not have found one another. The FORUM thrives on an unusual combination of approaches and juxtapositions which demands creative insights. FORUM brings together not just students and teachers, but

students and students and teachers and teachers. Faculty and students learn mutually from each other as professionals, as adults.

Communication is the crux of the Empire State College model of mentoring. It is through frank exchanges between you and your mentor that you were able to establish your academic needs and goals—which evolved into your degree plan and rationale. Emphasis on the tools of communication was integral to your academic experience and success—through your written work and presentations you demonstrated your learning and honed your communication skills. You challenged the faculty to articulate their knowledge and fine tune their communication skills.

Judgement is the result of reflection and bringing perspective to a situation. This is perhaps one of the ultimate goals of a liberal education-- not to train you—but to prepare you to think carefully and creatively. Thinking outside the box is one of the most valuable skills a businessperson can have in a fast-paced global economy. Bringing together a wide range of considerations—so you will think about more things than just the bottom line, but social, ethical, environmental, political issues that affect business, which affect our culture and the global economy.

Integrating creativity, communication and judgement is what you struggled to do as you designed your degree plans and wrote your “rationales.” When liberal arts are mentioned, people tend to think of the arts and the humanities. However, the better way to look at is that in the same way that medicine is a science and an art, business is both a science and an art. Your job training prepares you for the science of business, the studies you took in FORUM prepared you for the art of business by providing you with the theory and skills to look beyond the mechanics of work to find the meaning in your work, in the endeavors of your company to gain an in-depth understanding of our your work and the work of your corporation its influence and impact on the local and global community.

“Although writers and scholars have often looked at the working class, they have generally focused on the values such workers exhibit rather than on the thought their work requires—a subtle but pervasive omission. Our cultural iconography promotes the muscled arm, sleeve rolled tight against biceps, but no brightness behind the eye, no image that links hand and brain.”

**Mike Rose**, “Blue Collar Brilliance”



## A Visual Journey of Knowledge: Using New Tools to Enhance Learning for Students—A Student’s and a Mentor’s Perspective

Michele Paterson, SUNY Empire Class of 2022

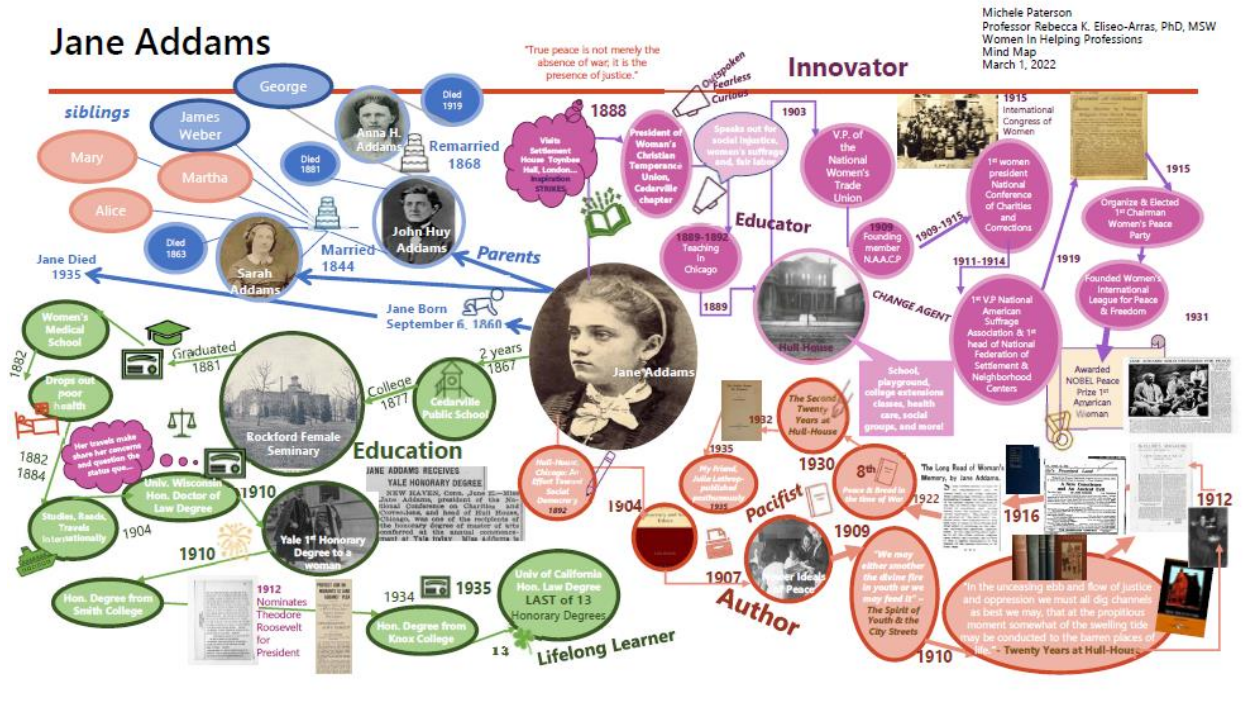
Rebecca Eliseo-Arras, Human Services



### **A Student Perspective** **Michele Paterson**

During my studies at SUNY Empire State University, I have learned more about what type of learning environment I thrive in. I get excited to learn more about subjects when the professor requires their student to share their knowledge in nontraditional ways. Creating presentations, debating, challenging information, and designing programs are some of my fondest projects as a student at SUNY Empire. Although written assignments can be a useful part of the study, it was refreshing to have a professor who required their students to present information acquired in the term in a new format, using a mind map. Although I had some experience using mind maps as a work and creative tool, I had never used one to represent my knowledge base in an academic setting.

When I was in my final terms of undergraduate study at SUNY Empire, I found myself faced with creating a visual map of an influential social work leader as part of the curriculum. The project required the mind map to illustrate the individual’s background, achievements, and their impact on society. Before starting, I did some additional research on how to use a mind map in an academic setting, quickly realizing there is no set format, and I could have a lot of fun while learning more about my topic. My goal for the project was to use the visual map as a graphic representation of my learned knowledge on the subject without having to author a lengthy paper. In a sense, I could present my topic without being physically present in a new, thought provoking, and creative way.



**Figure 1. Mind Map created by Michele Paterson**

My first step was to decide in which program I would design the map. I designed the program in Microsoft Publisher since it was a program supported by the university. As an avid user, I could easily embed links and convert them to a pdf format if needed. Next, while deciding who to research, I selected a few individuals and did some brief online research to see how much information I could collect. The areas I focused on were life history/information, education, work, and accomplishments. I used only primary sources since the individuals being researched were historically relevant, focusing on published journals, articles, websites, and books highlighting their achievements. Quickly, I realized some individuals would offer more primary sources than others and narrowed my choices to my final one.

After selecting my final topic, I then gathered information regarding their personal history, family, individual interests, academic accomplishments, publications, work, and major accomplishments. I created a timeline, listing sources and general information. Once I gathered enough material, I looked for themes in the research and decided which areas I wanted to highlight on the map. The four areas I chose for my project were personal life/family, professional accomplishments, and publications. I then sorted my information into subcategories to allow for an easy design process.



The mind map I designed used four complementary colors typically associated with the fall season (green, purple, orange, and blue). The colors would reflect each theme and subsection and were visually appealing to me. I used blue to represent personal, green for educational accomplishments, orange for publications and purple for innovations and societal achievements. To illustrate the direction of information, and flow of time, I used arrows with years and dates that connected each item highlighted in circles of all sizes. Some circles included pictures or graphics while others included text from primary sources with embedded links to illustrate each subsection. The more I worked on the project, the more excited I became to use this tool to share my knowledge with the class and professor. Although I could have authored a lengthy paper to share my learned knowledge, it would not be as visually appealing or interesting to read as my visual map.

To highlight certain accomplishments or milestones, I used bold text to draw the audience's attention. I used the same font throughout the project to make the overall look more appealing and easier to read. I was mindful of the information I included and kept the text short. Since I had embedded information, my professor could see an obscure article about the topic included from the Library of Congress or pictures representing the person's life. This also illustrated the time, work, and preparation that a student put into their work. My professor was able to visually see a representation of my knowledge, my understanding of the assignment, and my ability to present information without authoring a traditional paper.

"I hope more instructors will challenge their students to present their knowledge in new, innovative, and non-traditional ways."

I hope more instructors will challenge their students to present their knowledge in new, innovative, and non-traditional ways. Since the pandemic, I have opted to take more classes remotely and can feel disconnected from the classroom experience. However, this project brought me back into the classroom without having to present my information in person. I could take the audience on a journey through my topic's life without having to be in front of the class, in the room, or present when they reviewed the information. This project reminded me of the importance of remembering we all learn, absorb, and disseminate information differently. Ensuring students have new, innovative, and fun ways to share their knowledge with professors is vital to our success as students and important as the world

continues to recognize and embrace neurodiversity among students and staff. This can not only excite students but current, and future educators as well.

## **A Faculty Perspective**

### **Rebecca Eliseo-Arras**

One of my favorite courses to teach is Women in the Helping Professions. It is rooted in the history of social work, human services, and the women who were the major influencers of the professions. Women such as Jane Addams, Ida B. Wells, Clara Barton, and Susan B. Anthony all contributed to the multiple facets that make up Social Work, from the clinical work we do, to the agency level research and evaluation, to the social justice initiatives we advocate for and take part in. Because this course is often taught in an independent study format, I wanted to experiment with more creative learning activities to engage students and encourage them to use their imagination in terms of presenting the material.

I came across this idea of a Visual Map in the Fall of 2018 when I was searching for assignments to add to this course. At the time, it seemed rather straight forward: Students would select a person to highlight and then present information about that individual in a visual way either through pictures, newspaper clips, or drawings. What I later learned is that every single piece and facet of what goes into the visual map is purposeful right down to the font style and colors.

Given that students are only permitted to display their information on one page, they learned that they must be judicious and pragmatic about what goes into their visual map. Only the most important and intriguing facts and information will make the cut. Students are required to include a brief background about the person they have selected, major contributions to the field, some interesting facts about that individual and how those facts relate to their work, and their resulting influence on the fields of social work and human services.

With each successive offering of this course and reviewing completed Visual Map assignments, I have been able to refine the assignment with more explicit instructions. Additionally, previous students gave me permission to share their work with future students of the course so that they could see the finished product. This helped students visualize the outcome of the assignment and helped in their development of their own piece. Students, including Michele, have reported that this assignment aided in their understanding of the influential person they selected but also in the fields of social work and human services overall. They were able to

better comprehend these fields as well as develop a better understanding of the evolution of the field and treatment modalities through the lens of the notable figure they studied. Michele was gracious enough to provide her visual map as an example of the final product.

I would encourage faculty to explore using ideas such as this to increase creativity, connection to the course topic, and student confidence in their abilities to master the course content. Students in my courses have reported enjoying this assignment, being able to flex their creative skills, and really gaining a more thorough understanding of the topic.

“Why... do we recognize an obligation to care?...In the ethic of care we accept our obligation because we value the relatedness of natural caring...When we care, we must employ reasoning to decide what to do and how best to do it ...But reason is not what motivates us. It is feeling with and for the other that motivates us in natural caring. In ethical caring, this feeling is subdued, and so it must be augmented by a feeling for our own ethical selves.”

**Nel Noddings** (2002) *Educating moral people*

## Developing Intensive (Accelerated) Courses

Lynette Stewart, Human Services



Scott and Conrad (1992) allude to Harvard, summer of 1869, as the seminal break from conventional length courses in higher education with the experimentation of summer intensive (non-credit) courses. Accelerated learning sessions subsequently were extended to include “interim” sessions during between-semester breaks. Johns Hopkins and University of Chicago would soon follow, marking the beginning of a paradigm shift in adult education. Corporate training specialists introduced to the U.S. the concept of accelerated learning in the 1970s, borrowing from Bulgarian psychologist George Lozanov. Lozanov challenged prevailing pedagogical and cognitive assumptions in a study of 60 English students, using a holistic, multi-sensory approach in a shorter timeframe (Richards & Rogers, 2001). Referring to his method as “deguggestopedia,” Lozanov sought to tap into students’ ability to learn a second language through positive suggestion. Although highly criticized, the 20th century gave way to pedagogical innovations in course length, including the emergence of Suggestive Accelerated Learning and Teaching (SALT). Integrating methods such as relaxation, music, and guided imagery, SALT techniques are practiced in military training, corporate training, and adult education programs with mixed results (Dipamo & Job, 1990). SALT and several other accelerated learning theories developed out of a swelling area of research on adult learning (andragogy) and adult identity theories. It is within this context that I openly invite an ongoing discourse on accelerated study in this increasingly fast-paced learning landscape of higher education.

Accelerated courses, sometimes called intensive, abbreviated, short-term, concentrated, or compressed courses, are gaining popularity across higher education, particularly as institutions face mounting enrollment and economic challenges and student demands for a more flexible, briefer, and affordable learning experience. Many of the suggestions below can be applied to full-term classes of any modality and across disciplines. Please take from this what is most valuable and applicable to your courses, teaching style, and understanding of the needs of your students. This is a dynamic resource, intended to respond to changes in higher education policies, practices and technologies, as well as innovative insights from new research, your experiences, and the experiences of our students.

Contributors to this article include academic support personnel, librarians and educational technologists at SUNY Empire State University who were interviewed about their professional insights on the distinction between distinct types of shortened learning modalities and the type of courses best suited for accelerated learning and abbreviated courses. I also discuss the student characteristics that have been found to facilitate ideal student outcomes in abbreviated courses. Finally, I offer tips for designing abbreviated courses, and the hope of a successful transition from traditional-length courses to rich abbreviated classes, where appropriate.

## **Definitions and Distinctions**

Contemporary literature on accelerated courses centers on two aspects of the teaching and learning experience – time and teaching methods. Accelerated courses refer to classes delivered within a shorter timeframe than traditional or typically timed courses (Gordon, 1989). Traditional courses in the U.S. must meet instructional contact hours as defined by the Carnegie Unit and the Department of Education -15 weeks in the course, three hours per class per week, resulting in 45 hours of class time per course. There is little consensus on what exact timeframe constitutes an accelerated term and the terms accelerated, abbreviated and intensive are often used interchangeably in the literature, delineating a shorter time engaged in structured learning during a term, semester, or quarter. Accelerated courses can range from four to 14 weeks in a term, with a wide array of time-on-task hours per week and total hours per term.

Another aspect of accelerated learning involves approaches to teaching and learning methods that emphasizes active, holistic learner-driven approaches meant to maximize depth over breadth of knowledge. Common strategies found to facilitate this level of higher order thinking are discussed below. The Center for Accelerated Learning (CAL) emphasizes the learning as creation, and not consumption, with students as co-creators of new knowledge. The CAL highlights the role of the instructors as facilitator of learning, delivering content as a supplement to the “learners’ process of discovery and creation.”

Compressed courses have been flippantly referred to as "McEducation" and "Drive-Thru U" for their presumed substandard rigor and lesser quality when compared to traditional length courses (Wlodkowski, 2003). Many have concerns about the (lack of) investment of time and effort spent on coursework inside and outside of the “compressed classroom” (Wayland, Chandler, & Wayland, 2000), despite empirical evidence that student learning has been found to be comparable full semester

courses (Daniel, 2000). For example, graduate instructors and administrators have conveyed a hesitation in offering graduate courses during shortened periods of time because graduate programs require more depth of engagement with course content (Barclay, 1990). Compressed courses are often criticized for lacking academic rigor - sacrificing depth for breadth (Kretovics, Crowe & Hyunn, 2005).

Yet, research has begun to explore course-, instructor- and student-level characteristics that put compressed-timed courses on par with traditional-length courses in terms of student outcomes such as long-term knowledge retention (Daniel, 2000). Research using random sampling, pre- and post-test measures, and summative, performance-based measures of proficiency in content such as final exam scores (instead of student self-reports) have found the learning to be comparable - sometimes superior - in the accelerated courses when compared to traditional courses (Caskey, 1994). Others have criticized the methods used in initial studies, noting design flaws in early studies (Scott & Conrad, 1992). Thus, faculty at institutions where time-compressed courses are new or controversial have reported an awareness of and concern for colleague disapproval and criticism, along with limited administrative support.

### Course Length and Academic Performance

“Research has begun to explore course-, instructor- and student-level characteristics that put compressed-timed courses on par with traditional-length courses in terms of student outcomes .....

A growing number of scholars have given attention to the impact of course length (number of days/hours in a course) on student learning. Spurling (2001) examined the relationship between intensity of study, defined as more hours per week of class within a subject matter area, and the percent of students passing English, mathematics, and English as a Second Language. They have found that

students in the condensed/accelerated format have significantly *higher* pass rates than students in the traditional format. (Important to note: this study does not control student differences in ability, age, etc.) Geltner and Logan (2000) at Santa Monica College have found that session length is related to success. When students take similar courses in shorter time periods, they have increased success. Despite these findings, not all courses are suited for shortened terms. Craig and Kohl (2014) note that before enlisting students in accelerated course, institutions and instructors need a reliable way to assess the “competencies required for learning (knowledge, skills, behavior, and mind-set) and the proficiency levels required

(novice, competent, experienced, expert)” (pg. 11). While many instructors find teaching compressed courses a positive and rewarding experience (Johnson, 2015), many encounter challenges to teaching in this context. Faculty who are accustomed to traditional classroom-based teaching have mentioned increased professional isolation and marginalization as many institutions hold compressed courses during weekend or evening hours, or online - outside of the rhythm of typical campus life.

### **Designing Accelerated Courses**

Instructional design and delivery play essential roles in the success of compressed courses for both instructors and students. The astute instructor does not take assignment selection lightly. Research has revealed *time* as the chief barrier to reforming courses (Henderson et al., 2011). For this reason, integrating compressed courses into programs goes well beyond just designing shortened classes. Institutional leaders need to consider offering faculty a trade-off for teaching in this format, such as a reduction in teaching load, service activities, and recognition for course revisions during promotion and tenure reviews (Holzweiss, Polnick & Lunenburg, 2019). I offer a brief rundown derived from the condensed course literature and our specialists, including tips, cautions, opportunities, and recommendations for designing abridged courses.

### **Reading: The Silent Killer**

Educators often assume that writing is what hinders most students as they progress through college-level courses. While writing can be a challenge for many students, reading can also be the obstacle that discourages and undermines intellectual growth and academic progress. Reading speed and comprehension can be a hindrance when students are asked to consume a substantial amount of reading material in less time. In shortened courses, reading supports can be introduced early in the learning process to ensure that students are prepared for subsequent assignments that will later require content organization and comprehension skills. Assignments such as dialectical journaling can help students analyze reading material through a reflective conversation with oneself about the material and are effective tools for increasing reading comprehension, analysis, and critical questioning by teaching students how to follow their own thoughts while they are reading. The integration of literacy tutorials, webinars, and brief tips on reading and applying complex in assignments can help students at various stages of literacy improve their ability to read academic material more critically, efficiently, and effectively.

## **Scaffolding Assignments**

In abbreviated courses, I recommend that instructors break complex or multi-component courses down into its parts, with established deadlines and learning goals for each part. Scaffolding, sometimes called 'chunking,' is a temporal method that breaks down larger assignments into smaller elements that are completed at varying points during the term. For example, a term paper may be broken down into a thesis assignment, an annotated bibliography, and a final paper. Offering feedback on the thesis allows the instructor to guide the student on the feasibility of the final paper, offer recommendations for research or literature to explore, and/or correct errors in understanding or assumptions about the topic. The annotated bibliography can garner comments on the relevant and/or quality of the resources that will be used in the final paper. Careful sequencing of each component involves ordering the elements in a way that overtime supports the development of specific knowledge or skills (e.g., student learning outcomes). This pedagogical approach promotes deep learning (Green & Peterson 2013) and thoughtfully considers the learners' current level of knowledge and skills in assignment design and assessments (Gazza & Hunker, 2012). In abbreviated courses, students can receive and integrate instructor feedback, as well as self-reflect on their learning across the term. Difficulties can arise in abbreviated courses when students miss required element of multi-part assignments or become overwhelmed with or confused by the various elements and stall, which can become a barrier in abbreviated/accelerated courses. To tackle this problem, faculty can integrate the use checklists and/or rubrics that specifies the expectations for each component, including learning goals, formatting requirements, etc. Rubrics can be used to explicitly link assignments to overall course learning objectives to ensure student understanding of how each element supports their overarching intellectual progress in the study.

## **Abbreviated Skill-based Courses**

Skill-based courses center around the development of specific tasks or skills often linked to careers or industries. Higher education has been increasingly responsive to industry's call for a better prepared and skilled workforce by developing skill-centric programming that aligns with key economic sector needs. For example, data entry, interviewing, coding, and welding are skills. Further, the pandemic imposed added pressure on the economy, with businesses prioritizing the jobs and skills key to their survival during a time of economic uncertainty. Similarly, competency-based learning involves focused and intentional attention to a precise set of skills, attributes, and knowledge, typically captured in learning outcomes. Skills and



competencies differ in that competencies entail learning how to apply new skills and knowledge, especially across diverse context. Both pedagogical approaches can be a useful in shorted courses as they highlight and target a narrow content focus.

Skill-centric pedagogy requires iterative cycles of practice and feedback. In the abbreviated timeline, consistent iterative feedback and revisions can be demanding for both faculty and students. Likewise, project -based courses are difficult, as they often require complex scaffolding of multiple tasks (exploring literature, locating resources, developing papers, etc.). This is the case, for example, in a writing course with multiple modes of writing or multiple writing iterations that are time-consuming and dependent on other's (student or instructor) work pace. One way to overcome this reality in accelerated terms is through well thought out prerequisite foundational knowledge/skill requirements. This approach allows students to 'hit the ground running' with a level of familiarity with the courses' content. Turner, Bone and Ashton (2018) found that experiential learning has the capacity to inspire critical thought and reflection on the meaning and purpose of the course content in shortened courses.

### **Pacing in Abbreviated Course**

The internal pace of accelerated courses matters. As in any course, due dates, and timetables for submitting assignments should be clearly communicated. For compressed-timed courses, it is particularly important that students receive instructor feedback in a timely manner, allowing them to adjust their approach to studying and engaging with the material and the course. The turnaround time is condensed for submission, feedback, and revisions, which can put a great deal of pressure on both students and instructor. Readings and other required and suggested course material should, when possible, be made available to students prior to the start of the term, and reading should be completed before class, where applicable (e.g., face-to-face). Students in compressed online courses report having difficulty keeping up with study in multiple compressed courses at the same time (Rodrigue et al, 2016). So, it is recommended that students are advised to not overload themselves, particularly those new to rapid pacing.

### **Evaluating and Revising Accelerated Courses**

Teaching is an ever-evolving art. Assessment and revision are critical to the successful conversion of traditionally-length courses into fruitful short-term learning opportunities. I encourage you to build into your redesign a process for evaluation and assessment that captures key competencies and student outcomes.

Developing a systematic evaluation of your courses will allow you to contemplate the utility in each assignment and identify new opportunities, resources and supports that may improve upon your pedagogy and help students fulfill course benchmarks. If possible, embed a similar evaluation into the traditionally-term version of the same course for comparison. Develop common standards that draw on feedback from several sources such as instructor reflections, student evaluations, peer observations, and consultation with instructional designers (McDonald et al, 2018).

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## Four 100 Words

Shantih E. Clemans, Human Services



### Band Practice

This Saturday morning in October is warm like summer. Still, the bricks of the front steps of our square house feel cold against my thighs. My mother and I are waiting for the high school marching band, eager to see Alida marching in her plumed hat, blue and white Sergeant Pepper jacket, playing her clarinet. We can already hear the drums and the cymbals a block away. My mom in her white stained apron, tied in front with a string bow. Her blue t-shirt, white arms, her hand holding a cup of English Breakfast tea, no longer hot. I'm wearing jean overalls, my long hair blown straight. Finally, just after the flutes, we see her. A little wave and a wan smile. My twin translation: "I can't believe I have to wear this hat!"

### Dark Alley

The summer we were eight, you rose to Nok Hockey royalty at the playground of Lincoln Elementary. Tanned legs, straight back, thick bangs obscuring your eyes, softball t-shirt sweet from sweat. Your dark-pink tongue peeking out. 10-year-old boys your favorite opponents; your secret move: The Dark Alley. With your right hand, you nuzzled the wooden puck into the far-left corner of the board. A swift sweep of your stick and the nimble puck arched into the net every time. My eyes furtively searched out your next victim. Incredulous boys lined up to take their turns. Still, the crown remained yours.

### Grandfather Clock

"I've been sleeping in my workshop." Our father's voice sounds like he has a pebble on his tongue. "When you come home from school, Nana's furniture will be gone." I imagine swimming underwater in our empty house, the austere grandfather clock kidnapped from its home near the stairs. We stand three-in-a-row on the gravel driveway, my brother, sister and me. Our father talks in our direction but never meets our eyes. The gravel stabs my bare feet. I wince and twist a long strand of my hair around and around my index finger until the hair leaves a deep indentation and my finger is almost blue.

## John Lennon

You had already gone to bed, fast asleep in your blue flowered room, on the night John Lennon died. You were sleeping on your side, mouth wide open in a dream, your aviator glasses folded on your bedside table. I didn't want to tell you what happened.

Earlier, I stood in front of our mother's long mirror, trying on something of hers to wear to school the next day. Pink sweater, dark blue wool skirt with a pleat in front. Turning around to see the back of the skirt, I heard our brother's frantic words, "Someone shot him!"

"There are a lot of people who enter some form of post-secondary education poorly prepared. But their stories are more complex, more varied, richer than the chronicle of despair that we so often get. Please do better by them." **Mike Rose**, "Underprepared Students"

## Blended Learning for Better Quality and Community Building: Adding Synchronous Sessions in Two Graduate Programs at SUNY Empire State University

Ali Ait Si Mhamed and Lila Rajabion, School for Graduate Studies



### Introduction

Examining two cases of programs at the SUNY Empire State University (SUNY ESU) proves that blended learning in the form of asynchronous and synchronous teaching and learning is an effective approach due to numerous benefits. Some of these benefits include a high level of supportive learning and understanding of complex material; synchronous sessions as social gap fillers; empowerment of tools for creating an engaging environment; connection with peers and instructors through online discussion forums and collaborative tools; and fostering a sense of community and support in the virtual classroom. Asynchronous sessions provide learners with flexibility, allowing them to access course materials and complete assignments at their own pace. Blended learning, on the other hand, combines traditional classroom instruction with online learning, offering a personalized and adaptable learning experience.

### Literature Review: An Overview

According to a literature review by Garrison and Kanuka (2004), blended learning can potentially improve student engagement and performance by providing a personalized and adaptable learning experience. The review also found that blended learning can be implemented at various educational levels and support diverse instructional objectives. Means et al.'s (2010) review suggests synchronous and asynchronous online learning can effectively achieve learning outcomes. Synchronous learning offers real-time interaction with instructors and peers, leading to more engaging and interactive learning experiences. Meanwhile, asynchronous learning provides flexibility in accessing course materials and completing assignments. The review concludes that synchronous or asynchronous learning should depend on the instructor's and learners' specific learning goals and needs.

In a higher education setting, Hew and Cheung (2014) conducted a study that compared the effectiveness of blended learning to traditional classroom learning. The study found that students who participated in blended learning performed better on assessments and were more engaged. Research by Means et al. (2013) shows that synchronous sessions can improve student outcomes, resulting in higher academic achievement and course completion rates. Based on these findings, educators should consider integrating synchronous sessions as a valuable component of courses to enhance student learning and success.

*Blended learning* is a powerful educational approach that combines traditional classroom instruction with online learning and technology-based resources. It can potentially improve student engagement and performance and be applied to various educational levels. Blended learning, also known as hybrid learning or mixed-mode education, is an instructional approach that combines integrating different online and face-to-face teaching modes (Graham, 2013; Lee et al., 2017; Vasyura et al., 2020). This approach utilizes different models of convergence between technologically enabled tools and more conventional ones to deliver instruction of subjects and courses in a way that enriches student learning. The approach of blended learning is a method of instruction that is experiencing rapid growth on college and university campuses (ElSayary, 2021; Chen, 2022). Research has shown that blended learning preserves student-teacher connection and peer learning (Phillips et al., 2016).

In light of the support that mixed-mode education has received in literature studies, our goal is to share our combined story of integrating synchronous and face-to-face approaches in our programs/courses to enhance student learning. Grounded in the philosophy upon which the SUNY Empire University (SUNY ESU) is built, we seek to share our strategies of experimentation and innovation around teaching and learning using hybrid approaches in our courses. Given that graduate study at SUNY ESU is essentially asynchronous, our definition of blended learning in this paper refers to blending synchronous and asynchronous in our teaching.

### **Empirical Study: Two Case Studies**

Through a study conducted with a colleague at SUNY ESU in 2022-23 (Toma & Ait Si Mhamed, 2023), we discovered the effectiveness of synchronous sessions in distance education. This led us to explore the role of blended learning, adding synchronous sessions to asynchronous courses to improve the quality of education at SUNY ESU. To investigate this, we analyzed qualitative data from student evaluations in courses taught over the past two academic years (2021-22 and 2022-

23) that included regular synchronous sessions in the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Change and in The Master of Science in Information Technology (MSIT) programs.

### **Case One: Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Change (Ali Ait Si Mhamed)**

The findings revealed that the blended mix of synchronous and asynchronous sessions was more effective than fully asynchronous courses, especially for students with hectic personal and professional lives. The analysis drew from course evaluations and discussion forums in six courses, as listed in the table below.

**Table 1: List of doctoral courses used for data**

Course title	Semester course offered
Foundations of Doctoral Study	Fall 2021
Principles of Higher Education Leadership	Fall 2021
Organizational Change Theory and Practice	Spring 2022
Research Methods in Education	Spring 2022
Models of Organizational Administration and Finance	Summer 2022
Quantitative Research Methods	Summer 2022

Since the aim was to understand students' perceptions, they were provided with opportunities to articulate their viewpoints individually. Some of the open-ended questions they were asked were: 1) *In your opinion, what was the best aspect of this course?* 2) *What did you think about the recurrent synchronous sessions?*

Students were free to share their opinions and viewpoints by responding in short written reflections. The qualitative approach for analyzing data was followed to extract themes. The data for this qualitative study were collected between July 2022 and September 2022. The participants were asked to write a short narrative about their learning and experiences with different learning modes (i.e., asynchronous and synchronous).

Clarke and Braun's (2013) systematic guidelines for conducting thematic analysis (TA) were adopted to analyze the narratives conducted with the participants. TA is a method for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) across qualitative data in rich detail (Clarke and Braun 2013, p. 218). In phase 1, I familiarized myself with the data through reading and re-reading the narratives actively, analytically, and critically (Clarke and Braun 2013, p. 205). After the familiarization process, the data were coded to generate initial codes about the

purpose of the study. For this purpose, a selected reading approach (Van Manen, 1997) was used; I read the transcripts and highlighted statements that captured the participants' learning curves and their opinions about the blended synchronous sessions. After this, codes that shared standard features were collated to generate themes. Following this phase, the subthemes within each broader theme were identified after testing the tentative themes formed in the previous phase against the coded data and the entire dataset. Once all the themes had been identified, I provided extracts under each theme to illustrate the participants' in-depth thinking.

#### Student narrative evaluations

demonstrated that participants had varied degrees of familiarity and understanding with added synchronous sessions. Most of them indicated that they considered these sessions to provide a high level of supportive learning and understanding of complex material. They also saw these sessions as a social gap filler because they gave them an incredible sense of community and belonging. Due to their interactive mode, participants thought of these sessions as empowering them to create an engaging environment.

“They also saw these sessions as a social gap filler because they gave them an incredible sense of community and belonging.”

A high level of supportive learning and understanding of complex material is one of the characteristics of students' perceptions. Extracts from students' narrative comments reveal how the added synchronous sessions fostered participants' intellectual competence to enhance and advance their learning of the course content. Student-led sharing of questions and discussions during these sessions displayed students' willingness to be more open and interested in engaging with others in the learning process.

Another aspect of students' thinking is that added synchronous sessions are a social gap filler. Analysis of student narrative evaluations showed that some participants had articulated instances that curtailed their ability to develop their learning, including attempts to participate in all asynchronous activities to gain some interaction from their peers. More precisely, participants reported that the asynchronous mode lacked the social interaction they needed to make them feel they belonged to a class and a "community" of learners. Although they were sometimes assigned group work, that, too, was completed asynchronously, to accommodate each other's schedules. Hence, students' narratives pointed to



synchronous sessions as filling in the social aspect of their learning and their lived experiences as students in a virtual community, which they indicated would not have been possible without those synchronous sessions. Even though some had limited time to participate, they valued the quality of these synchronous sessions as social gap fillers.

Another exciting category in analyzing students' narratives is empowering tools for creating an engaging environment. Although added synchronous sessions may be considered a regular task or even a slight burden in the schedule for some students, most participants agreed that these sessions empowered them to create an engaging environment. The more they attended these sessions, the better they engaged in creating other environments in which they could interact.

### **Case two: The Master of Science in Information Technology (MSIT) (Lila Rajabion)**

The Master of Science in Information Technology (MSIT) program is an asynchronous program that allows students to access course materials and complete assignments independently. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for students juggling work, family, and other commitments alongside their studies. Asynchronous learning allows students to balance their academic pursuits with other responsibilities and obligations without sacrificing the quality of their education. Students can engage with course materials when it best suits their schedule, allowing them to absorb and retain information more effectively. Furthermore, the asynchronous format enables students to connect with their peers and instructors through online discussion forums and other collaborative tools, fostering a sense of community and support in the virtual classroom. Overall, the MSIT program's asynchronous format offers a valuable and effective approach to education that benefits students in a variety of ways.

In a recent case study, MSIT students in a database course were found to benefit from the incorporation of around five synchronous sessions for group projects. MSIT students in their program take a database course, which includes a real-world project that needs to be done. Incorporating synchronous sessions into a database course for group projects can prove to be a powerful strategy for improving student learning and success. Such sessions enable group members to work together in real time and discuss project-related matters, including goals, tasks, and deadlines.

There are two approaches to integrating synchronous sessions for group projects. One method is to use them to facilitate group meetings. Instructors can schedule regular synchronous sessions to allow groups to discuss their progress on the project. During these sessions, group members can share their ideas, ask questions, and receive feedback from each other and the instructor, ensuring that everyone is on the same page and that the project is progressing smoothly. Another approach is to use synchronous sessions to provide additional instruction and support for group projects. Instructors can leverage these sessions to review critical concepts and skills related to the project, answer questions, and provide guidance on tackling different aspects of the project. This can be particularly beneficial for students who may be struggling with certain aspects of the project or who may require additional support to complete the project successfully. To ensure synchronous sessions are used effectively for group projects in a database course, instructors need to establish clear learning goals and objectives for each session.

Moreover, instructors should provide students with clear guidelines for participation in these sessions, including expectations for attendance, participation, and preparation. This can help guarantee that all group members are actively engaged and contributing to the project. In conclusion, integrating synchronous sessions into a database course for group projects can effectively enhance student learning and success. These sessions provide opportunities for collaboration, instruction, and support, ensuring that each group member participates and contributes to the project.

### **Conclusion**

The evidence from these two cases shows that both asynchronous sessions and blended learning can benefit students in the Ed.D. and MSIT programs at SUNY ESU. Asynchronous sessions provide learners with flexibility, allowing them to access course materials and complete assignments at their own pace. Blended learning, on the other hand, combines traditional classroom instruction with online learning, offering a personalized and adaptable learning experience. Research has shown that both approaches can improve student engagement, performance, and achievement. Therefore, educators should consider incorporating both asynchronous sessions and blended learning into their courses to enhance student learning and success. Thoughtfully designing and implementing these programs is essential to maximize their potential benefits.

### **Acknowledgment (from Ali Ait Si Mhamed)**

This essay is inspired by an earlier study conducted with Dr. Roxana Toma with whom I had the pleasure to work on the topic of the power of synchronous sessions in distance education. The chapter, "The Power of Synchronous Sessions in Distance Education: Building Community and Resilience in the Age of COVID-19," was included in the edited text: *Innovative Approaches to Technology-Enhanced Learning for the Workplace and Higher Education* (Guralnick, Auer, and Poce, eds., 2023, Springer). I am grateful to Dr. Toma for our work on this piece and for our presentation of this work at two conferences.

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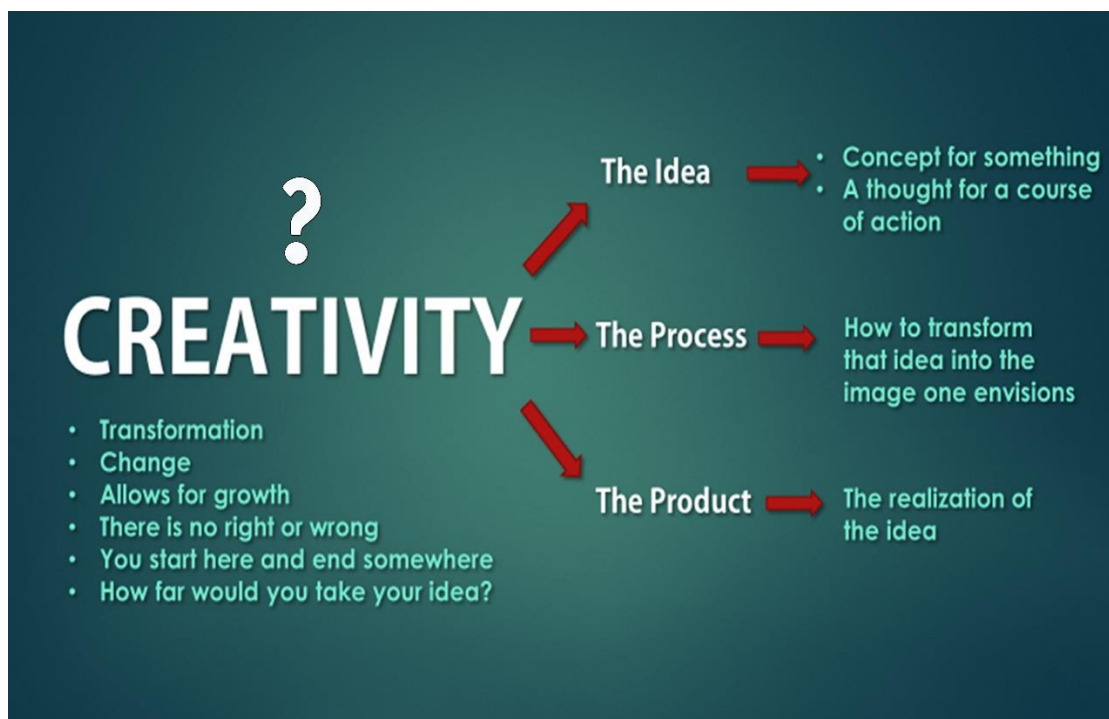
## My Creative Process

Raúl Manzano, Arts and Humanities



*At the All-College Conference in April 2021, a session called “Creative Expressions: Visual Arts” offered colleagues an opportunity to describe their individual works. Colleague Raúl Manzano provided these reflections on his “creative process.”*

For some artists, creativity requires a great deal of isolation, concentration, self-determination, and dedication. The proper studio facilities are also conducive to the artist producing the work envisioned. This environment away from the mundane world is essential for the stages of creativity to flourish and materialize the idea, the process, and the product (Figure 1). As an art practitioner, I treasure my own studio space because I can reflect, develop, and grow. When all these elements come together for me, there is no limit to what I can create. In this essay, I will share my approach to and process for creating my paintings, what informs me, and my habits.



**Figure 1**

Where do my inspiration and thoughts come from? Is there a message implied in my work? Or do I paint for leisure? All these variables are important as they provide

content and context for ideas and establish my routine. For example, I look at the news and social media, read newspapers and magazine articles, write notes, take photographs, and observe everything around me. Each one of these sources may provide a spark that leads to an idea and then a project.

Once I have an idea for a painting, I start developing a concept by doing thumbnail sketches in my sketchbook, sometimes on post-its, pieces of paper, or whatever may be handy. Then, I put all these thoughts into a drawing that I use to create a smaller version of the painting on a canvas. This gives me a visual representation and a sense of what the painting may look like. Other times, I may choose to work directly from the final drawing. When I need references for my images, I ask friends to pose for me or I photograph myself, as I did for my paintings *Fearless* as shown in Figure 2, *Grieving* in Figure 3 and *Black Lives Matter* in Figure 4. For the final sketch of the painting *Black Lives Matter*, I combined traditional drawing practice and Photoshop. I took a selfie holding a baking pan, which became the statue's tablet, and used Photoshop to design, add color, and write the text on the tablet as well as superimpose the statue's face over my face to get the proportions and the effect I sought.



Figure 2



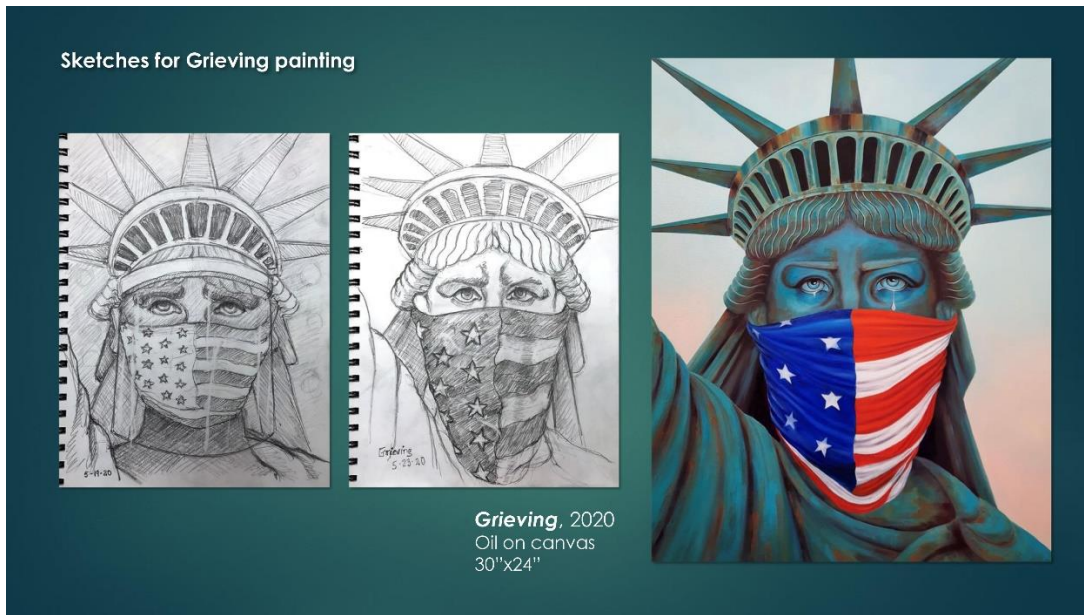


Figure 3

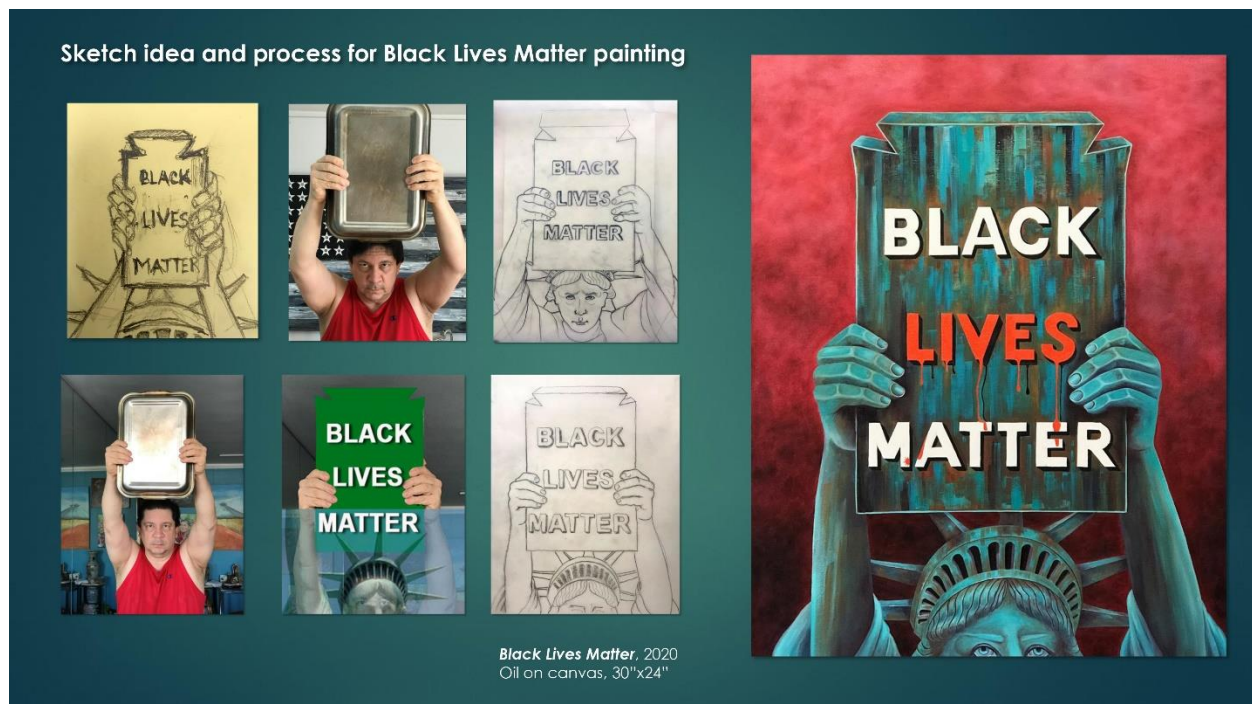


Figure 4

Practice and research are my rituals, a process I learned early on during my art formation and have continued to exercise. This approach helps me clarify ideas as well as add or remove information before I begin the actual work. Changes also may occur during the painting stages since other thoughts may emerge during the process. Although this method may sound too academic and less experimental, the

results are rewarding, for I can see how an idea evolves, changes, and grows. Furthermore, the process instills habits and techniques in my artistic practice, and it serves to document my work.

I take photographs on my iPhone during a painting session or at the end of the day for review. Often, the camera picks up areas the human cannot discern. This tool has been useful to create more accurate images. I also look through a handheld mirror and/or turn the painting upside down to see it from different angles where distortions are sometimes subtle to perceive.

Inquiry and common sense play integral roles in my process of creativity. Ideas sometimes go far beyond the original intention, opening opportunities for artistic exposure and scholarly and commercial recognition. For example, my painting, *Grieving*, was selected for the media publicity announcement and exhibition catalog cover for the “Unprecedented: Art Responds to 2020”- juried exhibition I participated in at the View Center for Arts and Culture in Old Forge, New York, in 2021 (see Figure 5). Another example of this creative process from idea to final product is shown in Figures 6 and 7 for the poster at my virtual exhibition, “Our America! — ¡Nuestra América!” at SUNY Empire State University in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month in September-October 2021.



Figure 5



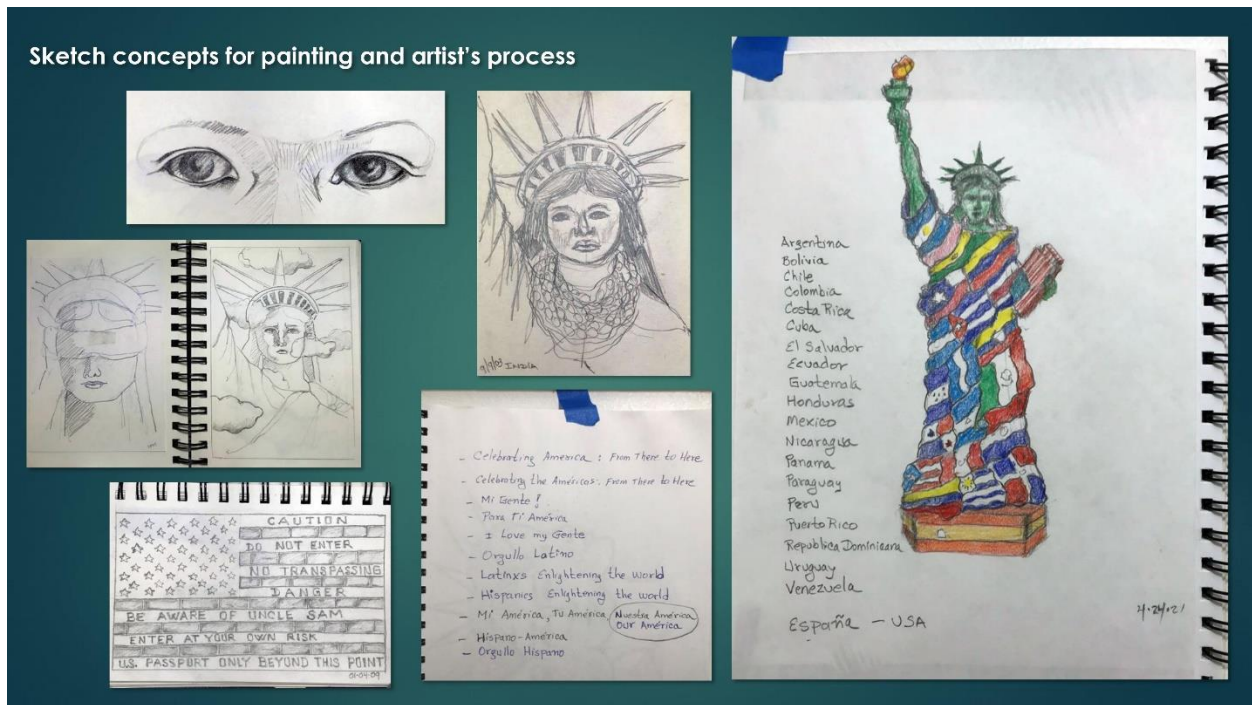


Figure 6



Figure 7

Naming a painting is also part of the creative process. Having a concept title in mind helps me visualize and organize my ideas. For this, there are different ways I arrive at a title. Most times, I title a painting when it is finished. My preference is a

short name or even one word, but that also depends on the meaning or purpose of the painting. Other times, I scribble notes and make a list of possible titles based on the subject. This process is similar to doing quick thumbnail sketches. I find this process valuable as thoughts can escape the mind quickly. If I don't have a title for the painting, I write potential titles when the painting is finished and then do an elimination process until I arrive at the proper title. I also ask friends what the painting should be titled. If they don't come up with any options, I share my list with other folks to see if those titles appeal to them. During the pandemic, I did a survey via email with the help of my colleague, Dr. Lisa D'Adamo-Weinstein at the live virtual presentation of *Creative Expressions*. Viewers were asked what the title of the painting should be. They received a visual image and information about the painting. Participants submitted titles and the title was selected via a survey based on the higher number of votes. I find titling a painting essential because it reflects the process that went into the work and adds meaning and content for audiences. Moreover, a title gives character and identity to the artwork. I believe leaving a painting untitled feel like a parent leaving his or her child unbaptized.

"An artist must be able to resolve uncertainties through trial and error to formulate results because the pattern of doing something consistently is what gives me pleasure in the outcomes. However, not every idea will turn into a masterpiece. Nonetheless, the learning experience and discoveries of the process of painting are priceless since they lead to other innovative and creative notions."

Even though I enjoy creating realistic images, painting to me is more than rendering a picture. Painting is a medium of communication. Moreover, painting implies knowledge of history, how the world was shaped, and what techniques and how they developed throughout the centuries. This artistic discipline dates to early civilization. Art historian Henry Sayre (2010) stated, "The emergence of La Pittura ["Painting," a 15th-century figure] announced that painting was finally something more than mere copy work, that it was an intellectual pursuit equal to the other liberal arts ..." (p. 220). With this approach in mind, I seek to create art that provokes thought and encourages social change. Social change brings awareness to people's rights, self-empowerment, and education.

While artists have different methods and styles for their creative work, having a habit or routine helps organize the thought process and the development of a concept even if the results are different from the original idea. This is what makes creativity unique. An artist must be able to resolve uncertainties through trial and error to formulate results because the pattern of doing something consistently is what gives me pleasure in the outcomes. However, not every idea will turn into a masterpiece. Nonetheless, the learning experience and discoveries of the process of painting are priceless since they lead to other innovative and creative notions. This is what energizes my creative process. Creativity not only provides artists (and non-artists) with positive intellectual pursuits. It also transforms the human soul, mind, and spirit to a higher level of consciousness and joy.

### **Notes**

--See the "Unprecedented" exhibition at <https://www.viewarts.org/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/unprecedented-art-responds-to-2020/>.

--View Manzano's virtual SUNY Empire exhibition at <https://www.esc.edu/our-america/>.

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## Making Connections: International Learning through Virtual Exchange, a Dialogue

Alan Mandell, Karen LaBarge, Sandra Winn, Christopher Whann, Elsa Maria Moquete Cruz, Melissa Odette Rosario Perez, Moises Alejandro Banks Peña, Linda Jones, Lorette Calix

*Across the U.S., colleges and universities have been sponsoring international programs for as long as a century. Indeed, many higher education institutions have also been doing exchange programs internationally and domestically for many years. Empire State University has been doing international education since its inception (the London satellite program began in 1971; the Israel unit had its start in 1976). This panel discussion is about one project, international virtual exchange, between Acción Pro-Educación y Cultura (UNAPEC) in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, and ESU. The partnership with UNAPEC started in 2006. This virtual exchange project began in fall 2020, with the first virtual exchange activities taking place in spring 2021. International virtual exchange has been growing at many institutions inside and outside SUNY, but the COVID pandemic rapidly accelerated its growth as partner schools had to pivot away from face-to-face teaching and toward other modes of learning to serve students, expand learning opportunities, and extend the value of cross-cultural collaboration to a wider array of underserved students who had neither the time nor the means to travel overseas while pursuing their educations.*

*This project has four components: interactive virtual exchange activities; student short-term exchange: training for faculty and staff, and data collection and research. With support and guidance from the Center for International Education at ESU, the SUNY Collaborative Online International Learning Office (COIL), the leadership at UNAPEC, and the United States Embassy in Santo Domingo, these academic partners have been able to sustain this project for several years. A team of scholars from the two schools have presented their research at international conferences in the U.S., Europe, and Latin America; they are in the process of publishing papers and book chapters about this exciting project. Moreover, the project is likely to expand to other countries where ESU has academic partnerships and programs.*

*Thanks to our colleagues from ESU and UNAPC for their contributions to this dialogue, which took place on 28 April 2023. Thanks especially to Chris Whann for making it possible and for offering us this introduction.*

**Alan Mandell (AM):**

Can we begin with some introductions? I'm Alan Mandell. I'm a faculty person at SUNY Empire, and I've been here for a long time. My background is in the Social Sciences; I'm a sociologist. I'm really interested in adult learning and have worked with Karen LaBarge on various faculty development projects and publications around our institution.

**Karen LaBarge (KL):**

I've been at the University for 20 years. As Alan mentioned, I work with him on three different publications. I do part of the editing work, as well as taking them through design and publication. Today, I'm here in the background!

**Sandra Winn (SW):**

I work in the Arts and Humanities. I'm a mentor and faculty member. I joined this project in the beginning of the second year of a three-year grant cycle, and I've been working very closely with the group. My main role for this project has been working with the qualitative data, helping with the writing, and presenting of our findings.

**Christopher Whann (CW):**

I'm Chris Whann. I am a political scientist by training. I have been here for 15 years. I started at SUNY Empire in International Programs and spent some time in administration. When I returned to my faculty role a few years ago, one of the very first calls I got was from Lori Calix, who said to me: "We have this really cool project going. Do you want to participate?" And my immediate response was "Yes" because I have nothing but the highest regard and affection for Lori, Sandy, and for Luis Camacho. And I was very excited to meet our new colleagues from UNAPEC as well. It's been just one of the great joys of my life as a teacher, a researcher, and a colleague to participate in this project.

**Elsa Maria Moquete Cruz (EMC):**

Hello, good afternoon. I am Elsa Maria Moquete, and I am the director of internationalization at UNAPEC.

**Melissa Odette Rosario Perez (MRP):**

I've been working with the virtual exchange since 2021 as a professor; then, last year Lorette called me to work as a coordinator for this program. It's been such a pleasure to share with you, to see how virtual education and this virtual exchange

can impact education, and how students can see other cultures. I'm also working as a faculty at UNAPEC; I teach e-commerce, graphic design, communication, and advertising.

**Moises Alejandro Banks Peña (MBP):**

I am the coordinator of research in business, and currently am on the faculty at UNAPEC. I have been working on this project for about two years. I began as coordinator and worked with Chris (Whann). We have worked together for months, and it's been a great experience. I think we can do many things for our universities and our countries.

**Linda Jones (LJ):**

I'm with the Natural Sciences Department and the School of Science, Mathematics and Technology at SUNY Empire, where I am finishing my 12th year. I joined the project very serendipitously in 2020. At that time, I was developing a Principles of Environmental Sustainability online course, and so we designed it, including a virtual exchange, and presented our work at the U.N. Sustainability online conference. Lori then pulled me into this group, and it's been a wonderful collaboration. I'm one who lurks in the background, putting materials together for students. Because of the grant we received from the embassy of the Dominican Republic, we were able to bring in Melissa who translated all the learning materials, and thus students who have participated were doing it bi-lingually, using Google Translate. It's been an interesting and rewarding project.

**Lorette Calix (LC):**

I am Lorette Pelletiere Calix—Lori! I've been with SUNY Empire since 2005. I started with International Programs (IP) and most of my teaching has been with IP. I have also taught and mentored New York-based students, but most of my work has been with the Center for International Education. I teach management courses, so I'm also part of the Empire's School of Business, Management and Economics. I've been involved with virtual exchange since 2008. At that point, I was really trying to solve a problem: I had small groups of students in three different countries I was trying to connect with each other, making the best use of our resources. I originally happened onto virtual exchange when I was working as a director of our program in Panama. Since then, I learned it was a "thing," and I did more training in the virtual exchange model. It has been part of my courses almost every term using different methodologies. The method I use most frequently is one that we refer to as a "shared discussion" that, working with my colleague, Bidhan Chandra, we use

in an International Cross-Cultural management course offered every fall. At this point we've received 3-4 grants related to virtual exchange from the embassy in the Dominican Republic to develop this project. Previously, we've also been awarded several IITG (Innovative Instruction Technology) grants from the State University of New York. We've not only been practicing; we've also been studying virtual exchange. This has been a wonderful group to work with.

**AM:**

Thanks everyone: It's my hope that we could talk about the origin of the program, its purposes, the activities in which people have been involved, the joys that have come from your experience in the program, and the challenges you have also faced. I hope we can also discuss next steps for this program and for this model. Thank you for your willingness to start, Elsa.

**EMC:**

When we were in the midst of COVID, we had big questions: How can we respond to the situation? How can we continue? This has been more than an excellent experience. We've now had two years together, and we are learning every time we work or plan. This international education experience using virtual exchange from an "inclusion perspective" not only avoids the obstacles of mobility but gives us an opportunity to see teachers and students working in a network and living a multicultural experience. We're doing and learning at the same time.

**LC:**

In terms of some background: Empire State University has partnerships with several universities in other countries to provide dual degree programs and to offer students other academic experiences. UNAPEC [Universidad Acción Pro-Educación y Cultura] is our partner in the Dominican Republic since 2006. It's been a long-term partnership in a dual degree program.

**AM:**

Yes, thank you both. How have you envisioned the *purposes* of this collaboration? How would you identify these goals?

**LC:**

I want to put a broader framework on your question, Alan, and it's this: I think international education in general has been proven to be very important and a life-changing experience in many people's formation; and yet, unfortunately, it is an experience that is just *not* accessible to all. For economic reasons, many can't

participate in traditional international exchange experiences because they work, because they have family, because they have disabilities. Yet it's exactly those international experiences that study after study have shown to give people a real advantage when they go into the workplace and have already developed some global competencies from their international experiences. Virtual exchange is so important because it makes international experiences accessible to so many more people.

**AM:**

Thanks Lori and Elsa. I wonder if others would feel comfortable talking about what drew them to this program:

**SW:**

Actually, my career really drew me in. I've worked with international exchange in various forms throughout my career because for me, one of the most important things about the education of students at *any* age is that they learn about other people, and they learn not to be afraid because someone has a different practice or a different character than they do. I think the only way we can get beyond the prejudices that we have in this world is if we get to know each other. I have lived overseas for a number of years. I know most people on this call have done so too, and I've realized that one of the best ways for our students (especially at the high school and college levels) to learn about others is for them to have the opportunity to study with other people from other places around the world. But as Lori has already said, international exchange has really privileged the wealthy--people who can afford to go to another country around the world. When you work in institutions like we do, you know students would greatly benefit from that access, but they don't have it. For me, the bottom line is that in a program like this one, students are learning about one another. They're learning that we have commonalities and differences, but we don't need to be afraid of the differences: the differences can bring you closer together instead of further apart. And for me, it fulfills my well-roundedness as an educator because if I weren't working in some sort of international virtual exchange, my job would not be nearly as fulfilling.

**AM:**

Thank you, Sandy. I just wonder if any of our UNAPEC colleagues could respond to this question about what drew them to this program, and its goals and its purposes.



**EC:**

A special goal of this project is interdisciplinary work. COIL [the State University of New York Collaborative Online International Learning Center] led us to this international exchange, including interdisciplinary subjects. That's so important for us because it's an overall institutional goal that we improve interdisciplinary work. This project was an excellent opportunity to do that. Another goal is to develop stronger inter-institutional work between UNAPEC and Empire State University. We connect weekly! That's important for us because that's international work, research work, and international exchange. I'm also learning about SUNY Empire and the way you work together. The way teachers work in UNAPEC and the way faculty work at SUNY Empire are different. We learn from each other.

**CW:**

When I was growing up, my family didn't have the time or the money to do international travel. And it was only much later when I got into graduate school that I really got to do any kind of significant global travel; and even later, when I encountered students who *had* the means to travel, they didn't always have the time. What has been so exciting about being involved in this project is that we have been able to collapse the challenges of time and money to create possibilities for students who simply never would have had the opportunity to do this kind of stuff; it works so well for our SUNY Empire students who can participate in something that really was not on their radar screen. As Sandy and Melissa know very well, the UNAPEC Dominican students who were able to come to the SUNY Empire Student Academic Conference this spring had a chance to see what Empire is all about. They're not just earning a dual degree with us! That was a tremendously exciting opportunity.

**AM:**

Thanks, Chris. This theme of reciprocity really rings out for me. The "exchange" is not only valuable to one institution, but to *both* institutions and to students in both institutions. I wonder if anyone could talk about some of the specific activities in which you have been involved as part of this virtual exchange and some of the teaching you've done?

**LJ:**

This conversation already has been really interesting. It's important to hear everyone talk about their perspectives and what we're all learning through this

process--what people are bringing to the group, and what they're taking away. This has been valuable in itself. For the environmental sustainability virtual exchange in which I have been involved, I appreciate Elsa's comments about the interdisciplinary nature of that particular exchange. It was not only our students who were able to see cultural differences, but they could see *professional* differences, too. For example, we had students who were in business, humanities, science courses--all coming together, all wrestling with questions related to sustainability.

So going back to our previous discussion about what drew us to the program, here was an opportunity to let students gain a multi-disciplinary perspective on a topic that is going to be critical to their lives moving forward. How do we come up with solutions to solve challenges that the UN has identified through its sustainable development goals that are going to touch every population globally? One of the beauties of the way that the UN sets this up is that it doesn't tell anyone *how* to reach these goals. They're leaving that up to the individual nation states and to the individual cultures to figure out what will work because it can't be a one-size-fits-all. The theme itself opens up so many conversations, and we don't have a lot of time in the course; it was a three-to-four-week study. The way the exchange was designed was to be scaffolded so all the learning activities built upon what was happening before, and students could first reflect on their position, how they would define sustainability, what was important to them, and what they would prioritize. They had a moment to reflect, then have a conversation with others who may or may not share their perspectives, and then regroup. So, there is this pattern of reflective activity, and then learning how other researchers, institutions, organizations are approaching sustainability and how that information and those insights can further inform their perspectives. In the final weeks, they're using what they've learned to analyze different case studies. There were some courses in which the students indicated that they wanted to work together on a group project, for example, looking at sustainability challenges either in the Dominican Republic or in New York. These students worked together to develop a sustainable management plan based on what they had previously done.

**Moises Alejandro Banks Peña (MABP):**

I was very glad to coordinate the experience between COIL in the Dominican Republic and SUNY Empire. We had to find professors who wanted to participate in the project; we found six from the Dominican Republic and six from New York. After this, we had to choose the teams that would work together, prepare the programs,

find the themes, and create exercises for the students. We also had to find materials so Dominican and US students could work together and create joint presentations. We have had some challenges. In the Dominican Republic, everybody doesn't speak English, so we had to choose one student in each group who could talk with peer colleagues and coordinate the hours so that people could have time together. There are also conference presentations and some journal articles on which our group is working together.

**LC:**

Building on what Linda and Moises described, I wanted to add that there are different models of virtual exchange. The only reason these differences may be important is because some instructors/faculty may be interested (or find it more feasible) to use one type over the other. What Linda described is what we call the "virtual residency model," which is three to four weeks of what I like to call a "plug-and-play" module. Faculty participate in developing and delivering the content, but it's not as heavy a lift as what Moises was describing. Moises is referring to what is commonly known as "COIL collaborative online international learning." That's a model in which SUNY has been a leader for many years. In that model, two individual faculty members, one from each institution, work together to decide on a topic and develop a joint module. Those modules tend to be a little bit longer, usually five or six weeks and include more cross-cultural work in teams so that the students work together a little more, delve a little deeper, and get to know one another a little bit better. And finally, there is the third model that we commonly use, and that is a model I mentioned earlier that I use with colleague Bidhan Chandra. The shared discussions are relatively simple to do because faculty are substituting what might otherwise be discussion forums in a course with discussion forums in which the students talk about some of the same topics, but now with the students in the other country. Three different models, each of which could be useful.

**EC:**

I want to add two aspects to our understanding of these experiences. The impact on the *number* of students involved in virtual exchange was significant. It is possible to work with *many* students at the same time. And secondly, we have students and teachers working together who have the opportunity to freely participate in a safe and respectful environment. And, of course, I think participants enjoyed the virtual exchange. They learned *and* they enjoyed it!

**AM:**

Thanks everyone. Perhaps from different angles, many of you have talked about students and your sense of what they have gained from the experience and the value that it has for them.

**CW:**

Let me talk briefly about an experience we had a couple of weeks ago at the Student Academic Conference here at SUNY Empire. Rafael, who was a student from UNAPEC, was part of the team that visited us in Saratoga Springs, New York, to meet with the president of our university and to present on a panel. Otto was a student in my public administration class. Rafael and Otto had never met. They were working in different groups, but they had both taken the public administration class where Moises and I had a shared module. We talked in our module about ethics and transparency in times of crisis in public sector organizations, and these two students had gotten to work on these shared projects, developing PowerPoints and studying agencies (one in the Dominican Republic and one in the United States). They got a chance to meet each other in person in Saratoga and again in Albany. It was a fantastic opportunity to begin work in a virtual environment, but also to have the opportunity to meet in a face-to-face environment. You could tell those two students just hit it off. Otto is probably old enough to be to be Rafael's father!!! But it was just such a perfect little moment within this much larger project to see these two students connecting. And, as Elsa just described, it's one of those things that was that was so much *fun*. I can't wait to share this experience again with other students.

**AM:**

Thanks, Chris. I wonder if I could segue into a related topic. A few of you have mentioned reflection and research on this work. What kinds of research have people been doing? What kinds of topics have come up on which you've been working?

**SW:**

We could spend quite a few hours discussing this because we talk about it as a group almost every week! What we're really looking at is whether the dial moves in "cultural competency" for a student who has *not* had international exchange experience and then goes through the international exchange experience. When they finish with this virtual international experience, what we are finding is that, yes, the students are really learning a lot about cultural competencies. Everyone on this

call believes that there's great value to engaging in such types of exchanges so that students have the opportunity to grow beyond gaining content knowledge, but personally, too—in effect, to learn how to be a global citizen. What we're finding is that even in the shorter virtual exchanges, our understanding points towards yes, but we're still collecting data and we have more to collect.

**AM:**

Is this quantitative and qualitative data?

**SW:**

At this point, we've received about 125 responses and our quantitative database is larger. We use instruments that we've adapted from other cultural competency surveys. Moises was really helpful in this process. Across the board, students said that their lives had *greatly* changed by being a part of this experience--that they had learned not only about other people in another country, but about themselves. Most of them said if they had to do it over again, they would; and a couple of them said, "I wish every single one of my classes had a component like this in it." It made a huge impact on them.

**AM:**

Thanks so much, Sandy. The beauty and the potential of what you are doing really came through for me. So many rich connections among students *and* colleagues. Would anyone like to talk about some of the problems you faced when the hopes of what the programs might be able to accomplish just didn't happen.

**CW:**

I'll talk about a couple of these bumps that I learned about in the experiences that Moises and I had. Number one: It is *definitely* challenging to work with students who are operating in different time zones because you know for some of the year, we're at the same time; at other times, we're an hour apart. The most challenging part of this "time" issue is when you're working weekends versus weekdays, or daytime versus nighttime, or asynchronously and synchronously: that's not a negligible thing! More broadly, logistics have to be thought about, and you really need to spend a lot of time on the preparation-side even before you actually engage the class. A second issue that was challenging is that communication tools and technical aptitudes vary considerably from student to student. Here's one example: The Dominican students introduced the US students to WhatsApp because they use

that tool all the time, and most of the US students didn't know what WhatsApp was. Honestly, until I was involved in this project, I wasn't using WhatsApp, and now I use it constantly! One of my U.S. students I mentioned earlier, Otto, in the Public Administration class talked about how he found WhatsApp to be incredibly helpful as a way to have “real time” conversations with his colleagues in UNAPEC when they were working on projects.

**AM:**

Thanks, Chris. Technological, infrastructural questions seem really important. Sandy, please.

**SW:**

And I'll make this quick cause I'd truly love to hear from others, too. Here is another one of those logistical things that was incredibly challenging: Brightspace does not support doing international exchange. So, when SUNY moved to using Brightspace for everybody as our learning management systems [LMS], COIL was basically bumped right out of having a LMS that we could share. So that's a wrinkle because in some ways it made me feel like SUNY as a whole was not committed to what we are trying to do with COIL, but at the same time, Lisa Vollendorf became ESU's new president, and she is 1000% committed to *increasing* international exchange, and sees this work as a possibility to do more. So, for me, our biggest challenge had to do with fighting for *space*! Lori spent many many hours working on this. On the one hand, we've got great support from our institution and our new president; on the other hand, we have to go *outside* of our own SUNY institution in order to actually run a class. This was a little disheartening, and I think everyone felt that, but we made it work because Lori makes everything work, and she's an amazing project lead. But that aspect of the logistical side of things has been incredibly challenging for us.

**AM:**

Thank you so much, Sandy. I wonder if any of our UNAPEC colleagues have anything to say on your end about these particular bumps or challenges that you've experienced. Moises, please.

**MP:**

We always have the challenge with the language. Most of our Dominican students don't speak English, and some of them are afraid to talk. There has to be a system

in place (this is part of the infrastructure theme) to translate and to edit videos, and so on. This is a challenge that we have to consider, too.

**AM:**

Thank you Moises. Melissa?

**MP:**

I'd like to add how big a challenge for me was the time involved. For example, while we were doing the virtual exchange, we had to be in regular contact with professors to see how students were doing, and for the two first weeks, it was especially challenging because we had to help our students to use Moodle again because we are not using Moodle anymore in UNAPEC; we switched platforms from Moodle to Canvas, and then we had to say to the students: You have to log into Moodle, and this is how you log in. And some of the students had issues. It was frustrating.

**AM:**

Yes. Thanks so much, Melissa.

**LC:**

With this talk of the technical and logistical difficulties we faced, I just think it's appropriate to give a shout out to our back-end support. Steve Simon at Empire was really crucial in resolving our problems, and he worked with tech people at UNAPEC to get all of our students connected. So, this isn't something we do by ourselves. We do get support. I think the tech support people are our behind-the-scenes heroes. We have to acknowledge them.

Continuing on the theme of obstacles though, I want to mention some things that we have repeatedly encountered as institutional obstacles. When we're recruiting faculty to participate in these sorts of activities, one of the first things that comes up both for UNAPEC, I believe, and for Empire is time because as we all know, any sort of new activity in our courses demands time. You have to make some adjustments to what you would normally do, and you have to look at new ways to do things or change your schedule a little bit. So, there's always a time factor no matter which model you use, and people are very concerned about how they're going to find the time. There isn't any acknowledgement at the institutional level for the extra time that these activities take. The COIL collaborations take an *extraordinary* time commitment from the faculty involved, at least the first time they do it because there's training, there's all the time you have to work together on designing the activities and the materials, and then getting things in the LMS to get

things organized. And so, it would really be helpful if there was some sort of release time for faculty who are participating in these kinds of projects.

Another kind of institutional obstacle that I have come across when recruiting faculty is their concern about student evaluations and about getting poor student evaluations. What if it doesn't go well; what if some students don't like the experience? And, of course, everything *isn't* going to go well all the time.

I think it would be very helpful if our review process incorporated a criterion having to do with "innovation" along with the other evaluative criteria we use. And this is not just relevant to the virtual exchange; it could be relevant for all faculty developing and trying out new resources (like OERS [open educational resources]). I'd like to see us reinforce that and not make faculty so afraid of trying new things.

**AM:**

Thanks for that, Lori. I want to close our time by bringing up an area that we mentioned at the beginning of our discussion. There is, as I feel it, incredible enthusiasm for the project and in a wonderful way, pride in what you have been doing and are able to do with students from these two different institutions. Do you have fantasies about next steps given your experiences to date? What would be valuable to experiment with as you move forward? Elsa, please.

**EC:**

We need to establish and use COIL as a methodology in a more regular, a more routine, way. We also need to create documents that we can use as a COIL reference that will improve what we do and increase enthusiasm among teachers about this methodology. I think we should stay with this program as part of the methodology of the university.

**MP:**

I agree, and I would add two more things: We can work on specific projects between UNAPEC and SUNY that will help us identify and analyze common problems. For example, there are problems with supplying electricity and power service. You have dealt with this problem in the United States for many years and to a great extent have resolved it. We need to learn and, for example, call on students in the engineering area and work together to find solutions to this problem. I think we can do this kind of research together—institution and institution; teachers and students. And the second point is that many students really miss the classroom; what do we do about that? We need to research real problems—real academic



problems.

**AM:**

Thank you so much, Moises and Elsa, and everyone. Any further comments?

**LC:**

I'll just say that in terms of the future, one of the things that we have been concerned about and that these two grants have pushed us to work on is sustainability. How do we keep these initiatives going? I think the fact that we have such a well-established working group is part of what's going to keep it sustainable, but we have incorporated training both for faculty and for the coordination/administrative part of the program, and we've been working on writing and hope to propose some formal procedures and incentives related to virtual exchange at both institutions. So, we're trying to make the work more formally ingrained in the institution.

I would love to see several options, virtual exchange opportunities, available every term from which students can choose. And I would love to see them across multiple disciplines. A lot of what we do is interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary, but so far, we've worked more with the business faculty. But you can tell from the team we have here, we represent a number of different disciplines. That's a goal.

And finally, there is the research end of things. I would like to say that what we've embarked on is a long-term study because we can't only have short term results. We know that as soon as the virtual exchange is over, students are still euphoric and paint a beautiful picture, and we can say yes, there *has been* an impact on their global competencies, but we *don't* know if that has any sort of lasting effect. I'd like to be able to go back in 5, 10, 15, even 20 years, and see if there was any impact.

**AM:**

Such a longitudinal perspective would no doubt be powerful.

**LC:**

One of the things that makes me hopeful that we may have a longer-term impact is that one of the very positive results was that this experience made people more curious about other people and other countries. And I'm hoping that that curiosity is something that's going to have a long-term impact that will influence our students beyond their experience with that specific virtual exchange.

**AM:**

Thank you. And the last word on this topic, Sandy.

**SW:**

I agree with everything that others have said. For me, it distills down to the need to incorporate our own COIL office into our own international programs center. I would like to see us put some more money into that office. I'd love to see *all* colleges put money into these types of exchanges. Like Lori, I think we have a great opportunity to be able to offer many different virtual exchanges in many different countries. At ESU, we already have partnerships in other countries, and I would love to see us take what we're doing here and use it in places where we are, such as in Greece and in the Czech Republic. In fact, I was in China on a fellowship and had so many professors who wanted to do an exchange with us, but because of administrative issues and then because of COVID, everything fell flat at that point. Having a COIL office and expanding our international programs is, I think, what we need to sustain the work. We have a great model that we can showcase.

**AM:**

Thanks, Sandy and thanks to all of you for taking this time together. It has been fantastic to learn more about this particular project and, as a result, to think about how experiments can become *normal* processes at our institutions--they're no longer different, or a kind of anomaly, they're what everybody does, or can do. I am hoping that in a teeny way, the editing and publishing of this conversation can serve that function: to help people understand more about what all of you have been doing that is so interesting and wonderful and relevant to our academic work. And thanks Chris for making it happen and Karen for setting this up for us.

## Found Things: Independent Learning Strategies: The Basics

Chris Rounds, Faculty Emeritus

*Beginning in 1979, Chris Rounds, now mentor emeritus, served as mentor, assistant dean for assessment, associate dean, and co-chair of the Mentoring Institute (among many roles) at the Binghamton Unit of the Central New York Regional Center. In 1998/1999, Chris created a course on "Independent Learning Strategies" for Empire's Center for Distance Learning (CDL), from which this text is taken.*

### **Introduction:**

This is your first enrollment at Empire State College. What can you do to help ensure your success as a student? Answering that question is the purpose of this piece. It is divided into several sections, addressing issues related to your motivation to learn, your physical setting and time management, the business of becoming an effective independent learner, and the learning supports Empire State has to offer.

Before moving on to those detailed suggestions, I just want to point out the underlying theme here: To be successful in this independent/distance learning environment, you're going to need to change! The habits that served you pretty well in a traditional academic environment won't work as well here. And if you've been out of college for a while, you're going to need to make some significant adjustments to 'make room' in your life for college. Becoming an effective independent learner involves letting go of old habits and developing new ones. And like any other effort to change habits... going on a diet or committing to an exercise program, things will seem difficult at first and success will depend on your ability to focus on the new priorities you've set for yourself.

### **Motivation and Discipline**

You know from your work experience that it's not always the 'smartest' person who gets the job done. Motivation and discipline often count for more than raw intelligence. To thrive in the learning environment Empire State College has created, you have to want to be here, and you have to be willing to work hard and persistently. Getting oriented and thinking through what you're going to study is the first essential step. You need to focus on the daily business of understanding

what's expected of you, planning your approach to the work, tracking your progress weekly, and constantly learning from your experience and improving your technique as a student and independent learner.

Focusing on the short run is critical. You've already decided to complete your degree. That's great, but now you need to shift the focus to the achievement of crucial short-term goals: creating a place to study and finding the time; creating a supportive learning environment; learning about yourself as an independent learner and constantly getting better at that; polishing the reading, writing and thinking skills you'll need to succeed.

You know all about discipline and hard work... that's what has enabled you to thrive at work. Now it's time to apply those skills in a new environment: Empire State College.

## **Improving your learning environment**

### **Creating a place to study:**

You're going to need a place to escape from distractions in order to study. Ideally, it will be a place where you can leave your study materials out, where you can shut out the distractions of the house, and where you'll be able to study comfortably, with good light. Here are some additional actions you can take:

- Plan with your family for quiet times, when everybody's studying. For some adult learners, studying with the kids works wonderfully.
- Plan with your spouse or significant other for times when you can escape to the local library to study. Some students have arranged with other adults in their lives to split up family and household responsibilities during the weekends, creating a full day available for study in the library.
- Stay late at work, or go in early, to study. Some students have even found that going to work on the weekends works wonderfully.

Everyone will respond to this challenge differently, depending on their particular circumstances. But whatever strategy you adopt, keep track of how well it is working periodically, and don't hesitate to make a change if you find the quality of your environment deteriorating.

## Creating the Time to Study:

At the very least, you're going to need several hours a week to devote to each study in which you are enrolled. [One rule of thumb: plan for 10 hours of study per four-credit study, per week.] You need to make this time... unless you now have a whole lot more free time than you know what to do with.

You can make time by:

- Scheduling for a week at a time, blocking out at least an hour or two each day or several hours during the week and longer periods on weekends.
- Backing out of commitments that you now enjoy but that are not essential.
- Distributing responsibilities... at home and at work, to create time for yourself.
- Reducing the frequency with which you fulfill repetitive responsibilities.
- TV eats time. Turn it off!
- Taking advantage of even small bits of time, driving, waiting for appointments or to pick up a child after practice. Carry a book and a notebook with you everywhere!

Here's the point: Going back to school is like work. It takes time, typically more of it than you had anticipated. Reading takes time, writing takes time, doing research takes time. And, it takes more time during your first enrollment than it will later on. You're on a learning curve here, developing new habits, getting the hang of it.

Become more self-aware as a learner. Discover from experience when you are at your best, and try to make time to study then. Getting up an hour earlier every day works for some, while staying up an hour later works for others. Pay attention, and learn from your experience. Adjust your schedule as you go.

Another dimension of creating time involves planning. I encourage students to be particularly aware of planning in two specific time frames. The first is the week: what's on my agenda this week in terms of life and work, and what are the specific tasks I have to complete for my studies? Sit down on Sunday and put what you have to accomplish on the calendar. This might also involve the whole family... Next, you want to do longer-range planning for the academic term. If your assignments have specific due dates, get them on the calendar and work backward from those dates to clarify what, exactly, needs to happen when to reach those goals. If you're working on an independent study that doesn't include hard and fast dates, make up your own! Remember that you're in the business of replacing the

highly structured environment of the classroom with a new structure of your own design...eliminating structure is not an option.

### **Creating a supportive learning network:**

Your decision to return to college has impacts on a lot of people. Some of them will love the prospect and will be pleased that you've finally listened to their advice. Others may react quite differently, feeling that you've abandoned them or that you've violated some unstated agreement to stick together. One of the major tasks you'll need to accomplish as you return to college involves creating a network of supporters, people you'll be able to count on as you confront the challenges college has to offer.

Independent learners are not isolated learners, they exist in a web of relationships, each of which requires 'maintenance' of one sort or another. Especially during your first enrollment, you'll have times when you're convinced that you've made a terrible mistake, that you're too old or too slow for this kind of race. It is precisely at those times when your support network will be crucial. You're going to need protection from those around you who resent you're going back to school and wouldn't mind seeing you fail. Some times, you're going to need protection from your own 'dark side.' You're going to need that special person who bucks you up, assures you that you can do it, and helps you get back on track.

### **Sources of support**

#### Your family

The people closest to you can be your greatest supporters, and your worst enemies. Their attitudes depend largely on you. Pay especially close attention to your significant other and kids as you create the time and space to study. Make them feel like members of the team. If they feel left out or left behind, you'll pay for it.

- Attend to them first, before you study.
- Talk to them about why you're doing this and how what you're doing can help them.
- Ask them for help around the house.
- Share your learning with them.
- Ask your significant other to read your essays and make suggestions.

- Talk to them about the ideas you're encountering.

### At work

You know the people at work you've been able to rely on. Get them on your team, and keep them there. You know the superiors who are committed to education and to professional growth. Keep in touch with them, and use them to help create space and redistribute tasks when that's possible. Let them know when something you've learned at school has paid off at work.

You also know the people at work who are stuck... and who resent anyone who is moving on. Do they really have a need to know about your academic experience? Don't expose yourself to negative influences.

For the people who report to you, your commitment to college can create real opportunities. Delegate! Let someone else take on some responsibility. Or maybe just let them do their own jobs without the 'benefit' of your daily advice. Empower people. And bring what you learn as an Empire State College student back to work, putting your new learning to work for them. Imagine how much more convincing your talk about the importance of continuous learning will be when your subordinates know that you're practicing what you preach.

### In your community

Think about people beyond your immediate family who are interested in you and who are, themselves, always learning something. Talk to them. Seek their support. Listen to their advice. Relatives, neighbors, teachers, friends. You've been there for them. Let them be there for you. You might also look for other Empire State students or alumni within your community. Your mentor can help locate them. Establishing a strong relationship with someone who's graduated from the college can prove immensely helpful.

Remember: Ask for help! We all like to think of ourselves as independent, and are reluctant to ask for help. Most people are very happy to help if they are asked, especially when they think of themselves as good at something. Ask!

### **Understanding yourself as a Learner:**

Many Empire State College students have been out of school for a long time. And many didn't exactly love school when they were there. Many have transcripts that they are not particularly proud of.

Realize:

- That you're not the same person you were back when you were a kid and school was a burden.
- That Empire State College is not like the last school you attended. You've got both more freedom and more responsibility here than you have ever had in school before.
- That much of the structure you experienced in school before has just disappeared. You won't have weekly classes complete with lectures to interpret the reading, and quizzes to keep you focused.
- That you'll have to create structures and discipline for yourself.

All of these things mean that you will have to take responsibility for your learning. Instead of just letting learning happen to you, you'll need to make it happen. Getting to know your self as a learner will be a major task during this first enrollment.

**From passive to active learning:**

School, for most new students, is associated with classrooms, teachers, lectures and multiple-choice exams. School was a place where you went to listen and learn. That won't be the case here. And that can be both good and bad.

The good news is that you won't have to travel to classes, sit around with other students who haven't actually done the home work, and listen to an instructor explain the reading, emphasize the important bits and give you clues about what will be on the exam. You are now free to study when you're able, learn at your own pace, and decide for yourself what's important and what can be safely skimmed over.



The bad news is that the weight of responsibility has shifted from the teacher to you. Instead of having new material interpreted for you, you'll have to serve as your own interpreter. Instead of having the discipline of the weekly class schedule imposed on you, you'll have to create your own structure and impose your own discipline. Instead of exams that require the recollection of memorized facts and the application of known formulas, you'll be asked to write essays, interpret complex ideas, and compare conflicting points of view. And while meetings with your mentor, tutors and other students will be exciting and important opportunities to share ideas and interpretations, most of your learning will go on at home and on your own.

"The payoff for becoming an Active Learner is that it lasts a lifetime. You know that life at work requires a willingness to constantly learn new things and adapt to a changing environment."

All of this boils down to becoming an **Active Learner**.

### **Active learners:**

- Plan their learning experiences, creating and adjusting schedules and setting realistic short-term learning objectives.
- Define their own learning goals and create a 'road map' to achieve them.
- Are aware of themselves as learners and constantly work to improve their efficiency and productivity as learners.
- Play off their strengths and compensate for their weaknesses.
- Know when to ask for help and are good at staying in touch with the important people in their academic lives.

Becoming an active learner is like acquiring any new skill: it takes time, requires focused attention, and rewards patience and practice. Good coaching also helps. That's where your mentor and tutors come in.

The payoff for becoming an Active Learner is that it lasts a lifetime. You know that life at work requires a willingness to constantly learn new things and adapt to a changing environment. Active learners have the tools they need to do this. The same is true in your community. New challenges arise and old responses don't

always serve you well. As a citizen and community member, you need to be constantly learning and adapting. Active learners are leaders rather than followers.

### **Becoming aware of yourself as a learner:**

More traditional education includes lots of helpful feedback loops. Teachers ask questions and encourage discussion in class, and you can compare your level of understanding with that of other students. Frequent quizzes and homework assignments compel you to constantly check on your level of understanding. Casual conversations with other students help you remain aware of how well you are doing in relation to others.

Independent learning requires you to be more intentional and aware of yourself as a learner than you needed to be in the classroom. Most of those helpful feedback loops are gone. Assignments tend to be more substantial and due less frequently. Meetings with instructors and other students are also less frequent, and are more intense, so that receiving individual feedback regarding your studies may require conscious effort on your part.

In this environment, becoming aware of your self as a learner is a key to success. You need to keep track of the learning techniques that work best for you, and you need to be willing to constantly adapt as you discover study techniques that work.

Try the following:

- Keep a learning log in which you write about what you're learning, raise questions you want to pursue, and reflect on the relationship between what you're studying and your work and personal life.
- In your log record hours you've studied and assignments undertaken and completed. Keep comparing where you are with where you need to be in each study.
- Stay in touch with your mentor and tutors via e-mail or phone. Ask questions as they arise. Be sure you've understood assignments and are on track in terms of the progress of each study.
- Experiment to improve your active reading and critical thinking skills.

- You will learn what study techniques work best for you only through thoughtful engagement, trying new things, tweaking them, and noting improvements in efficiency and comprehension.

## Tools for Learning

### Active Reading:

Most of us are familiar with one kind of reading: you begin at the beginning and read to the end. Respecting the author, you pay attention to every word. That might have worked when each course had a single text and you could rely on your instructor to review what was in the text, highlighting the author's important points. It won't work for you as an independent learner, where the reading load is much heavier and there's no one leaning over your shoulder to tell you what's important and to give you hints about what's going to be on the test.

As an independent learner, you need to work with books in a new, more active way.

- You need to ask questions.
- You need to pre-read.
- You need to write in your books.
- You need to translate key concepts into your own words.
- You need to read differentially, adjusting the speed and thoroughness of your reading to the nature of the material you're working with and its centrality to the achievement of your goals

### Asking questions

Every author, in every essay or chapter, is trying to make a point or get an argument across to the reader. When you begin reading anything, ask yourself: "What is this about? What was the author's purpose in writing this?" Answer this question by reading the first and final paragraphs in the article or chapter. Ask yourself: "How crucial is this chapter or essay to my larger purposes in this study?" "What do I need to understand here?" Record these key questions and answers in a Learning Journal.

### Pre-reading

Then scan through the rest of the piece, looking for key indicators: headers, bold type, any text set off by the author. This very brief preview should tell you how the

author goes about making his or her case. After you've finished this quick scan; ask yourself if the case the author has made makes sense. Remember that all authors are apt to emphasize the evidence that supports their argument and downplay or ignore the evidence that does not. This is entirely predictable. But it is your job as an active and critical reader to probe the author's argument, to see if stands up in light of what you know about the topic.

### Writing in your books

Ideally, you want to read every book or article once, carefully. That's true, at least, of the best of them. You may decide that some don't deserve that close attention. [Keep in mind that if the book is assigned reading, somebody thinks it's worth your attention!] Take care, also, not to dismiss books or articles simply because you disagree with an author's conclusions. If you limit your careful reading to works whose authors share your own point of view, what's the point of being in college? You are likely to learn the most from authors with points of view you don't share. After all, it is precisely this difference that makes the work worth your careful attention.

As you read, make brief notations in the margins. Flag key ideas, underline key concepts. Summarize important ideas at the top of each page. And if there's room at the end of the chapter, take two minutes to capture the essence of the content there. This may seem like a lot of extra work, but what you've done is to translate the author's ideas into your own words, and create a record that you can quickly thumb through to review the text at a later date. You're more likely to remember what you've read, and you'll never have to read the entire text again. When you've finished reading an article or chapter, close the book and see if you can summarize, in your head, the central arguments made by the author. If you get stuck, skip back through the text to pick up the concept you've missed.

Remember that the purpose of academic reading is to learn, to acquire new and deeper understanding. The purpose is not to be able to say you've read something. So if you can't remember or don't understand what you've read, you've wasted your time.

### Using a Learning Journal

A Learning Journal is a place where you record your ideas about what you've read. It is not a place to take notes or transcribe long passages from texts. I use my

loose-leaf appointment calendar as a Learning Journal, adding lined pages as needed, and shifting pages to a backup notebook when I've got a bunch of them. I keep my notes in order by always putting the date at the top of the page and following it with a brief note about what I've been reading or the project I'm working my way through.

- Use it to record connections you've made between one reading and another.
- Use it to think through assignments and how what you've read relates to them.
- Use it to note the questions that arise as you're reading.
- Use it to record questions you want to ask of the tutor, and of yourself.
- Use it to organize your thoughts before beginning to write an essay.

Before they try it, students are apt to complain: "I'm already overwhelmed with work! I don't have time for this!" But once they've gotten used to it, they realize that keeping a Learning Journal saves time in key ways:

- Ideas recorded in your journal aren't lost... so you don't have to waste time trying to recapture them. You're more apt to remember something you've recorded in your own words.
- Notes taken in your journal allow you to efficiently review what you've read and thought about in reviewing before a meeting or conversation with your tutor.
- Once you've recorded your ideas and made connections in your journal, you'll get off to a much faster start when it comes to writing essay assignments.

### **Critical Thinking:**

Critical thinking is the ability to engage thoughtfully and analytically in the "conversations" that surround and bombard us every day. Critical thinkers are able to consider points of view that are in conflict with their own. They are willing to weigh the evidence, acknowledge the legitimacy of perspectives other than their own, and respect the possibility that another's interpretation may enrich their understanding of the world. Critical thinkers realize that their own point of view is a product of their experience and reflects the values and assumptions they hold. They realize that new evidence and new understanding may lead them to change their minds.

The ability to think critically, to actively engage with the ideas of others, is crucial to learning in any environment, but especially in the independent study environment that characterizes Empire State College. Students come to Empire State to learn.

Learning is impossible when your mind is not open to new ideas and new interpretations of old ones. This does not mean that you should believe everything you read here! But it is important that you be prepared to engage critically with new ideas. And you should not be afraid to expose the ideas and assumptions you came with to the same critical light.

“Learning is impossible when your mind is not open to new ideas and new interpretations of old ones.”

Critical thinking is at the heart of active reading. It is a questioning stance that compels you to ask:

- What is the author’s point of view?
- What argument is being made here, and what evidence supports it?
- Has the author considered other interpretations of the data?
- Is there evidence of bias here or superficial analysis?
- If the author’s argument makes you uncomfortable, might it be because her argument has exposed your own prejudice or the shallowness of your analysis?
- Is the author treating the reader as a thoughtful person?

Critical thinking is also at the heart of effective writing. Writers who are also critical thinkers:

- Explain what they are trying to accomplish in every essay.
- Acknowledge their own point of view and try to give balanced interpretations of perspectives with which they disagree.
- Organize their writing logically, providing evidence to support arguments and using sources responsibly, always acknowledging the sources of ideas that are not their own.
- Never assume that something is true simply because an ‘authority’ said it.

### **Analytical Writing:**

Most of the writing adults do is either very informal and casual, in e-mails, for instance, or letters to friends, or it is business-related, in memos and reports. Even in previous college courses, the writing you’ve been asked to do may have been primarily descriptive in nature. The emphasis may have been on conveying information either about something you’ve read or experienced, or concerning your opinions or feelings.

The writing you will be asked to do in Empire State College's studies will often be different, in much the same way that active reading and critical thinking may differ from what you're used to. What your tutors will be looking for is the ability to analyze and issue, an argument, or a case study. They will want you to go beyond simply describing what you've read or experienced and demonstrate in writing your ability to look carefully at something, analyze it [break it down into its component parts], and critique or evaluate it.

Think about analytical writing as having three elements:

### Summary

Your first task in analytical writing is to satisfy your reader that you've understood what you've read or the project you've just completed. Here you describe for your reader what you've read. You explain who the author is and what her credentials are. You briefly review what the author was trying to accomplish in the piece you've read, and how she went about doing that. And you highlight the key conclusions reached or arguments made in the piece. The point here is to satisfy your reader that you have read and understood the work in question. You want to show that you have listened carefully to what the author has to say.

### Analysis

Your second task is to critique or analyze the piece. Here you are answering the fundamental question: how successful was the author in accomplishing her objectives? Depending on the nature of the piece you're analyzing, you'll want to explore:

- The nature and quality of the evidence the author relies on;
- The arguments or reasoning relied on by the author in developing her argument;
- The assumptions and values underlying the argument, and
- Any evidence of bias exhibited by the author.

In addition to this analysis of what the author said, you'll want to reflect on what the author didn't say... what was left out of the argument. Every author builds the best case she can for the argument or point she's making. She emphasizes those bits of evidence that support the position she's defending. But in the process she is also apt to down play, leave out or explain away evidence that does not support her case. Your job, as a critical thinker and analytical writer, is to identify and think

about what the author left out or discounted in making her argument. You'll want to ask yourself:

- Has she been clear with her reader about what she's trying to accomplish in this piece?
- Has she put her topic in an appropriate historical context?
- Has she acknowledged that she has a perspective or point of view [rather than presenting her own perspective as if it were the only possible or legitimate interpretation]?
- Has she provided or at least referred to sources of evidence, rather than using statistics or information without any attribution?
- Has she acknowledged and considered alternative explanations that may be in conflict with her own?

### Synthesis

The conclusion of your essay should connect the work being discussed to other works read or reviewed in the study as a whole. You want to help your reader fit this individual piece into the large puzzle of the study as a whole or the project you're working on. The operative questions here are:

- So what?
- What does this article/essay/book contribute to my understanding of the larger picture?
- What questions remain open?

## **Using the College's Resources**

### **Your Mentor**

Your mentor is your link to the rest of a complicated institution. We all work somewhat differently, and our relationship with each student is adapted to meet particular needs at different times. Early in your relationship, you should talk to your mentor about the best ways to stay in touch and the most effective ways to submit and get it reviewed and returned. Many students enroll without a clear understanding of their mentor's role, and that's fine. It will need to be negotiated over time, since each mentor adapts to the particular interests and needs of each student.



There are, however, some general rules worth keeping in mind.

- Your mentor can't anticipate your every need. So if you need help, ask for it!
- Your mentor is working with a lot of students, and has other obligations both within and outside the college. Many mentors are not full time employees of the college, and this may have implications in terms of the timeliness of responses. So recognize that you may not receive instant feedback! But be persistent and polite in seeking your mentor's support.
- Your mentor has probably got a preferred communications medium... some rely on the phone, while others opt for e-mail when given a choice. These things need to be discussed and clarified.
- Your mentor is a human being, who may, very occasionally, make a mistake! So keep copies of all assignments, and always follow-up, politely, if you haven't gotten a response to an assignment within a week or so.

"Your mentor is your link to the rest of a complicated institution. We all work somewhat differently, and our relationship with each student is adapted to meet particular needs at different times."

### **Other ESC employees**

Depending on the nature of the center or program you're enrolled in, there are always people you can talk to in addition to your mentor. Unit and center secretaries are, for many students, a key link to the rest of the college. They can answer lots of questions immediately, and they always know where to send you when your question requires more specialized feedback. Every Center also has an assessment office and student services personnel, who can help you solve problems within their particular fields of expertise.

### **Tutors and CDL course instructors**

These people are specialists who may or may not know a great deal about the college as a whole. Rely on them for direct help in relation to studies in which you are enrolled. And be sure to stay in close touch with them especially if problems arise and assignments are delayed. CDL instructors, in particular, work within

certain fairly strict guidelines, but they can often flex the rules for a student they know has been working hard in their course.

### **The Empire State College website [esc.edu]**

The ESC website contains a huge amount of information, much more than can be even hinted at here. Two elements of it deserve particular note, however.

The first is **MyESC** [<http://www.esc.edu/MyESC>]. This is your link to the larger college. At Orientation you should have received a small envelope with the title "STUDENT TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES." It includes information about how to obtain an ESC login and password. Once you're logged in, you can find all sorts of information about your enrollment, the status of studies you've already completed and financial aid information. You can also pay tuition and other fees electronically.

The second is ESC's **Library and Learning Resource Center** [fondly referred to as the Virtual Library]. Whenever you're asked to do any kind of research while in the college, this should be your first stop. The Virtual Library gives you access to some very powerful search engines, that will help you find the full text of articles in journals and newspapers, as well as helping you with bibliography building generally. The library also, under the heading "Learn More," has lots of resources to help you learn how to do research and report on it.

## Winter Commencement 2022

Roxana Toma, School for Graduate Studies

*Roxana Toma offered these words of greeting at the SUNY Empire graduation recognition ceremony held at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center in Albany on 17 December 2022. Thanks to Roxana for sharing them with us.*



Good afternoon graduates, fellow faculty, staff, leaders, and friends of the SUNY Empire community.

It is my honor to stand before you today and represent the faculty at this commencement ceremony. I will be short, as I recognize I am not the main event here. That distinct honor belongs to all of you wearing a cap and gown, waiting to cross the stage, and collect the recognition you so well deserve.

While preparing for this speech, I kept thinking that I need to find something inspirational to say, something that will give you pause and wow you. But then I realized that I don't need that. I speak for all my fellow faculty colleagues when I say that it is you who inspire us. Your commitment, hard work, determination, and resilience remind us every day of why we love teaching at this college. You, my dear graduates, are not short of a wonder! You've made it through despite the challenges you've faced, despite the professional and family obligations in your lives, and you used the little time you had left and many long nights to study and get a degree. That is quite a different setup from someone living in a dorm on a campus that is their entire ecosystem, where they have nothing else to do and no other responsibilities in life. You were anything but sheltered when you took this on, and I can tell you that your determination and resilience inspires us each and every day.

I teach in the graduate policy programs and I am always humbled when I hear what my students are doing – from organizing and running ad hoc shelters for an unexpected wave of immigrants arrived in NYC, to working front line in mental health services, addiction services, reentry and integration programs for former inmates, social and welfare programs for the poor, youth at risk services, domestic abuse women's shelters, nonprofits of all kinds, you name it! All my students have

one thing in common: a genuine deep care for others, for their communities, for a future that is more just, and a strong commitment to contributing to something bigger than themselves. Every year since I've been at the college, but especially during the pandemic, my students taught me that it is how you view the world that shapes your actions. When faced with adversity, you can strive to express compassion, courage, or resilience. When you see an opportunity in your community, you can respond with generosity, gratitude, or joy. My students taught me that when we choose to see the world in these ways, our actions affect the lives of those around us – our families, friends, communities, and even those we may never know. My students taught me to build bridges.

I will end my remarks by asking you a favor. We live in a very uncertain world, one full of adversities, but one that is also rich in opportunity. It is up to us how we respond. So, I ask you to take what you have learned and spread a message of understanding, inspiring in others a commitment to social justice and to making things better for those who need it most. We need this in the world, and I can't think of anyone better than you to be those messengers. You all know what it's like to work hard, persevere, ask for help when you need it, and step up to lead when you can.

My sincerest congratulations to the graduates of 2022. Enjoy the day and please continue to be both inspired and the inspiration. Thank you.

## Personal Definitions of Success and Failure

Carrie Steinman and Thalia MacMillan, School of Human Services



### Abstract

With the increase in non-traditional learners in higher education, colleges need to identify the personal definitions of feelings of success, failure, and the resources needed for students to reach their goals. This study utilized a mixed-methods research design with a sample of non-traditional undergraduate human service students. Personal definitions of success and failure revealed internal and external elements, including meaningful connections, academic outcomes, connection with instructors or classmates, and level of engagement. Implications for teaching and learning are discussed.

### **An exploration of undergraduate human service students' personal definitions of success and failure**

When it comes to defining student success, particularly for non-traditional students, we have more questions than answers. The population and enrollment of non-traditional undergraduate students are increasing (Hussar & Bailey, 2014). The non-traditional student could be considered as the new normal on college campuses, with this population of students having unique interests, needs, definitions, and career pathways (Sisselman-Borgia & MacMillan, 2018). Adult learners make up more than 50% of part-time and more than 33% of total higher education enrollment in the United States (Bergman et al., 2014). The increase in the number of non-traditional students is expected to outpace the growth of traditional undergraduate enrollment (NCES, U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

Non-traditional learners are typically defined as having one or more of the following characteristics: aged twenty-five and older, delayed full-time enrollment or non-consecutive enrollment, employed full-time, financially independent, have dependents, or engage in a caregiving role, and enrolled at least part-time in college (Engagement, 2005; Kenner & Weinerman, 2011). Non-traditional students typically are self-directed, have extensive life and work experience, are motivated and ready to learn (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011). Increased enrollment by non-traditional students may be due to the growing pressures of a competitive workplace, value in continuing education, retirement plans, and job losses (Kenner

& Weinerman, 2011; Quiginns et al., 2016). Within the field of human services, this is particularly the case. The term human services represents the provision of services within the community and may take the form of casework, addiction, disabilities, gerontology, social service, counseling, and/or advocacy. Many human services students return to school to finish their degree, for a promotion or raise in salary, and/or to change careers (MacMillan, 2018). Enrollments in the field of human services overall are increasing, potentially due to the increased need for services and skilled practitioners (NOHS, 2020).

While there are steady enrollment rates among non-traditional students overall, unfortunately, there is also a higher attrition rate (Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011; Hardin, 2008; Ishitani, 2006; Noel-Levitz, 2003). The attrition rate, defined as voluntary withdrawal or academic dismissal, may be tied to how successful or not that an individual feels while in school (Ishitani, 2006; Osam et al., 2016). As noted by MacMillan (2018), if a student feels a higher level of success or engagement in the learning process, this may lead to performing better in a course. Understanding what makes an individual feel like they are successful, engaged, or alternatively feeling like a failure is crucial to better serve the needs of non-traditional students overall.

Non-traditional students are distinctive in several important ways: financial and family obligations, learning styles, institutional and emotional barriers, and perceived academic deficiencies (Osam et al., 2016). Identifying factors that may contribute feelings of success and/or failure, as well as identifying resources that are needed is crucial to retain students in the ever-changing landscape of higher education.

To examine personal definitions of success, it is also necessary to define what it means to fail. Attrition may be representative or an outcome of failure. As noted by Ishitani (2006), attrition may be due to the risk factors and stressors that non-traditional students possess. These may be defined as life events, chronic strains, and daily hassles, and student's ability to manage stress and coping may impact their ability to complete their degree (Maroney, 2010). Students with work or caretaking responsibilities may have constant, yet varied, stressors; hence, definitions of success or failure in college may represent a more accurate metric of retention and engagement than simple attrition. As human service students may be working in the field and do not have the same amount of time to dedicate to their studies as traditional students, understanding what risk factors are present may lead to an understanding of how to serve students more appropriately.

Definitions of success or failure that represent or include specific impacts of coping may act as a motivator in college. Previous research examining attrition and success in non-traditional students has determined that the relationship the students have with mentors (Laurian-Fitzgerald, 2015), stress and coping strategies (Chung, Turnbull, & Chur-Hansen, 2017; Ishitani, 2006; Maroney, 2010), intrinsic motivation or locus of control (Bye, 2007; Pintrich et al., 1993; Quiggins et al., 2016), extrinsic motivation or locus of control (Quiggins et al., 2016; Ryan, 2000; Vallerand, 1992), and institutions integration of adult learning theory with their students (CAEL Institute, 2018; Cox et al., 2016; Kenner & Weirnerman, 2011) all may impact personal definitions. Quiggins et al. (2016), found that non-traditional students identified intrinsic motivation, task value, self-efficacy, internal locus of control, and extrinsic motivation as reasons to continue with their education.

Non-traditional students are somewhat unique as they may draw upon their life experiences to create new learning opportunities, something which traditional-aged students may not yet possess (Knowles, 1984). As noted by Knowles (1984), andragogy is one of the main philosophies that may help define education for non-traditional students as distinct from other areas of education and learners. Through this paradigm, self-directed learning, the inclusion of life experiences, learning that is directly tied to future roles, and the application of knowledge are valued by non-traditional students (Knowles, 1984). Within the field of human services, whereby students are asked to integrate their knowledge and skills, these concepts of andragogy should be examined within personal definitions of succeeding or failing. For example, one student may withdraw from classes if previous experience working with clients is not incorporated, while another may feel more successful if knowledge and skills for a future career are gained.

Much has been written on the significance of the student-instructor relationship in higher education. For the non-traditional student, the relationship with an instructor or mentor may be tied to the quality of the interaction, engagement, and provision of feedback (Britton, 2019; Chambliss, 2014; Chory, 2017; Cramp, 2011; Laurian-Fitzgerald, 2015; Mandel, 2003; Orsmond, 2013; Planar, 2016). Non-traditional students want mentors who understand the challenges they face as adult students. Studies have shown that well-developed mentoring programs are beneficial for non-traditional students in the areas of academic achievement and professional development (Laurian-Fitzgerald, 2015). In human services classes, where students are being asked to apply and integrate skills, knowledge, and theory, the presence of an engaging instructor or classroom environment may help



to model future practice behaviors or skills. Thus, overall definitions of success and/or failure should be explored further within human service students.

In higher education, success is typically viewed as degree completion, retention, and maintaining academic requirements (Blieck et al., 2019). In more recent studies with non-traditional students, the definition of success denotes a more complex answer. Success is truly an enigma as it is comprised of personal, cultural, and programmatic components (Hatch & Bohlig, 2016; Highpoint, 2017; Kırmızı, 2015; Kingston & Anderson, 2013; Kuh et al., 2006; Palmer et al., 2011; Perez & Taylor, 2016). Personal components represent elements of self-efficacy, previous academic success, or motivation (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014; Kuh et al., 2006). Programmatic components may include the presence of supports, degree completion, or course completion (Hatch & Bohlig, 2015; Kuh et al., 2006). However, as each student population may be discipline-specific as to what shapes the quality to which they are successful, it may be helpful to explore the definitions of success in non-traditional human service students.

Further, much of what we know about student success has been quantified as either course-based, degree-based, personal, or a combination of these or other factors (Cuksusic et al., 2014; Goncalves & Trunk, 2014; MacMillan, 2020; Smith & White, 2015). While research has tended to focus solely on the traditional undergraduate population (Almeida et al., 2012; Goncalves & Trunk, 2014; Kuh et al., 2006; Petty, 2014), there is a shortage of research examining success in non-traditional students and/or those interested in human services. This is problematic as students who feel that the college (or a specific department) understands their specific needs, how to help them succeed, or anticipates the issues that they may have are more likely to complete their degree (Adney, 2012; Cuseo, 2016; Gipson, 2016; Lemmens & du Plessis, 2012). Human service students, particularly non-traditional students, typically bring applied work experiences, values, and their definitions of success to the classroom. Faculty that understand the needs of non-traditional students, the value that they bring, and how the work-life balance may impact their learning, may help them further engage in the learning process (Britton, 2019; MacMillan, 2020).

The term “complex” may be appropriate to characterize definitions of success or failure as it may be indicative of something that has multiple parts or represents a concept that is hard to analyze or solve. One could postulate that “complex” adequately captures student success on the collegiate level. A dearth of information exists on personal definitions of success and failure within human



service students. Given the growth in this field and the applied nature of the knowledge and skills learned within it, this study will focus solely on the experiences of human service students. Previous research has focused primarily on the traditional-aged college population, only those online, or specific to a particular type of class. Findings have been limited by the use of primarily quantitative methodology, specifically focusing on academic outcomes (i.e., grade in a course or overall GPA), or one specific aspect of success or failure (i.e., self-efficacy). This research will focus on the questions: 1) How do undergraduate human service students define success? 2) How do undergraduate human service students define failure? 3) What specific factors describe personal definitions of success in human service students?

### **Methodology**

A mixed-methods research design was employed for this study utilizing a convenience sample of non-traditional undergraduate human service students. Before beginning the research, the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at SUNY Empire State University. As no list of human service students was available from which to recruit or sample, participants were recruited via several methods: information shared to them by their mentor, postings in six human services online courses, and flyers posted around four of the campuses at the main entrance. As varying methods were utilized to recruit the sample, no information is available on the response rate. Only students enrolled as part- or full-time would be reached via the sampling methods utilized. In each method of recruitment, the student was able to self-select participation and was given the name and contact information of the researcher if they were willing to participate in the study.

The demographics at SUNY Empire State University represent “typical” non-traditional students; the average age is 38 (range is 18 to 90), 85% working full or part-time, 50% have children at home, 80% are transferring credits from other institutions without a completed degree, and 40% are first-generation college students (Empire State University Factbook, 2018). The college is non-residential and has over twenty locations around New York State. Students across the state can take part in courses in a variety of learning modalities no matter where they are located (i.e., structured asynchronous online courses, independent studies, in-person study groups, and residency-based courses). Each semester on average the human services program offers over 100 courses and over 2,000 students taking courses each semester. Interested students were emailed a copy of the consent form for the study and a link to the online survey. No names, IP addresses, or any

identifying information was collected on the survey site. On a separate link, students could indicate if they wished to receive a copy of the results of the study, as well as provide their email to receive a ten-dollar gift certificate for Amazon.com. The incentive amount was based on Dillman et al. (2008) survey methodology, whereby the amount should represent an incentive to participate and help, but not be coercive or influence a participant.

The online survey was developed empirically, as well as guided by the results of a previous qualitative survey conducted by the author with undergraduate human service students (MacMillan, 2020); the resulting survey contained a mixture of quantitative and qualitative measures of success. This study will focus on three qualitative questions, as well as describing several of the quantitative measures of success. The three qualitative questions were the following: 1) Have you ever felt like you have "failed" in class? 2) Have you ever felt like you have "succeeded" in class? 3) What types of resources do you feel would help you the most to succeed in school? The questions were meant to elicit additional information about how each individual defined failure and success.

The quantitative measures included: demographic questions (age, gender, employment status, preferred mode of study), rating how successful they were in college on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 was not successful and 10 was very successful), type of assignments that they felt confident in, and type of ways that they felt successful. These items were developed by previous qualitative interviews with non-traditional human service students by the lead author; the results of those interviews indicated that these were all ways to measure success in human service students.

## **Analysis**

Analysis of the qualitative data was conducted utilizing an inductive analytical approach, specifically a grounded theory approach. The grounded theory allows for the development of theoretical ideas or concepts that are derived directly from the data and specific to a set of individuals (Strauss & Corbin, 2007). This analytical approach allows for the thematic coding of responses. This type of analysis is beneficial as it allows the analysis to utilize a comparison process that allows for new ideas and insights to emerge from the data. The qualitative data was reviewed by both authors utilizing this approach.

The qualitative information from the survey was put into a Word file and was distributed to both researchers for analysis. Each researcher utilized the same principles of inductive analysis techniques: thematic analysis, constant comparison, and member checking. Two students who took part in the previously mentioned qualitative survey (MacMillan, 2020) volunteered to take part in the member check-in.

The exploratory nature of this study and the type of data collected allowed the analysis to be framed around theoretical issues related to personal definitions of success. Thus, grounded theory approaches were the best choice for exploring this topic, as well as determining what type of patterns or themes would emerge (Strauss & Corbin, 2007). Through the triangulation of data analysis techniques, the researchers sought to increase the credibility of our findings to create an enhanced understanding of the personal definitions of success in the survey participants.

The first stage of analysis involved classifying a large amount of data into broad categories and themes. Individual responses to each of the questions were considered as a unit of analysis; this technique is reliable and valid for analysis purposes (Strauss & Corbin, 2007). Each researcher individually examined the responses for words, phrases, situations, and whenever possible, the written expression of feelings to thematize a shared meaning (Strauss & Corbin, 2007). Following a preliminary review of emerging thematic categories, coding schemes were collectively revised and interpreted to better describe themes that appeared in the data. Subjective agreement of inductive coding categories was obtained in a manner that increased the dependability of findings.

Both researchers used the themes to constantly compare relevant situations and nuances (Strauss & Corbin, 2007). The constant comparison allowed for the discovery of commonalities found in the survey responses. The researchers were careful not to force categorical descriptors so that unique themes could be derived directly from the data.

Finally, two students who had previously been interviewed in another study volunteered for member checking of the identified themes. The two students provided feedback and helped in the process of revising or accepting such themes identified during the initial qualitative analysis.

For the quantitative responses, as the study was focused on exploring factors specific to non-traditional human service students, the analysis was focused on

descriptive analysis only. The quantitative data was meant to provide additional information to the qualitative analysis.

## Results

A total of ninety-six undergraduate students in human services participated in the online survey. As multiple methods were utilized to gather the sample, the response rate could not be obtained for the study. The demographics of the sample are presented in Table 1. The age range was from 21 to 62 years of age, with a mean of 38.7 (SD = 11.7). The sample predominantly female (n = 81, 84.6%) and worked either full (n = 68, 70.8%) or part-time (n = 15, 15.6%). Over two-thirds categorized themselves as white (non-Hispanic). These demographic characteristics are similar to the overall undergraduate population from which it was drawn at SUNY Empire State University (Empire State University Factbook, 2018). The participants all had at least the characteristic of a non-traditional student (i.e., employed, had children or caregiving responsibilities, over the age of 21, taking classes part or full time).

Students were able to select the preferred mode of study. Over two thirds indicated that they liked structured online courses (n = 68, 70.8%), while 40.6% liked independent studies (n = 39), 35.4% liked blended studies or residencies (n = 34), and 18.5% liked face to face group studies (n = 18). Students chose between one to four preferred modes of study, indicating that many chose courses across different types of modalities.

	N	%
Age		
Range	21 – 64	
Mean	38.7	
SD	11.7	
Gender		
Female	81	84.6
Male	15	15.6
Ethnicity		
African American	14	14.9
Hispanic	10	10.6
Asian or Asian American	2	2.1
White (non-Hispanic)	64	68.1

Mixed race	4	4.3
Employment Status		
Full-time	68	70.8
Part-Time	15	15.6
On disability	6	6.3
Caregiver	3	3.1
Unemployed	4	4.1
Mode that likes to take courses		
Online	68	70.8
Face to Face Group	18	18.8
Independent Study	39	40.6
Residency	34	35.4

### Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis examined three questions: 1) Have you ever felt like you have "failed" in class? 2) Have you ever felt like you have "succeeded" in class? 3) What types of resources do you feel would help you the most to succeed in school? Thematic responses were garnered in the areas of success, failure, and resources needed.

### Personal Definitions of Success

Qualitative analysis revealed five overarching themes, each with sub-thematic responses. The first theme was categorized as "I" learned; there was a meaningful connection for the student to the material. This included feeling like one achieved something, feeling actively engaged, understanding the material, applying the information learned in other parts of one's life, helping others based on what was learned, and a general self of personal achievement and fulfillment. As illustrated by comments such as:

*"When I have had to work hard, think deeply, and apply knowledge from a variety of areas to complete work that I feel is satisfactory."*

*"Yes, when I struggle to get through the paper and get a grade that was higher than expected. I feel great!"*

*"Yes, when I learn something new and actually retain the information after the class is over."*

The second theme was categorized around the grade that was received. Students' comments reflected doing well in the course (in general) or the grade that was received for the course. As illustrated by comments such as:

*"Yes! There are many times when you work hard to finish an assignment and the professor grades it where you would hope to be. Feedback from a professor is always very rewarding as well."*

*"My grades and positive feedback. Any type of feedback is appreciated – without it, how can I improve?"*

*"When I receive any type of feedback, I like it. How else can I learn if I don't get receive any feedback?"*

The third theme was categorized as a positive connection with the instructor. Students' comments reflected that they felt a connection to the instructor based on communication or feedback that was received. As illustrated by comments such as:

*"Yes, when there was high engagement with the professor and other students. When many discussions were encouraged and thinking "outside the box"."*

*"Yes, my instructor took part in the discussions with us to discuss topics. She raised questions that I hadn't thought of and made me think. She gave me a great deal of feedback on my papers which helped me. It made me feel like she cared about my learning overall. She gave me tips on other courses to consider based on my interests – no one else has ever done that!"*

*"The instructor was available to us whenever we needed. I could reach out and schedule a time to speak with her. I really liked this as I felt that she cared and wanted to encourage my learning."*

The fourth theme was categorized as positive connections with classmates. As with the instructor connection, this revolved around areas of communication and feedback. As illustrated by comments such as:

*"Having great discussions with classmates on the discussion board or outside of class."*

*"Discussing topics with my classmates really helped me to understand the material."*

*"Several of us in the class had kids and were working full time. I really liked being able to talk with them as we had so much in common. We were great supporters for each other, cheering each other on."*

The fifth theme was categorized as feeling as if you can achieve goals despite difficulties. This was reflected by comments about getting work completed on time, managing despite issues, achieving a work-life balance, being able to pass and feel successful. As illustrated by comments such as:

*"When I pushed through and kept doing assignments even when I struggled."*

*"Yes, I've completed work on time even on a time crunch. It's being able to balance out full-time work and school."*

*"There were several times when one of my kids was sick, but I was still able to balance things and get the work done. I was able to take care of them and do finish my coursework. It wasn't easy, but I did it!"*

### **Personal Definitions of Failure**

Qualitative analysis revealed five overarching themes, each with sub thematic responses. The first theme was categorized as blaming the professor. Students in this category felt failure was as a result of unclear expectations set forth by the instructor, no feedback provided to them on previous assignments or course activities, feeling as if the instructor was not engaged in the course, feeling as if the instructor did not manage the course or just a general sense of blame on the instructor. As illustrated by comments such as these:

*"I had one online teacher not be very helpful or offer guidance when I was struggling with the course and another that didn't offer guidance other than repeating the instructions over and over with no examples or explanations."*

*"When the professor was not very engaging or present during the course."*

*"I would try to reach out to the professor to ask a question about the assignment. In one case she just copied what was in the syllabus and the other time she didn't respond. Seriously not helpful at all."*

The second theme was categorized as grades. Students defined failure based on a specific grade for a course or on a specific assignment that they felt was earned or wanted. As illustrated by comments such as these:

*"Yes, when I didn't get the grade in which I thought I earned."*

*"I never felt like I totally "failed". However, I was disappointed when I received a B- in a course that I tried extremely hard to do well in."*

*"I worked really hard in the class, with all that reading and discussions. I only got a B for the course. I think the professor should have taken my doing so much into account and gotten a higher grade."*



The third theme was categorized as internalized responsibility for failure. Students with this theme noted that the responsibility for failing was solely on them because of time management, health factors, work, parenting, anxiety, self-perception of abilities, or simply accepting responsibility for not doing well. As illustrated by comments such as these:

*"When I didn't do the best of my ability due to being a mother and working full-time."*

*"Yes, due to life circumstances I had to withdraw from three classes and felt incredibly embarrassed about it."*

*"I got so anxious working on one of my papers. I didn't understand what to do and I was afraid to ask the instructor or a classmate. I was so ashamed when I submitted the paper as I knew it wasn't my best work."*

The fourth theme was categorized as students simply stating that they have never experienced failure. It was unclear if this represented some type of internalized confidence, high self-esteem, or a level of motivation. Students in this theme indicated comments such as:

*"No, I have always done well."*

*"No, I always put forth my best effort."*

*"I have never felt that way."*

The fifth theme was categorized as student engagement. Specifically, similar to internalized responsibility, students in this category indicated that they had failed when they did utilize available resources when they were in need. As illustrated by comments such as:

*"Yes, I did not understand the course work and did not reach out to the professor for additional guidance. Also, I just did nothing. I did not participate in tutoring sessions that were being offered."*

*"Not being on top of my work, falling behind timewise."*

*"I was having trouble with my writing and my mentor had suggested academic support for writing help. I didn't use it even though I could have. One of the tutors reached out and I never got back to them."*



### **Resources That Are Needed**

Qualitative analysis revealed five several overarching themes, each with sub thematic responses. The first theme was categorized as student connections. Students reported wanting interaction with classmates or having peer support. As illustrated by comments such as:

*“Continued correspondence between students. I have learned a lot of information in addition to what is covered in the course.”*

*“An assigned study buddy or just being connected to other students.”*

*“On the online discussions, making sure that all participate when they can. Some people didn’t reply and without doing that, you can’t feel like you are connected to them.”*

The second theme was categorized as mentor or instructor relationships and communication. Students’ comments reflected wanting a deeper connection with their mentor or instructor and more interactions. Having consistent communication and feedback was mentioned as necessary for their success. As illustrated by comments such as:

*“An understanding and patient instructor. Some things come easily to me, and others don’t. So, when they don’t, a supportive instructor is an asset. Professors that are willing to take time and further explain complex concepts.”*

*“Working together with responsive and available professors.”*

*“More time with a supportive and engaging mentor. The most important single resource is your mentor. I had one horrible mentor and one excellent mentor and the different impacts they had on my overall academic experience was profound.”*

The third theme was categorized as concrete resources. Students’ comments reflected basic care needs, such as food, childcare issues, and receiving financial aid, as well as computer resources. As illustrated by comments such as:

*“Childcare, classes before work or after work and on the weekend, a mentor that is responsive, more resources at extension sites like a library, bookstore, gym discounts, a couple free mental health sessions – a wellness package while in school.”*

*“Good security and childcare”*

*“Having access to computers at each of the locations.”*

The fourth theme was categorized as academic skills and library support.

Students' comments reflected the wish to have additional academic support available and help when utilizing the library. As illustrated by comments such as:

*"I feel tutors are the most helpful, especially online chatting with tutors."*

*"Easy to navigate libraries. Both online and in-person."*

*"Tutors, online help, student help when needed."*

The fifth theme was categorized as course materials and engagement. Students' comments reflected the wish for more academic offerings in varying modes of study across locations, having access to course materials (e.g., such as online versions of the book available in the library), or being able to engage in the course material more. As illustrated by comments such as:

*"Access to all resources, including computer access."*

*"Online courses where instructors provide periodic Skype group discussions, where students can choose to log on to ask questions."*

*"I wished that all courses could be provided in many different ways. So far, I have only been doing online, but I would like to take some courses in person if I could."*

### **Quantitative Analysis**

As seen in Table 2, the academic characteristics are presented. Two-thirds of the sample had a concurred degree plan (n = 61, 63.5%); this type of plan indicates that they have selected the courses needed to complete their degree and have set forth a plan to take them.

On a scale from 1 to 10, where one was not successful at all and 10 was very successful, students rated themselves on average as 8.8. This suggests feeling a high level of success in this sample.

Students were asked to indicate which ways that they feel successful overall. The overwhelming majority rated finishing their degree (n = 85, 88.2%), doing well on an assignment (n = 79, 82.3%), and completing a goal (n = 79, 82.3%). This was followed by 66.2% who wished to set an example for family and/or friends (n = 64), 75.0% who wanted to do well in a course (n = 72), 44.1% feel like they knew the answer (n = 42), and 38.2% who indicated that they liked having a good discussion with a classmate (n = 37).

Students were asked which type of assignments they felt successful in completing. The overwhelming majority reported that writing about thoughts and feelings was the most preferred (n = 77, 83.8%), while two-thirds preferred assignments where they got to apply what they learned (n = 64, 66.2%), and over half researching a particular topic or field (n = 55, 57.3%). Two out of five students preferred to analyze a case study or set of information that was presented to them (n = 40, 41.2%).

	N	%
Concurred degree plan	61	63.5
Rating of success on a scale from 1 to 10		
Range	5 to 10	
Mean	8.8	
SD	1.2	
Type of Assignments Prefers		
Researching Information	55	57.3
Writing about thoughts/feelings	77	83.8
Applying what have learned to field	64	66.2
Math or quantitative problems	4	4.4
Analyzing a case study	40	41.2
Define Success		
Doing well on an assignment	79	82.3
Having a good discussion with a classmate	37	38.2
Feeling like you know the answer	42	44.1
Doing well in a course	72	75.0
Finishing your degree	85	88.2
Completing a goal	79	82.3
Setting an example for family and friends	64	66.2

## Discussion

Overall, the results of the study illustrate that personal definitions of success and failure in non-traditional human service students are anything but simple. Personal definitions of success revealed meaningful connections with the material, academic outcomes, connections with the instructor or classmates, and succeeding despite challenges. Personal definitions of failure revealed academic outcomes, blaming the professor, internalized blame, perceived level of self-engagement, and feeling as if one has failed. Students reported that to succeed connections with other students, relationships with a mentor or instructor, concrete resources related to

basic needs, academic resources, and varying course materials and engagement were needed. The quantitative findings revealed that students felt successful overall and preferred learning activities whereby information could be applied in real-life situations or case scenarios and that their reasoning or goal for completing was varied.

Andragogy maintains that adult learners value self-directed learning, the inclusion of life experiences, learning that is directly tied to future roles, and the application of knowledge (Knowles, 1984). As found in the results, the first theme was feeling successful when there was meaningful connection to the material. Students who reported feeling actively engaged, an understanding of the material, and being able to apply the information learned, had a stronger sense of personal achievement and fulfillment. These findings support the conclusions of adult learning theory. For non-traditional human service students, opportunities to connect the course work to their experiences, either through the application of case studies or within discussions, may represent a way to promote engagement in the course.

There were commonalities between the personal definitions of success and failure and the quantitative data. Students noted that internalized locus of control was the driving force for success or failure, as well as the type of assignments that they preferred. Success was defined by succeeding despite challenges, while failure was defined by internalized blame and perceived level of self-engagement. Student-centered assignments, where the individuals were allowed to express their feelings on a topic, research material, or applying the information in a way that was meaningful to them, were seen as successful. These findings are consistent with previous research that intrinsic locus of control is a driving factor for non-traditional students to continue their education (Bye, 2007; Quiggins et al., 2016).

External locus of control was another commonality between the personal definitions of success and failure in this study. For both success and failure, external locus of control could be noted as the academic outcome or grade for the course or a specific assignment. However, for many human service students, the grade for an assignment was not as important as other factors, such as finding meaning with the material or making connections with others. In non-traditional students, extrinsic locus of control may represent less of a motivating factor (Quiggins, 2016; Ryan, 2000).

Meaningful connections were another commonality between success, failure, and what students need for the future. The presence of a positive connection with an

instructor or classmates has the potential to make a student feel as if they succeeded, while the lack of this connection has the potential to make a student feel as if they have failed. This was reflected in the quantitative results in that over a third of students wished for a connection with classmates. As noted by Chambliss (2014), the presence of meaningful connections has a dramatic effect on learning, whereby college feels less like an academic set of programs and courses and more about a place of learning. Further, a connection with an instructor or mentor in non-traditional students has been found to be valuable and enhance learning (Laurian-Fitzgerald, 2015). Maintaining connections, either through modeling or variation of student activities, may be essential in engaging human service students within the class.

The findings have demonstrated that this group of non-traditional students felt successful in many ways. Over two-thirds were able to design a degree that met their career and educational interests (i.e., a concurred degree plan). Students who can complete this design process have been found more likely to graduate (Empire State University Factbook, 2018). As these students in the sample were overwhelmingly working-age non-traditional students with families, wishing to complete their degree, earn good grades, setting an example, or completing a goal are not surprising. To achieve a raise or a different type of position, many in the field of human services need a degree (Kenner & Weirnerman, 2011). Reasons for the degree should be studied further as it may impact definitions of success and/or failure.

Overall, the results highlight that personal definitions of success and failure are complex. Individuals may have multiple definitions that have the potential to impact how they perform in multiple courses differently. Academic outcomes, feedback, connections, reasons for the degree, and the presence of academic resources cannot be overlooked. In non-traditional human service students, this topic should continue to be explored in both quantitative and qualitative ways.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of this study is that a convenient sample of human service students was utilized. While the sample was representative of the larger population of human service non-traditional students at the college, it was not able to capture the voice of all students enrolled at the college. While the sample was limited to human service students, the sample was representative of those who attended the college and of non-traditional students overall as they all have at least one non-traditional characteristic. The findings represent a pilot from which further research can

explore personal definitions of success and/or failure, the type of resources that students need, and ways for students to feel confident.

A second limitation is that the students were from one college. However, this college has over twenty locations all around New York State and multiple teaching modalities are consistently utilized. The locations are situated in rural, suburban, and urban communities and the students represented diverse socioeconomic populations. The students who participated in this study took courses in all modalities with varied demographic characteristics that were similar to those at the college overall.

A third limitation is that the qualitative questions may have limited how a student responded. While most students' responses were an average of thirty words, some may have written more than others. The responses did shed light on many aspects of success and failure and provided a starting point for future research.

### **Implications for Future Research**

This study examined some of the factors that non-traditional students identified as contributing to their success or failure in undergraduate human service courses. As human service non-traditional students tend to be employed and often pursue advanced degrees to advance their careers, it is important to further explore this population of students examining their area of study as a contributing factor to their motivation for their success. Other areas of study, specifically health care, are fields where students are commonly employed when they return to college. It is important to research non-traditional students enrolling in these professional areas of study as students must integrate the learning into applied practice. As noted in this study, the ability to apply what was learned was recognized as a substantial reason for their feeling successful.

"If instructors and/or mentors can identify what specifically engages their non-traditional students in learning, this may provide essential information on how to retain them until the completion of their degrees."

Being able to integrate knowledge is considered an intrinsic motivation. As intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are layered concepts, understanding the other aspects of it may help us to understand why students feel successful or not in their college

courses. If instructors and/or mentors can identify what specifically engages their non-traditional students in learning, this may provide essential information on how to retain them until the completion of their degrees.

Similarly, the need for further research on the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic locus of control and student success is also recommended. A more detailed examination of factors that help students have a sense of an internalized sense of control over their learning and academic performance is warranted. As the population of students on college campuses is changing, we must evolve in how we approach teaching, learning, and the student experience. Hence, the provision of college services from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. may not be feasible for students who take courses from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Recognizing how and where we can accommodate the student experience is essential.

### **Implications for Practice**

In this study, non-traditional human service students identified a need for both internal and external supports to help them succeed in higher education. This may include creating connections, provision of support, flexible access to college offices, and having access to basic needs. It is crucial for colleges and universities that admit non-traditional students to address and provide necessary internal and external supports for these students to be successful.

It was clear through the quantitative and qualitative student responses that communication, feedback, and engagement with the instructor is an essential factor for feelings of success or failure for students. The provision of consistent feedback and

communication (albeit positive or negative) is highly valued and appreciated. Instructors need to recognize the importance of constructive feedback in how it aids learning and academic development. Access to professional development opportunities, such as resources and workshops, on how to provide substantial feedback and encourage consistent communication with their students may be helpful for faculty to achieve this.

Non-traditional students typically have numerous other personal and work obligations, limiting the time that they may have to interact and develop

“It was clear through the quantitative and qualitative student responses that communication, feedback, and engagement with the instructor is an essential factor for feelings of success or failure for students.”



relationships with other students. Colleges need to provide opportunities for non-traditional students to develop meaningful connections to their peers as this may be essential for their success. Structured activities within class time, assigning “study buddies,” student events after work hours, or informal networking are just a few ideas that can encourage communication and relationships to develop.

Application of learning is essential for the non-traditional student. Human service students overwhelmingly identified the importance of being able to apply their learning to practice settings as a significant measure of their success. Faculty must provide ample opportunities to integrate and apply theory to concrete practical situations. The ability to do so empowers students with confidence and engages them in the learning process.

## Conclusion

The increasing trend of adult, non-traditional students enrolling in higher education is expected to continue, particularly with the need for additional services and skilled practitioners in the human services field. This study has presented important research and practice implications for administrators, faculty, and professional staff committed to student engagement, retention, and degree completion. It was clear that the factors and themes identified in this study are important to consider if colleges and universities are going to help them achieve their personal and professional goals. Defining what it means to be successful and/or fail within the college setting is complex yet may glean ways to keep students engaged and retained within college.

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## Diversity and Narratives on the Global Economy

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*"... the economist, like a novelist, uses and misuses stories. Once upon a time we were poor, then capitalism flourished, and now as a result we are rich. Some would tell another, anti-capitalist story, but any economist tells stories."* Deirdre McCloskey (1992)

In April 2021 I took part in a small online conference sponsored by the SUNY Business School Deans and supported by the Center for Professional Development. The theme of the conference was "Business Disciplines Leaning into the Future: Tips, Tools and Practices for Incorporating Diversity, Equity and Inclusion into Business School Classes." There were around three dozen speakers, including myself and several former colleagues from SUNY Empire State University. The half day that we spent together was a fruitful and enjoyable learning experience, my only regret being that, given the pandemic conditions, we were not able to meet and exchange ideas in person. I very much hope that such events will be held more frequently, helping to increase the pace at which addressing social injustice becomes an integral part of business and economics education.

I decided to base my own presentation on a course which I taught throughout my two decades with Empire: *International Trade & Finance*. The course is taught in the classroom in Prague to undergraduate students of business and international relations. The students typically represent an amazing diversity of cultures and nations; at times it felt as if there were as many countries represented in the room as there were people.

As I contemplated my presentation, I drew inspiration from the quote at the top of this piece, by the economist Deirdre McCloskey. The course that I taught in the fall of 2021, at the beginning of my last academic year as an ESU faculty member, was very different from the outline that I had inherited that very first day when I walked into a classroom as a new adjunct. I will try to reflect here, as I did at the conference last year, on the aspects of my own learning that led me to develop my course content.

As McCloskey was right to point out, economics is in the end all about the stories we tell. And the subject matter of undergraduate courses on the global economy tend to tell a very standard story. Students learn that trade is an unqualified good, benefiting all nations who take part in it. Markets are also good; and the freer, the better. The story draws on the teachings of economists Adam Smith (or at least certain interpretations of Smith's work – he was a more nuanced thinker than many people realize) and David Ricardo. As with all stories about the past and present, what is left out, the 'silences' as Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) would have put it, is just as important as the actual content. The ahistorical approach favored in mainstream economics is not actually devoid of history - it is just one version of history that seems to matter.

At the beginning of my teaching career public discourse on the world economy was dominated by the concept of globalization. It was a time when scores of books had appeared, either praising or cursing globalization, and at the turn of the millennium Prague had hosted the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, so the debates (and clashes) were fresh in our memories. Globalization was the thread that connected a large part of what we had to say about the world and how it worked.

A recurring question in this discourse was: why are some countries rich and others poor? And how can poor countries catch up? Coming to academia from the corporate world, I had seen the workings and failings of markets at close hand. Not convinced by the dominant narrative, I felt obliged to examine my doubts and dig deeper beyond the surface. To make sense of the big questions of globalization we needed to add further questions. What were the stories that were being sidelined by the mainstream account of global progress? Whose stories were being tuned out? It turns out that it was the stories of the marginalized that got left out in the mythmaking of international economics.

"To hear the voices of the marginalized I needed to do better, and started looking for the stories that were not told in the standard textbooks, stories about colonialism and domination, past and present."

So, I started looking for those voices and stories that had been left out of the standard narrative about the world. At the time it was hard not to start with Joseph Stiglitz, the most articulate public intellectual challenging the status quo and the accepted wisdom on globalization. His work became part of the required reading

for my course early on. That Stiglitz had been something of an insider in the institutional architecture of globalization was a plus – but also a drawback. To hear the voices of the marginalized I needed to do better, and started looking for the stories that were not told in the standard textbooks, stories about colonialism and domination, past and present. When studying the exercise of corporate power around the world today, one must wonder what exactly has changed in the past hundred years.

I was lucky in my efforts as I could draw on the work of some distinguished economists who were able to bring their own personal stories to their scholarly work. Amartya Sen has created a concept of development that goes well beyond dry calculations of GDP, and which incorporates ideas of freedom. He has shown that human rights are an integral part of economic development rather than an optional extra. Ha-Joon Chang (2008) has examined the history of leading world economies and discovered that their own development was not driven by free trade; very much the reverse. Britain, the home of the Industrial Revolution, protected its industries right until the second half of the nineteenth century – indeed Chang makes the case that it was Tudor protectionism that laid the ground for later industrialization. Moreover, he has been able to bring his own personal experience, growing up in South Korea, to expose the flaws of standard prescriptions on development. The relatively recent Asian crisis of the late 1990s and the Latin American Debt Crisis of the 1980s provide fertile ground for critical enquiry. I discovered that if I asked a diverse group of students to explore such events, left to their own devices, they were perfectly capable of discovering narratives left out by the textbooks. We, in wealthier countries, tend to think of 2008 and Lehman Brothers when we hear the words ‘financial crisis,’ but the rest of the world has seen dozens of crises in the past few decades.

I found there was no shortage of voices of the marginalized (and I have mentioned only a couple of the most notable scholars). One only has to want to look for them. However, I am also convinced that an approach to teaching business and economics that integrates diverse perspectives will need to be inter-disciplinary in nature. I am still only at the beginning of my explorations. Though I cannot imagine doing this on my own, I am convinced that courses that incorporate a study of literature into the teaching of business and economics would enrich students’ educational experience and add considerable depth to their understanding. I have only started to experiment with ways of using documentary (and fiction) films in my teaching. I also see enormous potential for oral history. I very much hope that the Business School Deans’ conference on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion becomes a

regular event, and that it helps to bring together scholars and educators from different disciplines to develop new ideas and fresh thinking.

It is now almost thirty years since Trouillot wrote that “narratives are made of silences, not all of which are deliberate or even perceptible as such within the time of their production.” To better understand how economics can improve people’s lives, we will need to better understand people – and to hear the silenced voices that are all too often left out. That cannot be done without other disciplines, especially in the humanities. After all, Adam Smith, the founder of economics, was a professor of moral philosophy.

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“...themes of care help us to connect the standard subjects. The use of literature in mathematics classes, of history in science classes, and of art and music in all classes can give students a feeling of the wholeness in their education. After all, why should they seriously study five different subjects if their teachers, who are educated people, only seem to know and appreciate one?”

**Nel Noddings**, “Teaching Themes of Care”



## A Fool For Love

Robert Congemi, Arts and Humanities



I have to tell you the straight stuff about myself right from the beginning. I truly believe I am not like other people. I know most everyone thinks they're different, but I think I am *really* different. And, another thing, I'm convinced I was born this way. It is DNA, not because of things that happened to me. For instance, since I can remember I have worried about animals. Not just little animals, like birds and squirrels, but even big animals like horses and elephants and gorillas. Even ugly, horrible animals. One night last Winter, which was bitter cold, I looked out the back window of my family's house and on our little patio there was the nastiest looking creature. I don't know if it was a big rat or some kind of weird combination of animals, but it was shivering so badly and looked up at me with terrified eyes. I of course backed away from the window, a little overwhelmed, but I got up the courage to look out it again, to see how the creature was doing. Unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on your viewpoint, I guess, it was gone.

I worry about poor people, too. Lots of the time. I'll read a story in the newspaper or see pictures of people on television, and when it is about people who are suffering in Africa from incredible heat and starvation and are in refugee camps, I think I'll go crazy. For now, the most I can do is follow the story in the papers and hope to hear that things are getting a bit better from international aid or that at least they aren't getting worse. Not that I do only that. You know that guy who comes on television and shows you the pretty little kids standing in the doorway, incredibly starving with flies all over their eyes? And the guy tells you that just a small amount of money will stop some of this awfulness if you send that money? Well, last year I saved up everything I could from my part time job at the grocery store after school and sent money to him. I've been doing that ever since then, and I get notes from a little boy in

"I worry about poor people, too. Lots of the time. I'll read a story in the newspaper or see pictures of people on television, and when it is about people who are suffering in Africa from incredible heat and starvation and are in refugee camps, I think I'll go crazy."

Central America who tells me about all the good things that are happening to him because of me. And then there's the lady who cleans the house next door—does anybody worry about her? Having to clean up other people's dirty messes and clean their toilets for a living? Or the boy around the corner from where I live, even dorkier than I am. The other day a bunch of guys came up to him and pulled his pants down and knocked him to the ground for no other reason than that he wasn't as good-looking as they were or as cool, or because he liked to study and do homework.

Of course, I take a lot of grief from other people, even in my own family for instance. Apparently, I am a keeper of things. I admit to being sentimental and something of a hoarder of mementos, and for me lots of papers and other stuff qualify as a memento. Indeed, for me it is hard to discard anything tangible connected with anything I've done. And I am a writer of a diary. One night in particular my father went after me. My father, who works very hard as a construction worker, must have had a bad day hammering nails or taking orders from his boss, because when he discovered me writing in my diary in my room when everyone else in the family was watching the major league world series, he growled at me.

"Ben. The world series itself is being decided at this very moment. What are you doing writing in that goddamned diary for? Be a part of the present, not a part of the past. You're always doing this."

"I am trying to capture the present," I told him. "I like it more than you do, for I want to preserve it for all time."

He seemed to look upwards for guidance. "That's just bullshit," he commented. "It's a retreat. A retreat because of fear."

"Well, then many of the world's greatest writers were retreat-ers from fear."

My comeback didn't placate him. He kept coming at me.

"And this business of hoarding things is just another part of it."

"It's not hoarding."

"It's not hoarding? You have every ticket or picture or memorabilia that ever came your way."

"I even keep my old clothes," I said, bold.

"The least you could do is collect baseball cards. Did you ever think of that?" he asked, and then left.

His mentioning of baseball cards brings me to the narrative part of this story, the descriptive part over. What I really want to tell you about is an incident that happened last week. You see, my sister—to the endless relief of my father that someone in the family would fulfill this role—is the baseball player in the family. Or at least *softball* player. Sis is nuts about this baseball-related sport.

It simply has to be genetic, because when she was in her crib for goodness sakes, she wanted my father to throw a ball to her. For my own part, I'm not a bad athlete, not bad at all at baseball, however little enduring interest I have in it. Anyway, after several years of trying, this year my sister managed to find herself on a team that actually had a chance of winning a championship, for eleven-year-old girls in our town. Though my sister is not a particularly good player, she is unbeatable in her fervor, so that this championship game was destined to become a part of family history or folklore. For instance, the morning of the *big* game, my sister woke up nauseous from stress, nerves, pressure, hope, whatever, and within a few minutes of her arising was in our bathroom throwing up uncontrollably.

"It's not that important, Susie," my father lied to her, handing her a towel to help her regain something of her juvenile dignity.

"But it *is!* It *is!*" my sister gently corrected him.

At the town softball field, the pressure continued, indeed amplified. Wherever I looked, little girls in their uniforms and sporting gloves or swinging bats were unimpeachably serious, though the event itself was not particularly attended, not much more than a handful of spectators, probably all family, in attendance.

"This is for the championship!" one of the coaches screamed out happily.

Initially at a loss regarding my role at this event, but knowing I wanted to be at it in general support of my sister, I had brought with me to the game a copy of *Don Quixote* which I wanted to read through before graduating high school. Given *my* goal and attitude, I decided to without being noticed wander down the first base line into the outfield pretty far behind the right fielder's position. There I could relax, lie down with my book, perhaps *a la* Walt Whitman, loaf and invite my soul. From there, my presence would be appreciated and my sentiments be satisfied.

The only thing, though, after several minutes of consternation, which I didn't much pay attention to, I was suddenly approached by presumably the father of one of the softballers and an official of the game. At first, I panicked a bit and wondered if in some way I was doing something wrong.

"Is this okay to be lying here reading *Don Quixote*?" I asked, as the determination in the man's face and body became ever more clear to me. "I promise I'll be watching the game at the same time."

He didn't seem to understand me but proceeded directly to attend to his preoccupation.

"Ben," he said, surprising me by knowing my name. "You have to help us. You really have to help us. You see we have no umpire. The umpire didn't show up. Won't show up. Something about being called to work. I surveyed the people here and decided that you would make an acceptable umpire, considering that everyone else here is very very biased and I know you know something about baseball and are clearly outrageously fair-minded."

Of course, at first, I didn't know what to think or what to do. There I was ready to loaf and invite my soul, stretched out reading about the old Don's hallucinations, and now I was being dragged into everybody else's reality!

"But...but I don't know that much about umping," I told my apparent neighbor. "And I certainly don't know that much about umping girls' softball games." "There's nothing to do," he told me implacably, almost reaching out a hand to help me up. "And anything you don't know, I will tell you. Come on. We have no time to lose."

With that, the man walked me from the outfield into the infield and then to the pitcher's mound. I knew enough about the rules of softball to know that the umpire stands behind the pitcher. Imperceptibly, I scanned the crowd on both sides of me, worried about what people were thinking of me, some strange teenage intellectual being pulled from behind the right fielder where he was reading a book by a seventeenth century Spaniard. I could see there was a thick mood of seriousness about the parents and children and friends of the two teams of players. Finally, I found my sister on the bench of her team and tried to understand what she thought about all this. She of course seemed worried and a bit confused, and all I could think of was how little she was and apparently how much this game meant to her.

While everyone waited, the man who had confiscated me went over the rules as followed by this particular girls' softball league. I was not surprised by pretty much all of them, given my baseball experience, except for a few rules shaped to accommodate and adjust to competitions among young girls. At one point near the end of his instructions, he turned me towards first base and instructed me:

"And keep in mind that there is no sliding into first base. We want to teach the girls the game right, but apparently, they can't seem to separate first base from other bases. And besides it's probably dangerous, given all the activity at that base."

At this, I nodded my head in understanding, and then finally left him at the finish of his instructions and rather sheepishly walked to the side of the field where my sister's team was and placed my *Don Quixote* on the ground to one side of their metal bleachers and then walked back to behind the pitcher's mound. Seeing this, the players on both teams gradually began to get ready to play ball. A ten-year-old batter made her way to the batter's box, an eleven-year-old girl dropped into a squatting catcher's position, and the pitcher got ready to make her first pitch.

"Play ball," I rather timidly called out, and the game began.

Overall, my umpiring progressed fairly well. I got used to the underhand pitching, mostly erratic, I am sorry to say, and to the little field the game was played on. I wanted to do a good job for the kids, and I suppose, my sister and even my family, and I don't think it's inaccurate to say that I did pretty well. Overall, I think it's fair to say that the game was one mostly of strike outs and walks and errors and girls running crazily from base to base. Once in a while there were pop-ups and an infield hit, which made me careful to be on the lookout that none of the girls slid into first base. Sometimes I had the feeling that a number of the girls were not quite sure they knew what they were doing. The teams and the fans did take the game quite seriously, and I was constantly worried that there would be a sudden crying out of criticism from the teams or the fans that would unfortunately embarrass us all, and of course not serve the young ladies well. Once in a while a parent shouted out what shouldn't have been shouted out, or a coach boomed out desperate instructions. And by the end of regulation play the score was tied at 11 to 11. My sister had walked and struck out a number of times. As for myself, I was totally charmed by the entire game. It was rather cute in point of fact.

Finally in the bottom of the extra inning, the girls on the team opposing my sister's had more walks given to them than they struck out, so that the bases were loaded by them, and the action turned to this tiny little girl, looking so alien to softball, or to ball playing in general, it seemed to me. God, she scarcely knew how to hold the bat, much less swing it. Those facts notwithstanding, however, she did actually hit the ball after several pitches to her, a pathetic little grounder. At its appearance, the entire body of humanity present roared and rose to its feet. Since the ball traveled, if that is the word, toward the third baseman of my sister's team, fans and family on her side screamed at her to charge the ball and throw it to first base. The fans and family of the hitter's team screamed for her to run to first base, of course as hard as she could. Somehow, the little girl third baseman did indeed reach the ball, which had virtually stopped in its journey, picked it up and thrown it

towards first base. Shockingly, the throw was a good one and in the slow time of a second, I decided that the play at first base was going to be a close one, so I hurried in the direction of the base to make my call, to make it a good one, given this supremely critical moment. The little girl scurried down the baseline, the ball passed through the air, the little girl seemed to be beating the throw, and then, to my horror, with all the inhabitants of the earth screaming, to my overwhelming horror, most probably reacting to the cosmic screaming, she...she slid into first base!

Amazed, chagrined, saddened, I stopped my body language from waving my hands flatly as a gesture indicating that she was going to be safe. I didn't know what to do. I might have asked the divine Cervantes what to do, but I didn't. I thought of the instructions of my mentor. I felt further sadness, and then, reluctantly, signaled that the girl who had slid into first base was out.

"She...she'z...out," I articulated, putting a thumb up into the air. I almost tried to survey all the screaming fans. I wanted understanding.

"The batter is out." I leaned down towards the little girl. I almost reached out to her. "I am sorry, dear, but I have to call you out. You know the rules say you can't slide into first base. It's for your own good." I continued to want understanding. The championship had not been won by her. Her team would not be able to celebrate all Saturday afternoon and for the remainder of eternity.

And then, by all that is holy and important, the little girl looked up at me and started to cry. Her eyes filled with tears, they rolled down her face, her little body started to shake pathetically, and I thought my heart would break. I didn't know what to do. I had never been in such a situation before. I had frankly never seen such pain on the face of a little girl before, never known such pain to visit a child. Incredibly, incredibly, I changed my decision and announced that she was safe.

"No, no, please don't cry, dear," I tried to say consolingly. "I'm sorry. It was just the rule. I didn't mean to do it. You're safe. You're safe. You got to the base plenty before the ball. The rule really doesn't make that much sense after all. They don't have a crazy rule like that in baseball."

Well, if there had been bedlam before this pronouncement, now there was such a din that it beggars my ability to articulate. Now from the other side of the world, players and family and fans deafened my ears with their protest and indeed left their bleachers or where they were standing and started to come towards me. I was alarmed. The man who had originally taken me from

my comfortable literary world and put me in this impossible position charged out at me.

"The rule, the rule," he cried out. "I told you about the rule. She cannot slide into first base. No one can slide into first base. The little girl has to be out. The kid has to be out. She has not won the championship for her team."

Feeling exceedingly used and abused, I looked at him, re-confirming my recent decision. Everyone on the little girls' team was jumping up and down with joy, everyone on my sister's side continued to scream their protests at me. And then a quiet descended on everyone.

"You can't do what you've done," that man continued to say to me. "You are wrong. You have made a bad mistake."

As if in a deciding moment, as if confronted by an epiphany, as if making an existential gesture, I looked back at him, I looked at the crowds, and told him:

"I'll do whatever I damn well want to," and slowly walked off the field. Looking at no one, but intimidated by no one, I found my *Don Quixote*, picked it up, impervious to reprisals, wondered what my family, especially my father was thinking and doing, passed the bleachers, left the ball field, gained the roadway beyond it, and walked away—to the rest of my life, to my fate. The world would just have to take me as I was.

## Intercontinental Pedagogical Learning: Ecological Monitoring Techniques Used in New Zealand Courses for Urban Classrooms of New York City

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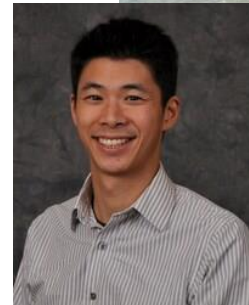
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*Manaaki Whenua, Manaaki Tangata, Haere whakamua.*

*Care for the land. Care for the people. Go forward.*

- Maori proverb



### Introduction

Learning from our colleagues in the discipline is an important part of collegiality, but it also allows us as instructors to incorporate, adapt, and evolve our curriculum and its delivery. Indeed, in order to stay current with methods, research, and theories in the field, it is highly pragmatic that we behave as continual students who are eager to learn, consider alternatives to current practices, and as most scientists ought to – occasionally consider the validity and effectiveness of the content that we have designed. Often, this pedagogical openness requires a sense of humility and humbleness to consider that one's own practices may need adaptation. Similarly to scientific research, the element of progress is critical for advancing knowledge in the field. Thus, a central question for all natural science instructors should be – how does our own pedagogy evolve? This can be followed by what kinds of material, delivery, and target audiences are ultimately successful? Akin to Niko Tinbergen's (1963) four questions for holistically understanding the cause, development, function, and evolution of any behavior, it is just that latter question that often eludes instructors.

Here, we discuss our travel to a country that has championed environmental conservation and a respect for its land, both culturally and ecologically, in which many international conservation agencies have modeled their own practices: New Zealand. We report on our constraints on teaching courses in ecology that traditionally maintain a field-laboratory component, yet the constraints we encounter when employing applications in our current



institutions. Furthermore, we discuss the kinds of field exercises that we learned and consider applications for future adaptation and collaboration.

## Diversity in STEM

Historically, diversity among undergraduate, graduate, and institutional faculty in higher education was severely lacking. While an unfortunate commonality that was all too uniform across many disciplines, the profile of natural science departments seemed equally parallel in their absence of inclusion (Billmoria & Buch, 2010; Whittaker & Montgomery, 2012). However, the recognition of this issue was the first step for addressing the lack of diversity and inclusion, and as such, institutions began to initiate progressive changes for addressing a monoculture among academia. As recent as the previous federal administration, there was significant support for creating both intellectual and financial incentives for underrepresented populations of students to seek degrees in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. With encouraging support from within higher education and selective agencies of governmental support, there have been many indicators that demonstrate an increase in diversity found across STEM majors (Hill et al., 2011).

While there is still a significant amount of effort necessary to adequately address the lack of diversity in STEM fields, there has been some demonstrated progress. For example, there has been a historical absence of African American, Latinos, and Native Americans (also identified as underrepresented minorities; URMs) engaged in STEM fields, which trailed behind white and Asian American participation (Hurtado et al., 2010). In 2010, URMS accounted for 14.7% of all undergraduate bachelor's degrees that were awarded in STEM fields (Estrada et al., 2016), whereas in 2013 this number increased to 24% (Strayhorn et al., 2013). Currently in the United States, women represent 35% of currently enrolled undergraduate students in STEM fields (Botella et al., 2019). The data still does not demonstrate equal representation across the STEM disciplines and continues to provide more evidence for efforts to improve diversity and inclusion across all science-related fields.

There are a several strategies that we can employ to continue to engage involvement of unrepresented populations of students. Estrada et al. (2016) have made four initial recommendations for improving STEM inclusion in science-related fields. In their action research model, they propose four steps for reducing barriers and engage science retention: a) evaluate, b) diagnose, c) plan action, and d) take action. Furthermore, they recommend five additional considerations that are directed at both administrative and faculty actions: a) increase institutional accountability, b) create strategic partnerships, c) articulate curriculum's best practices, d) address student resource disparities, and e) fire

students creative 'juices.' As a collation of these ideas, they can be implemented across the curriculum and adopted for employment across individual courses.

### Public Institutions in New York

In higher education, there is a distinct difference in both the operation and mission between private and public institutions. While both types of tertiary institutions aim to serve dynamic populations, public colleges and universities tend to serve a greater student body that are often under financial and geographic constraints. For example, in the 2018-2019 academic year, the national average cost for a four-year public institution was \$10,230 whereas the average four-year private school costs \$35,830 (<https://research.collegeboard.org/>). At SUNY, the average cost for tuition during 2019-2020 at four-year institutions was \$7,070 and \$4870 for two-year colleges (<https://www.suny.edu/>). Comparatively, the average cost for during the same academic year was \$6930 for four-year schools and \$4800 for two-year schools at City University of New York (CUNY; <http://www.cuny.edu/>). At the same time, 71% of the SUNY student population seeks some financial assistance in the form of grants, loans, and financial aid, whereas 84% of CUNY students seek similar support (<https://www.suny.edu/>; <https://www.cuny.edu/>).

LaGuardia Community College (LGCC) is a two-year institution that is part of the CUNY system, which awards primarily associates and professional studies degrees. SUNY Empire State University is a four-year institution that awards associates, bachelors, and graduate degrees and certificates. In a series of structural similarities, both institutions serve large numbers underrepresented populations, such as students from diverse communities, first-time degree seekers, first-generation degree seekers, and returning students.

In particular, LGCC and the Metropolitan locations (Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Staten Island) are anchored directly within the five boroughs of New York City. While both institutions serve urban populations, they are also physically constrained by their physical size and the escalating costs of real estate. Therefore, these locations have limited traditional laboratory spaces, and furthermore are absent of common field experiences typical of ecological or environmental courses. As enrollments in STEM areas steadily increase (Olson & Riordan, 2012), institutions in urban areas must continue to meet the demand and offer comparable experiences in the ecological and environmental sciences. In the natural sciences, majors in ecologically- and environmentally-related fields comprised of <10% of the total undergraduate conferred degrees (<https://research.collegeboard.org/>).

The field of urban ecology, as identified here as specific to the natural sciences as opposed to a broader conceptual approach that includes social and cultural ideals (McIntyre et al., 2000), is a rapidly evolving and increasing popular subdiscipline of general ecology. Considering that >50% of the world's population live in urban areas, applications of ecology

to urban environments is relatively new. As recent as a decade ago, publications specific to the area of urban ecology represented a mere fraction of all peer-reviewed publications, indicating both a bias, yet untapped area to study (Pataki, 2015). For example, of those extensively sampled, urban wildlife studies from 1971-2010 only comprised of <2% of all ecological publications (Magle et al., 2012). As scientists continue to acknowledge urban environments as dynamic and comparable systems, more scholars are publishing their research related to this field.



**Figure 1. Location of EcoQuest New Zealand at Whakatiwai on the western Firth of Thames and on the North Island of Aotearoa/New Zealand (images from Google Maps).**

Given the realistic limitations for conducting ecologically-based courses that typically demonstrate common methodologies for sampling the environment and collecting data, it has often led natural science departments and their instructors to be innovative in what and how they can offer similar field experiences. It is with this exact sentiment that we sought to collaborate with faculty whose pedagogical philosophy is based in field methodology and exploration, and to consider how these experiences can be adapted for our students in the urban environment.

## The Antipodean Experience

In February 2019, we traveled to Aotearoa (New Zealand) for two reasons. The first reason was to attend the Entomological Society of New Zealand conference held in Hamner Springs, NZ. The second reason was to visit EcoQuest New Zealand (<https://ecoquest.org/>) in Whakatiwai, NZ, and engage with students during their experience. Ecoquest operates in partnership with the University of New Hampshire's Department of Natural Resources and the Environment (NREN) and College of Life Sciences and Agriculture. Established in 1999, EcoQuest Education Foundation Te Rarangahau Taiao was created as a non-profit entity predicated on sustainability education and research. As part of their relationship with UNH's NREN, EcoQuest hosts rotating cohorts of international study abroad students mainly from the United States, but also from other global countries. The main courses are thematic across ecology, with options for a 15-week semester and 5-week summer courses. In addition to classroom instruction, students spend a significant amount of time in the field to engage in ecological field techniques, and to conduct individual research projects that employ these methods. While the physical location of the EcoQuest facilities is at the base of the Coromandel Peninsula along the Firth of Thames (Figure 1), EcoQuest faculty travel with students to various field sights located across the North and South Islands of New Zealand.

It has been repeatedly demonstrated that direct research experience deepens a student's interest in their desired field of science (Anderson et al., 2011; Carpi et al., 2017; Rodenbusch et al., 2016; Russell et al., 2007; Tsui, 2007; Weaver et al., 2008). With the pedagogical framework, EcoQuest has modeled their curriculum to engage students in a variety of field sampling techniques across different resident ecosystems. Moreover, many of these exercises tend to include an empirical component that stresses the employment of the scientific method. There are occasions where the demonstrated technique is already incorporated into an assignment or exercise. Comparatively, there are assignments that require students to design independent projects that implement previously demonstrated techniques or ask students to consider solutions for problem solving. Pedagogically, the



**Figure 2: Lecture on the shorebirds that visit Pūkorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre, where students learn about the migratory patterns of the shorebirds that visit and how to identify them.**

latter helps to reinforce creativity and innovation for considering ecological theory, employing the scientific method, and executing an empirical study that is data driven.

As such, one of the main facets of the EcoQuest program is to ensure that each student learns applicable techniques across multiple ecosystems, such as their Ecology in Action (EIA) program, but that they are also engaged in individualized directed research projects (DRP). Using the main field station as a home base for operations, DRPs are conducted on both the North and South Islands of New Zealand, and encompassing the many ecotypes found between the islands, including alpine, coastal, terrestrial, marine, and desert ecosystems. In emphasizing the scientific method, and under the guidance of the EcoQuest faculty, students are mentored across the conception, methodological design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. As students continue to exercise these tenants, they also become engaged in the entire process of scholarship, such as the dissemination of their research through written and oral presentations typical of the discipline. While the framework is imbedded in scientific practice and literacy, it is also expected that each project also incorporates a broader scope to include societal relevance, such sustainable systems.

Centered on ecological monitoring, we participated in field surveys of avian, invertebrate, and herpetological species. Primarily, ecological monitoring can broadly be classified as obtaining data from species within an ecosystem, such as population size, movement patterns (e.g., migration, immigration, and emigration), seasonality (including resident and transient populations), biometric data (e.g., morphological characteristics like body size and mass on fauna or diameter at breast height/DBH for flora), ecosystem composition (e.g., factors like density), and diversity. Thinking outside traditional paradigms, designing new methodologies for ecological monitoring may be necessary given the species and geographic location. Table 1 provides a brief list of ecological monitoring studies that have been conducted in New Zealand, including the methodology and purpose. Particularly for New Zealand, where many species are under conservation threat, many of the studies have focused on understanding population demographics and diversity within communities. Applicable to all ecosystems, biodiversity considers four interacting factors of species abundance, richness, evenness, and diversity (see Table 2), which provide a baseline for indices to compare between two or more communities.

**Table 1. Examples of ecological monitoring studies in New Zealand.**

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Type of Ecological Monitoring</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Reference</u>
Hochstetter's frog	<i>Leiopelma hochstetteri</i>	Mark-recapture	Species decline on mainland vs. population stabilization in pest-free sanctuaries	Longson et al. (2017)
Tuatara	<i>Sphenodon punctatus</i>	Mark-recapture; toe-clipping; body condition	Longitudinal study on effects of body condition	Moore et al. (2007)
tui	<i>Prothemadera novaeseelandiae</i>	Transects and non-invasive visual observations	Impact of native/non-native bird populations on pest-free island	Graham et al. (2013)
bellbird	<i>Anthornis melanura</i>			
skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Density estimation and mathematical modeling	Comparing surveying methods between common bird species on agricultural land	Weller (2012)
blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>			
song thrush	<i>T. philomelos</i>			
Australasian magpie	<i>Gymnorhina tibicen</i>			
Fiordland crested penguin	<i>Eudyptes pachyrhynchus</i>	Recording nesting sites and number of successful offspring	Demographic modeling for species management	Otley et al. (2018)
New Zealand sea lion	<i>Phocarctos hookeri</i>	Data tags/transmitters and naturalistic observations	Population dynamics and foraging behavior	Chilvers (2018)
Hector's dolphins	<i>Cephalorhynchus hectori</i>	Tissue sampling and photo identification	Movement ranges as correlated to increased genetic diversity	Hamner et al. (2014)
Auckland tree weta	<i>Hemideina thoracica</i>	Pitfall traps and footprint tracking tunnels	Measuring population success of weta species at pest-free location	Watts et al. (2011)
Ground weta	<i>Hemiandrus pallitarsis</i>			



Auckland cave weta	<i>Gymnoplectron acanthocerum</i>			
Cave weta	<i>Gymnoplectron sp.</i>			
Cook Strait giant weta	<i>Deinacrida rugosa</i>	Tissue sampling and mark-recapture	Examine potential effects of genetic bottleneck post-translocation to pest-free location	White et al. (2017)
Chatham Island black robin	<i>Petroica traversi</i>	Nest and clutch sizes, and pedigree construction	Consider effects of potential inbreeding from founding individuals	Kennedy et al. (2014)

To examine biodiversity, we sampled terrestrial, aquatic, and marine ecosystems (intertidal) around the main field center located in Whakatiwai, NZ. For terrestrial surveys, we visited the Pūkorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre (Figure 2; Figure 3; <https://shorebirds.org.nz/>). As typical of most fauna, mobility and locomotion presents



**Figure 3:** Students walk through the trail of the marshlands to survey a different site on the Pūkorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre.

challenges for researchers to collect data on moving organisms. However, for biodiversity, simple tools such as binoculars (or monoculars and telescopes) allow us to observe behavior and morphological features, count individuals, and identify the species at a considerable distance. With technological improvements, it has become both financially and technologically more feasible to collect data from remote locations, such as the use of cell phones to capture photographs using a combination of both digital and optical zooms (e.g., also known as digiscoping; see

Figures 4-6). Data can also be recorded on portable digital devices, such as cell phones and tablets, such that the increased battery life and connectivity to cloud systems prevent observers from losing information. On our surveys, we were able to observe endemic and migratory species (see Figure 7 for graphic of common shorebirds to the Coromandel Peninsula), such as the New Zealand dotterel (*Charadrius obscurus*), South Island pied

oystercatcher (*Haematopus finschi*), pied stilt (*Himantopus leucocephalus*), wrybill (*Anarhynchus frontalis*), and bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*).

**Table 2. The four factors for measuring biodiversity, and two prominent indices used in research and instruction: Simpson's Diversity Index (D) and Shannon Diversity Index (H).**

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Four Factors for measuring biodiversity:

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1. *Abundance*: the number of individuals in a species that are found in a given area (measured by population size or density);
  2. *Richness*: number of species in a community;
  3. *Evenness*: relative abundance of species in a community compared with one another;
  4. *Diversity*: a measure that combines the number of species (richness) in a community and their relative abundances compared with one another (evenness).
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Two Indices for Measuring Biodiversity:

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<u>Simpson's Diversity Index (D):</u>	<u>Shannon Diversity Index (H):</u>
$D = \frac{\sum n(n-1)}{N(N-1)}$ <p>Then compute, 1-D</p> <p>n = the total number of organisms of a particular species</p> <p>N = the total number of organisms of all species</p>	$H = -\sum [(p_i) \times \ln(p_i)]$ <p>p = the proportion (n/N) of individuals of one particular species found (n) divided by the total number of individuals found (N)</p> <p>ln = natural logarithm of a number</p>

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**Table 2 Note: For an example template on how to collect and calculate biodiversity data, refer to Pilgrim and Woo (2021).**

In addition to our avian surveys, the Firth of Thames is an estuary where both marine and freshwater systems intersect. We were able to sample intertidal organisms, such as the New Zealand cockle (*Austrovenus stutchburyi*), pipi (*Paphies australis*), and the New Zealand rock oyster (*Saccostrea glomerata*). In addition to biodiversity, we measured other biometric information like shell length, substrate composition, and density as a measure of interspecific competition from desiccation. In the vegetation surrounding the field center,



we were able to engage in species identification of flora, measure diversity, measure DBH for biometrics, and also record distinctive morphological features to consider broader aspects of evolution, genetics, and speciation. Here, we identified and recorded biometric data on species, such as pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*) and kohekohe (*Dysoxylum spectabile*). During 80 million years of geographic isolation (Waters & Craw, 2006), many flora and fauna species evolved under conditions of sympatric speciation, where the separation of geography from its nearest landmass of Australia influenced the selection of genetic and morphological characteristics distinct to the island biota. As a large-scale example of MacArthur and Wilson's (1967) theory of island biogeography, New Zealand species were constrained by the sizes of the North and South Islands, which limited capacity but allowed for immigration and emigration between islands. Moreover, both flora and fauna selected for morphological traits based on increased size and in absence of venom or poison, and having ecological niches filled by invertebrates, birds, and select herpetological species over mammals and serpents.



**Figure 4: Students setting up their cameras and digiscopes in order to record their scores of shorebirds.**



**Figure 5: Students use Celestron digiscopes to view and record shorebirds at the second site.**

Like birds, reptiles like skinks (*Scincidae*) and geckos (*Gekkota*) are prominent in New Zealand, with the iconic tuatara (*Sphenodon punctatus*) now restricted to predator-free offshore islands. We set pitfall traps, which consists of burying a bucket into substrate and coating the lip of the container with a non-toxic lubricant to prevent organisms from climbing out and escaping, in select locations. While actively conducting both avian and flora surveys, pitfall traps allow for passive survey of skinks, geckos, and terrestrial invertebrates. In this

exercise, we collected and identified some common herpetological species like the shore skink (*Oligosoma smithi*) and black shore skink (*O. suteri*), and collected data on gender, size using snout-vent length (SVL), and looked to see if individuals were once collected and tagged in a unique method. Toe-clipping is a method by which digits are selectively amputated from either the left or right and fore or hind limbs. This combination allows researchers to identify whether animals have been previously captured, and if they have not, then they can be marked with a unique combination for future monitoring. This method, known as mark-recapture, is a way to estimate population size based on the probability of recapture when it is impractical or impossible to collect all the individuals in a geographic population. The formula for mark-recapture is as follows:

$$N = (M \cdot C) / R$$

N = estimated number of individuals in the population

M = number of individuals captured and marked

C = total number captured the second time with and without a mark

R = number of individuals recaptured those with a mark

There are both invasive and non-invasive ways to conduct mark-recapture studies. While toe-clipping may be perceived as an invasive method, it allows research also to collect genetic information from the tissue samples that are maintained. Importantly, genetic research in ecology has provided contributions on the cellular and molecular level, which were absent from traditional field studies. Other non-invasive methods for marking fauna or flora may be in the form of tags, both physical or data loggers for transmitting information remotely; however, physical tags are often conspicuous to elements of threat, such as predators.

Ecological monitoring is one of the foundational techniques for conservation biology and science. New Zealand's Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai (<http://doc.govt.nz>) has championed species conservation and has been known internationally for their



**Figure 6. A view through the digiscope. A flock of South Island pied oystercatchers (*Haematopus finschi*). Spotting Tip: Look for a white and black bird with orange beak, eyes, and legs. While its cousin the variable oystercatcher (*H. unicolor*) can have some white feathers, *H. finschi* is positively identified by the tab of white on its shoulder.**

research, management, and policies for protecting the land. Moreover, sustainable actions transcend formal education boundaries, but have been easily adopted into common practice. It is thus important that we invest in teaching new researchers and scientists how to 'read' the ecosystem and how to preserve the biosphere for future generations.

## Implementation: Continued Learning and Practice

In the Summer 2014 term, Dr. Audeliz Matias, Dr. Nathan Whitley-Grassi, and Dr. Kevin Woo created the Ecology & Earth Systems Field Research Experience (now called the Ecology & Earth Systems Field Research Residency;

<https://www.esc.edu/residencies/ecology/>) at SUNY Empire State University, which occurs

at the Upland Interpretive Center of the Biological Field Station of SUNY Oneonta (<https://suny.oneonta.edu/biological-field-station/>). Initially, we recognized an obvious void in our curriculum that would support biology and environmental science students who wished to complete their degree at ESU. As one of the fundamental components in the pre-2020 and current guidelines for Science, Mathematics, & Technology degrees seeking a concentration in biology and environmental sciences was that students needed to demonstrate either laboratory or field experience. In our institution, devoid of traditional physical laboratories, students often acquired these experiences through earlier transcript learning, internships, apprenticeships, professional experiences, prior learning, and/or independent study instruction with an ESU mentor. For students who wished to complete the entirety of majority of their degree at ESU, the Ecology & Earth Systems Residency intended to provide them with the direct hands-on experience, side-by-side with

resident faculty to learn and execute some of the common field techniques in the discipline. More recently, we created a series of open educational resources (OERs) to address issues of accessibility with this kind of course, but also to supplement student



**Figure 7. Graphic that lists the common shorebirds of Miranda. Printed copies of the images were given to students to aid in their identifications and biodiversity surveys of shorebirds.**

learning (Matias et al., 2018). Some of our OERs, and those created by other ESU faculty and their collaborators, can be found at: <https://www.esc.edu/its/educational-technology/open-educational-resources/>

While the aim is for students to both learn and apply these techniques, what we demonstrate annually continues to evolve. The methodologies that we demonstrate intend to have multiple applications across various terrestrial and aquatic systems; however, scientists continue to devise innovative techniques for studying old and new problems. It is also for this very reason that I continue to learn from colleagues that are employing newer techniques for both research and instruction, and to consider how we may be able to revise our own curriculum for the inclusion of current methods, and how they may also be adapted to suit our students and the academic goals.

From our experiences with EcoQuest New Zealand, we have proposed a future joint collaboration with students from ESU and LGCC. While methodological applications in the urban environment provide truly unique experiences for learning ecological field methods, the opportunity for a learning collaboration potentially connects students with inherently similar backgrounds to partake in a joint transformative pedagogical experience. Particularly, this may be the first traditional field survey in which students from urban areas have the opportunity to travel outside of their immediate locale. For students who may altogether experience several 'firsts,' the combination of a new environment, different students, and demonstrations of their academic interests in action could be the gateway for transformative learning, and ultimately into professional careers in STEM fields.

## Conclusions

Our experience in New Zealand and working with EcoQuest Education Foundation presented an opportunity for us to learn how active learning strategies in the form of direct ecological field experience is taught in a country that respects the land. While colleagues here in the United States continue to use techniques both for instruction and research, learning from international colleagues offers a global perspective on pedagogy and an insightfulness that may be overlooked when designing one's own curriculum. Neglectfully, we occasionally need an extreme external alternative, and in this case literally from those on the other side of the world, to broaden our openness and approaches to fieldwork in the natural sciences. Even though this shared opportunity was immediately important for us as instructors and scholars, the intent is for a legacy that we can impart to our students at CUNY and SUNY, and a collective notion that science education and access to modes of learning is universal.



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We thank the academic staff at EcoQuest New Zealand for their help with instructional field techniques and experience with working with international students. PR would like to thank Dr. Chris Longson from EcoQuest and Dr. Greg Hollwell from the University of Auckland. K LW would like to thank Dr. Mary Mawn (Dean of SUNY ESU School of Science, Mathematics and Technology) for her support in this endeavor. In addition, K LW would also like to thank the ESU Faculty Development Award for support to attend the Entomological Society of New Zealand Conference and to conduct fieldwork with EcoQuest NZ.

## Dedication

This paper is dedicated to our great friend Dr. Chris Longson, who passed away on September 16th, 2021, after a five-year battle with myeloma-related cancer. Chris was an avid naturalist, brilliant scientist, awesome teacher, and a loving husband and father. Documented here, this paper highlights our last experience with Chris in New Zealand, and indeed emphasizes a further testament to his commitment to science, the environment, and society. His contributions to the field of ecology and conservation, and his leadership in mentoring burgeoning researchers can only be summarized by the continued success of his students and the impression that he left on the scientific community. A keen lover of coffee and good music, we will always have a hot cup ready for him and his favorite song turning on the record player.

## Weblinks

EcoQuest New Zealand: <https://ecoquest.org/>

Pūkorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre: <https://shorebirds.org.nz/>

New Zealand Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai: <http://doc.govt.nz>

ESC Ecology & Earth Systems Field Residency: <https://www.esc.edu/residencies/ecology/>

Biological Field Station of SUNY Oneonta: <https://suny.oneonta.edu/biological-field-station/>

ESU OERs: <https://www.esc.edu/its/educational-technology/open-educational-resources/>

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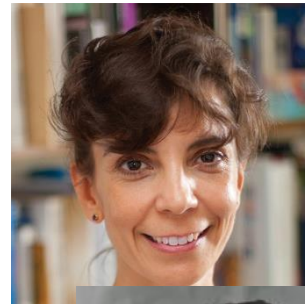
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## Finding Inspiration

Eileen M. Angelini, former Associate Dean,  
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Professor Emerita, School for Graduate Studies



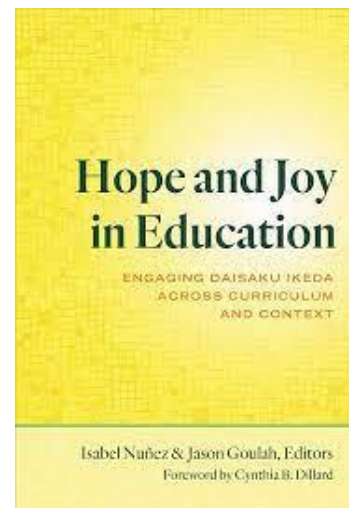
### A Review of:

Nuñez, I., & Goulah, J. (Eds.). (2021). *Hope and joy in education: Engaging Daisaku Ikeda across curriculum and context*. Teachers College Press.



In producing *Hope and Joy in Education: Engaging Daisaku Ikeda Across Curriculum and Context*, editors Isabel Nuñez and Jason Goulah (2021) offer a timely collection of essays by contributors who were inspired by school founder and education philosopher, Daisaku Ikeda.<sup>1</sup> In the introduction, Goulah posits two essential questions: “Why now?” and “Why Daisaku Ikeda?”

To answer the question of “Why now?” one needs to understand that over the past two years, American society has been in a state of despair and anxiety due to overt, structured racism; rising violence; the pandemic; and socioeconomic inequality. One of the principal aims of this collection of essays is to call on teachers and education professionals to “revitalize hope and the promise of education or to establish joy in teaching and learning” (p. xiv). Goulah elucidated: “We seek to remind readers that the classroom — virtual or otherwise — is still a magical space, brimming with the brilliant and creative energy of young people. In this place, one can always find joy” (p. xv). With the energy of adult learners, such as those at SUNY Empire State College, it is incumbent upon the instructor to foster a positive environment of inclusivity where students feel that their concerns are heard in a reciprocal manner.



As for the question “Why Daisaku Ikeda?” Ikeda is “a global peacebuilder and Buddhist philosopher ... [and] the founder of the Soka network of 12 schools, two universities, and a women’s college in seven countries across Asia and the Americas” (p. xv). Ikeda’s philosophy of education centers around “finding peace and eradicating the fundamental causes of human conflict,” calling his educational philosophy and practice “human education” or “humanistic education” (p. xvi). This means for each of us, especially as educators, that we encourage the person right in front of us and that we believe in that individual’s full potential. In so doing, we as educators are awakened to our own humanity and full potential. This is achieved through the four commitments and ideals of dialogue, global citizenship, value creation, and creative coexistence. As the editors put it, “For Ikeda, [happiness] is the courage, appreciation, hope, and joy born from realizing one’s unlimited capacity to create meaning from both learning and life’s realities, meaning that contributes to the betterment of oneself and others and, thereby, to positively transforming society” (p. xv).

“To answer the question of “Why now?” one needs to understand that over the past two years, American society has been in a state of despair and anxiety due to overt, structured racism; rising violence; the pandemic; and socioeconomic inequality.”

Let’s examine how the contributors embrace Ikeda’s philosophy of education and hope and joy, as well as how Ikeda’s philosophy manifested itself in their classrooms. The book is divided into three parts. “Part I: Curriculum and Teaching for Hope and Joy” is comprised of six essays. Out of this amazing set of essays, we are limiting our comments by highlighting Nozomi Inukai and Michio Okamura’s “Determining to be Hopeful in Hopeless Times,” and Allison Mattheis’ “Building a Change-Focused Community with Practitioners as a Source of Hope.” Inukai and Okamura stressed that “It is ... critical that we change our perspectives toward our students from managing their weaknesses to nurturing their strengths” (p. 12). What follows is an inspiring guide on how to engage in teaching practices with a renewed focus on human education. Mattheis emphasized her belief that teaching is “a dynamic and joyful vocation” (p. 46) and explained how Ikeda’s philosophy has had a personal impact on her: “I derive great hope from maintaining a disposition of openness like this and believe that Ikeda makes a strong argument when he states that ‘lifelong learning and education – the process of study, self-improvement, and development throughout life – are indispensable’” (Garrison,

2014, as cited in Mattheis, p. 47). Both essays offer multiple examples of how this “renewed focus on human education” can be achieved in the classroom as well as how this “disposition of openness” manifests itself.

Part II: “Hope and Joy in Aesthetic and Emotional Experience” is also comprised of six essays. For this set of essays, we were particularly inspired by Theodora Regina Berry’s “Finding Hope and Joy in Curriculum Theory Through Critical Race Feminism,” most especially when she offered: “While I honor the roots of curriculum studies, I can find engaging in this work distressing, difficult, and sometimes painful. I push back in ways that may appear as anger but that comes from a place of passion for my work. How do I find hope and joy as a Black woman in curriculum theory?” (p. 80). Throughout her essay, Berry eloquently demonstrates how she is not broken and does not need to be fixed. Equally meaningful is how Deborah Donahue-Keegan discussed in “Social-Emotional Learning and Value-Creating Education: Synergistic Possibilities for Cultivating Hope and Joy in Higher Education” the need for establishing a “space of security.” For Berry, space of security is “vital to dialogue processes conducive to transformational learning. Building relational trust is fundamental to establishing psychological safety, which is an essential prerequisite for authentic sharing, learning, and development within groups” (p. 109).

Part III: “Seeking Inner Joy and Outer Hope” again features six essays. This set of essays provides practical insight into hope and joy in education, particularly John Lupinacci’s “Value Creation and the Revitalization of Dependency as a Core Goal of Ecocritical Education” and his call for teaching for peace (p. 159) and Joe Ohlinger’s “A Curriculum of Becoming” and his emphasis on “forbearance” (p. 178). In these essays, “forbearance” refers to perseverance in challenging classroom conditions whereby the teacher is able to foster an environment of mutual growth.

Núñez’s conclusion, “Hope and Joy, Trust and Faith, and Poison as Medicine” sets the stage for moving forward amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder in Minneapolis. She readily admits to the difficulty of writing the collection’s conclusion in these turbulent times but how, now more than ever, there is an urgency for all of us to turn terrible toxic poison into medicine that promotes an inclusive and positive classroom environment, what we, as reviewers, term as “inclusive positivity” (pp. 210-215).

## Note

1. "Daisaku Ikeda is a peacebuilder, Buddhist philosopher, educator, author, and poet. He was president of the Soka Gakkai lay Buddhist organization in Japan from 1960–79 and is the founding president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), one of the world's largest and most diverse community-based Buddhist associations, promoting a philosophy of empowerment and social engagement for peace. He is also the founder of the Soka Schools system and several international institutions promoting peace, culture, and education. ... Ikeda is a prolific writer who has published more than 250 translated works, ranging from commentaries on Buddhism to biographical essays, poetry, and children's stories" (Daisaku Ikeda Website Committee, 2021, paras. 1, 12).

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"The second and more troubling problem with the narrow economic focus of the educational policy...is the way it plays into a longstanding undemocratic tendency in American education policy, and that is a narrow understanding of the lives and work of working class-people. The approach to schooling for them has often been a functional one heavy on job training and thin on the broader intellectual, aesthetic, and civic dimensions of education. And since policy influences the content and philosophy of programs -- new programs particularly -- this narrow understanding can be reproduced for new generations of students."

**Mike Rose**, "More than a Paycheck"

## Not for the Faint of Heart

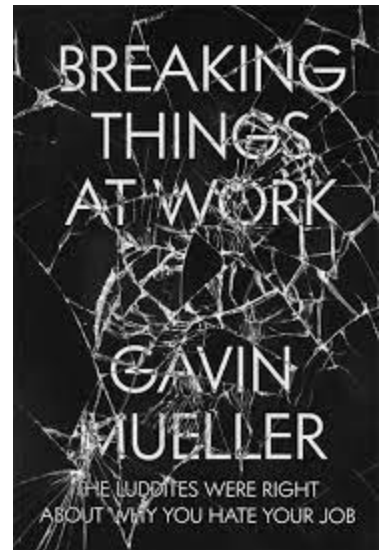
Andrew J. Hurd, School for Graduate Studies



### A Review of:

Mueller, G. (2021). *Breaking Things at Work: The Luddites are right about why you hate your job*. Verso Books.

The writings of Gavin Mueller in *Breaking things at Work* are not for the faint of heart. To comprehend and appreciate the writing, you must first have at least a basic understanding of Marxism, Socialism, and Communism. Mueller evaluates the perspective of individuals and their role in society. He considers how political views and practical concerns play an intricate part in an individual's choices that lead to a Luddite perspective. Mueller does not equate Luddism with primitivism. He argues that Luddism is a valid way of handling technological changes in a way that existing jobs are not affected by nor lost to technology. The evolution of jobs for the sake of technology seems to be a paradigm creep that is almost inevitable. Although Mueller discusses Luddites throughout the book, more specifically, the book is *not* about Luddites, but rather about how Luddites play a role within political discourse and how Luddites force policy changes.



### *Mueller's Goals*

Mueller's goal is "to turn Marxists into Luddites" (2021, p.5). So, what does it mean to be a Luddite or a Marxist? Originally (among 19<sup>th</sup> century English textile workers), Luddites were part of a group that sabotaged their work equipment because they were concerned that the technology was changing or replacing their livelihood. Luddism is often associated with fear of technology, but this is not always the case. Some Luddites are accepting of newer technology, if it is introduced in a way that existing jobs are preserved and the technology does not change the requirements of the employee (Martinelli et al, 2019). Pure Marxist societies are those without a class structure (Betts, 2022). Each person in society works for a common goal, ensuring the equal socio-economic wellbeing of all individuals. This structure is difficult to

establish because there always seems to be a ruling body that strives to maintain its power over capital and industries. It is generally agreed that what might be considered a “pure” Marxism has not been fully integrated into a government structure (Betts 2022), but its principles have laid the framework for socialism and communism.

Mueller’s secondary goal is “to turn people who are critical of technology into Marxists” (Mueller, 2021 p.5). He believes that the ruling class of society *should* be critical of technology, which contradicts Marxist’s belief but moves toward socialism. He outlines the struggles of the workforce with the ruling class and points out that Luddites, by their true nature, struggle with change and the evolution of technology. He further argues that the excessively wealthy—billionaires, in our time—hold society back to further their own political goals. Individuals such as Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, and Bill Gates all play political roles in introducing technology to society that divides the people into groups, while only superficially offering the populace places for their voices to be heard. This provides a false sense of social welfare, while maintaining dominance by an elite group over the evolution of technology. Mueller believes “technology optimism of billionaires comes from the political right and center, it can also be found on the radical left, where so-called accelerationists anticipate a fully automated luxury communism on the back of the wildest fantasies of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs” (Mueller, 2021).

### *Questions to be asked*

When we ask, “Does technology actually help?” we are on the path to becoming Luddites. In the spirit of Luddism, do we become resistant to technological changes because the ruling class wants us to use it to further *their* goals? Historically, Luddites fought technology, not for the sake of fighting technology itself, but for the fear of what the technology would do to jobs and society. Henry Ford introduced many different technological changes to the auto industry and met a similar Luddite mentality. The workers, while not truly appreciating the changes in the industry, were more concerned with their ability to use the machinery. They often sabotaged the machines to show how unreliable those technologies could be.

Written in 1835, *Philosophy of Manufacturers* (Ure) provided a foundation that Marx used to explain the need for a classless society. Ure’s writing proclaimed that “cotton-spinners in particular have been so blinded by prejudice and passion that they could not see the immense economic benefit of improvement.” Workers feared that the equipment would replace the need for human interaction with the product. The plantation owners saw the machinery as a tool to make more money. The socio-

economic structure was in place where the ruling body dictated what technology was going to be used, and the workers had to follow. It is not a question of whether the cotton harvest could have been accomplished without the machinery, it is about the resistance to change the workers introduced in the face of the technology. Socialist beliefs influenced the decision-making process and the workers who are governed by those beliefs resisted the implementation of the technology.

### *Socialist Views of Luddites*

Socialism is a political and economic system wherein property and resources are owned in common or by the state (*National Geographic*, 2022). Mueller believes that if the workers have no investment in the incorporation of technology, they will tend to acquire Luddite tendencies. If the governing body is controlling the property and resources and forcing the workers to use what is dictated, then the employees will only be viewed as resources for the production system. Workers will be evaluated on how well they can use the technology they have been given and on which they have been trained. This will not allow workers to overcome the demands of the socio-economic structure where they are always subservient to a controlling body. It is not about technology enhancing the workforce; it is about how resistant workers will be to using the technology if they don't see the *need* for that technology. Even in some socialist societies, the workers may not have a say in the technology, a situation that will only encourage the Luddite mentality and support Mueller's perspective on Luddism driving political climates.

### *Luddite Mindsets*

Mueller explains that there are four main "mindsets" that play regular roles with political influence: degrowth, primitivism, accelerationism, and maintainers.

*Degrowth* suggests that current society can go back in time when technology wasn't as advanced, and individuals would not fear the implementation of the technology. The workers would grow with technology implementation and therefore play a larger role in technological advancement. Luddite workers would be given the time to adopt the technology at their own pace.

*Primitivism* is a larger step back than the degrowth mindset. This mindset is about doing work *without* technology no matter what the consequences to production might be. This mindset reflects where many individuals think Luddites want to be. But, as Mueller argues, the issue at hand is not just about not using technologies, but about a slower proper integration of the technology into work practices.

*Accelerationism* argues that production and manufacturing can only *benefit* from the use and adoption of technology as fast as it can be developed. The only option is to go forward with technology no matter the cost to the individual. The accelerationist believes that jobs can be repurposed, and people can learn to do different jobs, if their current jobs are replaced by a machine. A good example of this in New York is the New York State Thruway. With the removal of highway toll booths, the toll booth workers needed to be repurposed. New York State planned to save the cost of the employees and leave them unemployed (Campbell, 2022). There was a three-year period where workers knew the Thruway Authority was removing toll booths. As State workers and paying union members, they were given the opportunity to find other jobs within the State. Of course, none of the implementation strategies allowed toll booth operators to stay in their current role because they were being replaced by technology.

*Maintainers* seek to maintain the technology status quo. This mindset is not about introducing new technology into the workforce; instead, it is about using the current technology to its fullest. Mueller states that “maintainers often couch their efforts in the language of the mundane and humble, what they call for is nothing short of a radical break with how we encounter technology” (Mueller, 2021). They do not look to introduce new technology, but instead continue with the daily routine and manage the best they can.

### *Concerns*

Mueller’s perspective on Luddism opens up many questions. He assumes many different political perspectives within his book. The concept that all Luddites can conform to Marxism and/or Socialism is flawed, the flaw being that all Luddites want to be in a society that is classless or dominated by a ruling body that would dictate technological change. Mueller’s four influential mindsets also do not consider the concept of laziness or the experience of being overworked. There are individuals that don’t want to do work and don’t care if new technology could improve their production or productivity.

His argument—that Luddism opposes automation—is short sighted. Implementation of automationism within different cultures can have different effects. If you take a well-educated workforce and introduce a tool that will automate their work, they could have many different reactions. These reactions can be grouped into three categories. The first category of workers is made up of those who are okay with the automation technology; the second could be impartial to the technology; and lastly, there are those who would be opposed to the technology. The reaction



would be based on how workers feel the technology will affect their jobs. If they can see the benefit and have experience with similar technologies, they might be more inclined to accept the infusion of the new technology. If individuals are already overwhelmed with their current work, they could be resistant to the incorporation of the technology because they don't have time to learn the implementation. They don't necessarily fall into Mueller's four main Luddite mindsets, but instead have external influences that add unneeded pressure. These external influences are not direct Luddite behaviors, but behaviors driven by being overworked in a diminishing-returns workforce. If you introduce the new technology into a low income, less educated population of workers, you may be met with resistance (and thus with Luddism) because those workers cannot comprehend what is being introduced.

Mueller does not address how education plays a role in Luddite beliefs. The educational levels of the target workforce *could* play a significant role in Luddism. Think about the origins of the term Luddite, which, as noted earlier, comes from 19th century British textile workers. It is a good assumption that most of the workers were not well educated and considered it a blessing having a job where they could provide for their family. The term itself was not partitioned into economic classifications to say there was no differentiation between a rich Luddite or a poor Luddite. Mueller assumes that if you had Luddite tendencies, then you were part of the workforce.

Mueller also does not consider not-for-profit for (NFP) or for profit, public benefit corporations (PBC) such as Patagonia, Kickstarter, and RStudio. These organizations are typically not driven exclusively by capital building and consider implementation of technology for the greater good. RStudio, for example, while a publicly traded stock company, reserves a governing shareholder contingent that all work for the company. The company's commitment statement says, "RStudio believes that corporations should be run for the benefit of all their stakeholders including employees, customers, and the community at large. Consequently, RStudio is a Delaware Public Benefit Corporation (PBC) and a Certified B Corporation®, which means that our open-source mission is codified into our charter, and that our corporate decisions must balance the interests of community, customers, employees, and shareholders" (RStudio, 2022). This does not fit into the scenarios that Mueller outlined in his book. A company that benefits the management and the employees equally does not fit into a socialist or Marxist ideology. Other PBCs might approach their profits in a different way, and thus, perhaps, employees within the company will not exhibit Luddite behaviors.

It is a scenario that suggests that not all organizations with a governing body are out to control production. Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU)—a not for profit educational organization—is an online college that describes itself this way in its mission statement: “SNHU is committed to making a positive social impact in the communities we live and work around the world. We believe that opportunity is not universally distributed, so in our social impact work, we provide access to education for underserved, marginalized, and nontraditional learners and support to overcome the barriers they face” (SNHU 2022). This college provides free to low-cost education to about 30,000 underrepresented students each year. The college has made it its mission to raise educational awareness in low-income urban areas and countries, to displaced refugees and other individuals in need, and, overall, to increase the economic impact within a given region. This again is not to say that Luddism won't play a role in the attitudes or behaviors of students or educators, but rather it provides an example of a corporation, albeit an educational institution, offering a means to do something for the greater good without a capital agenda.

### *Conclusion*

Mueller's theories about Luddism and its role in political climates have merit. It is easy to pick scenarios that his writings didn't address. He writes that Luddites were largely independent workers that resisted technology changes (Mueller, 2021). Of course, he is not able to examine every possibility or every factory that workers might encounter, which could influence their Luddite behaviors. His evaluation and documentation of Luddite behavior as it manifests itself through history is definitely a structure many future projects could use upon which to base their research.

Mueller's establishment of political scenarios that both lend and take away from the Luddite mindset can be strengthened by the incorporation of more variables—that is, additional influencing factors. Incorporation of economic status and beliefs into the propensity to have Luddite behaviors would be an interesting perspective to evaluate. So too, looking at whether the worker has experienced similar technologies in the workplace could be another interesting factor to consider. Also, there was no separation of ethnicity or gender in Mueller's writings: he groups all people into one classification of “worker.” Overall, reading this book will enhance your own mindset on Luddism as it pertains to Marxism, Socialism, Left and Right-wing political views, and political influences that drive changes in technology. Knowing that he believes that the richest people in the world drive technology for their own personal gain is a topic that will surely be debated for years to come.

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## Found Things: The Learning Contract

*From its start, one of the bedrocks of then Empire State College was the use of the “learning contract.” This form of describing and organizing a student’s ongoing studies was intimately tied to a larger project of rethinking some of the ritual objects of university life—in this case, the course syllabus. The learning contract sought to provide a distinctive architecture of learning, accented the non-course-based spirit of ESU at its founding, and reflected the “contractual” relationship of student and mentor. There was a democratizing urge here: each contract was signed by the student, the mentor, and by the “learning center” administrator (usually the “associate dean”). And the fact that a plan of study was made explicit and a section on “methods and criteria of evaluation” was included in each contract pointed to an underlying critique of professorial authority (the dangers of arbitrary top-down decision-making). Here also was a reminder of the theme of “self-directed learning” that Malcolm Knowles’ “andragogy” championed and that pushed us to recognize the connections between self-directed learning, student agency, the mentor role, and ways of learning.*

*This document from 1973 offers us a glimpse of the rationale for the adoption of the learning contract and for its particular components. It also points to the ways in which a distinctive philosophy of adult learning was embedded in day-to-day mentoring practices.*

*Thanks to our colleagues Richard Bonnabeau and Anastasia Pratt, whose attention to and care for our SUNY Empire State University archives continues to make such a difference. There is much to save.*

Office of Academic Affairs  
Empire State College

Working Paper

August, 1973

EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING CONTRACTS:

INTELLECTUAL COMPETENCE

Establishing clear relationships between College objectives and learning contract elements, and evaluating student progress in these terms, is a complex task that educators have yet to master. Empire State College will not solve all the problems of definition and assessment this year, or even next. But we have the opportunity to take some major steps forward and in so doing help amplify the meaning of our degrees and make a major contribution to higher education as well. Operationalizing our College objectives will be the most intellectually demanding and the most significant challenge we face. We now have substantial experience with a wide range of students, and a broad base of talent among faculty members and administrators so we can tackle this challenge with optimism and confidence.

This Working Paper speaks to "Intellectual Competence". Another concerning the major dimensions of personal development will be forthcoming in early fall, together with some individual case histories illustrating relationships between an individual's full program and College objectives.

In his Taxonomy of Educational Objectives - Handbook I: Cognitive Domain, Bloom identifies and defines Knowledge, and then proceeds to outline five intellectual skills: Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation. Taken collectively, these intellectual skills can be seen as the anatomy of cognitive learning. The purpose of isolating separate skills is not to emphasize dissection and classification; rather, it is to create an understanding and a language by which we can talk about teaching and learning.

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As we talk, then, about cognitive learning and its relationship to the educational objectives of Empire State College, we mean no disservice to the mystery of learning. When we attempt to separate learning into its separate parts, we do so with the hope that we can thus be clearer with each other as we discuss learning, and that we can become more aware than before of the relationships that exist among the parts of the anatomy.

If we see the student as a problem solver, as a manager of his own existence, and as a learner who needs to learn how to learn, then improved intellectual skills help him become better equipped to solve problems, to manage, and to learn. The educator's role is to deliberately bring such skills into the student's problem-solving cycle, to bring an expanding range of competence to the student's own motivations, interests, and goals. Thus, intellectual skills become internalized and more immediately functional as problem-solving tools.

All this is simply one way of saying that the objectives of the College are not centered on "knowledge" for the sake of knowledge. Rather, intellectual skills are important because they increase the capacity of the individual to manage his own affairs and to move effectively within his chosen endeavors.

If the Mentor is to move students through experiences that are deliberately designed to increase intellectual skills, it is necessary to be specific about what those skills involve and how they can be implemented in learning contracts. In the pages that follow, we have attempted to do three things. First, we have taken the liberty of giving a shorthand version of Bloom's taxonomy, for a quick and easy reference. Second, we have attempted to raise some general questions about how learning contracts are organized or designed in regard to those skills. And third, we have selected both small and large segments of actual learning contracts to illustrate ways in which mentors and students are attempting to deal with cognitive learnings.

In presenting small segments, we recognize that both cognitive skills and learning contracts serve complex functions, and an isolated narrative about specific skills is not necessarily the mark of an outstanding learning contract. Characteristically, learning contracts tie things together and make explicit connections between and among related activities...therefore being less "quotable" for its specific examples. The larger segments are included to offset this problem and to show the complexity and interrelatedness of learning activities.

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We also recognize that any complex learning activity may call for several levels of competence. Therefore, some examples offered under one level also contain elements of another. To edit out these segments would have required even further dissection and "decontextualization", so we did not take that step.

#### KNOWLEDGE

##### Bloom

###### Knowledge of Specifics -

- terms and symbols: to define terms via attributes, properties, or relations; to know vocabulary and to read and converse intelligently
- facts: knowing dates, places, names, etc.

###### Ways and Means -

- ways of organizing, studying, judging, and criticizing ideas and phenomena (process): using methods of inquiry; knowing standards of judgment; using techniques and classifications as links between and among facts
- conventions: knowing characteristic ways of treating ideas; knowing the use, style, and practice of conventions; knowing form and usage, as in writing
- trends and sequences: knowing interrelationships; knowing continuity and development; knowing evolution
- classifications and categories: knowing classes, sets, divisions; knowing forms and types
- criteria for judgments
- knowing techniques and procedures, and methods

###### Universals and Abstractions -

- knowing schemes, patterns, and theories
  - knowing principles and generalizations
  - knowing theories, structures, and interrelations
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Learning Contract Questions

- How much factual information does the student already possess?  
Is the difficulty level of the contract properly placed to build on what the student already knows?  
Will the contract explicitly call for the learning of new information?  
Will readings provide the student with a clear exposure to the ways in which bodies of knowledge are organized?  
What guides are available to help the student improve his ability to handle knowledge in characteristic form, style and usage? Does the contract ask the student to demonstrate these skills?  
Will the readings provide an historical overview or exposure to trends, continuity and expansion of bodies of knowledge, as well as to current models and techniques?  
Will the student be appropriately exposed to major theories held by leading exponents within an area of knowledge?

Learning Contract Examples - Small Segments

"During the course of this contract, the student will be engaged in exploring a number of 'Third Force' or humanistic psychologies. The purpose of these studies is to provide the student with a framework and an understanding of the theoretical concepts and objectives of the field of humanistic psychology."

"This contract will be primarily directed toward reading in the field of child development. The purpose of this study is to provide the student with an overview of various theoretical approaches to the emotional and cognitive development of the child, including an exploration of the role of mother-child interaction in personality development. More specifically, this learning program will cover the intellectual, emotional, and social growth of the neonate, infant, toddler, pre-school, and school-age child."

"The introductory exploration of theatre begun by the student in her previous contract will be extended to a more advanced level through an examination of the theatrical theories of Constantin Stanislavski, Bertolt Brecht, and Jerzy Grotowski. An examination of this kind will provide her with exposure to a wide range of production theories since the three principals--when considered together--embrace most of the theories of theatre developed in the centuries of theatre history. An



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extension of this primary focus will be a closer study of the work of Brecht. Again, her initial readings will provide a general familiarity of the work of the three theatre artists which will be amplified as the contract progresses."

"The student will familiarize herself with a wide array of textbooks in the field of child psychology and development in order to obtain an appreciation of different approaches and points of view regarding child development. Two of the more popular texts are by Stone and Church, and Mussen, Conger and Kagan. She should include in her readings works on personality, e.g., Hall and Lindsay, and in cognitive development, e.g., Elkind and Piaget."

#### COMPREHENSION

##### Bloom

###### Translation -

- from one level of abstraction to another
- from one symbolic form to another
- from one verbal form to another

###### Interpretation -

- to reorder or arrange
- to avoid "reading in" one's own ideas
- to recognize limits within which interpretations can be drawn
- to distinguish between warranted and unwarranted conclusions

###### Extrapolation -

- to project consequences and ramifications
- to extend trends beyond the data
- to infer with some degree of probability
- to conclude, to predict, to estimate

##### Learning Contract Questions

- Is the student asked to translate from the abstract to the concrete?
- Is the student asked to interpret and give meaning to isolated situations?
- Is the student asked to translate complex communications into simpler forms?
- Is the student asked to state a situation "in his own words"?
- Is the student asked to illustrate, or to give examples?

Learning Contract Questions (cont'd)

- Is the student given clear opportunities to attempt his own interpretations?
- Are there sufficient avenues of "feedback," trial and error, and other interactions with the Mentor or other more experienced scholars?
- Can a student recycle his efforts so that he can learn through experience about his own interpretive limits?
- To what extent do the learning activities require the student to extend, to infer, and to conclude?
- Does the learning contract include a systematic element with which the student must deal?
- Is the student asked to assess the "givens" in a situation and to make and project inferences?

Learning Contract Examples - Small Segments

"The student's essay on the family will serve a double purpose of using subject matter studied and offering an opportunity to produce a written project which would be a departure from the writing requirements of her job. The interpretation of research findings will be a second writing project."

"The student will choose four pairs of buildings from the following periods/places: Egypt and the Near East; Greece and Rome; Early Christian; Medieval; Renaissance; Baroque; Nineteenth Century; Twentieth Century. The purpose of this will be to do a comparative analysis of the buildings which will reveal some of the extra-architectural considerations that may have influenced the designs in some way. The comparisons will be presented in the form of detailed lessons with the appropriate visual materials included."

"Using available bibliographic materials, the student will write a research paper on the Virology of Human Tumors. The scope of the paper should be that of a scientific review article, and should be designed to show the following:

1. The student's comprehension of basic biological and chemical processes.
2. Clarity of exposition.
3. Evidence of the student's ability to grasp the methodology of biomedical research.
4. Evidence of the student's ability to distinguish between proofs, working hypotheses, and conjectures.
5. Evidence of the student's capacity to understand the limitations as well as the promise of any given area of investigation."

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Learning Contract Examples - Small Segments (Cont'd)

"After having read Marchchild in the Promised Land, the student will define what she perceived to be Claude Brown's basic view of his world and the value system which seems to have produced this view. She will apply this definition to her own life or the lives of the population with whom she is working, explaining why the book has given her a better understanding of a culture."

## APPLICATION

Bloom

## Abstractions -

- using abstractions in particular and concrete situations
- remembering and applying principles, ideas, and theories

Learning Contract Questions

Does the learning contract ask the student, in a variety of ways, to apply theories to his own real-life experience?  
 Are field work projects linked to the study of theory?  
 Does the learning contract give the student practical problems to solve, and relevant work to be done?

Learning Contract Examples - Small Segments

"The student will tape a series of singing lessons. First he will make a tape of a lesson where he begins to work with a student on the interpretation of a song. Then he will listen to the tape, write a summary and critical analysis and make a written plan for the next lesson. He will then tape the next lesson, listen to it, make a transcript, summary and critical analysis, and plan the next lesson."<sup>1/</sup>

"The student will be doing field research in the Azores, living and working in one or two small villages. The purpose will be to:

1. Study women of the Azores by living and working among them.
2. Observe and participate in religious practices and economic exchanges.
3. Determine the effect that the economy and religious beliefs play in the role of a woman.
4. Determine the women's duties in child rearing.
5. Understand how religion and economic factors inter-relate in women's overall roles and duties."

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Learning Contract Examples - Small Segments (Cont'd)

"Weisman and Aron describe research techniques in connection with field work projects. The student will become knowledgeable about these techniques and will select three she feels would be most valuable as tools for research carried on by her department. She will then undertake three small research projects."

"The student will observe, record, and analyze the dynamics of the various groups which convene regularly as part of the daily functioning at work. Such groups would include the patient therapy group, case conference groups, and regular staff meetings."

"The student will choose a case of publicized environmental decision and will write a brief perspective analysis in terms of the theories propounded in the selected bibliography."

"As part of this contract, the student will develop a rationale for motel siting on Lake George and other major Adirondack Lakes. This must take into consideration the aesthetic, economic and environmental factors related to such land-use planning. A map will be prepared showing the present location and size of motels on Lake George as a starting point. This map will be redrawn with overlays to indicate other configurations which would take into consideration the above mentioned factors. Zoning, sign control, cluster housing, condominiums, camping, etc., must be included as they apply to motel siting. The student will also study the reports of the Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board as they apply to this project."

## ANALYSIS

Bloom

## Elements -

- to identify elements; to recognize unstated assumptions;
- to distinguish facts from hypothesis

## Relationships -

- to identify connections and interactions between elements and parts; checking consistency of hypotheses with given information; comprehending interrelationships among ideas

## Organizational Principles -

- to perceive the organization, systematic arrangement, and structure which hold a communication together; to recognize form and pattern; to recognize general techniques used

Learning Contract Questions

- Do the learning activities ask the student to acquire new analytical skills?
- Is the student exposed to new readings and experiences which must be identified by their elements, by their connections, by their form and pattern?
- Is the student asked to demonstrate his ability to recognize discrete elements, relationships, and large-scale organizational principles?

Learning Contract Examples - Small Segments

"A comparative analysis of the Montessori School and the student's own teaching will be made, emphasizing effectiveness and responsiveness of the child. References will be cited in the analysis."

"The evaluation will be written work consisting of the student's observations, contacts, and readings in an analysis of the role of women in the society, and personal reaction and growth to this experience."

"The student's purpose in this contract is to develop analytical skills in reading. At the same time, the student will be investigating the historical development of the novel in English Literature. Both of these matters relate directly to her creative writing, which is at the center of this contract. She needs to read to learn specific writing techniques, and she needs to know how those techniques developed through time, where things stand today, and possible directions in the future. In addition to her participation in the creative writing seminar, the student will write an analytical paper on the development of the novel and will write four original pieces of material, either fiction or poetry."

"The student will do two papers which will attempt to tie together her readings in this contract with her past work in American History and with the readings that she did on American art in her last contract. These papers will deal with the relationship of art (literary and visual) to

Learning Contract Examples - Small Segments (cont'd)

the idea of nature and to the process of industrialization in 19th century America."

"After reading The Scarlet Letter, Moby Dick, and The Crucible, the student is to deal with the following questions:

1. How do these books characterize Puritan society?
2. How does this characterization relate to the author's broader historical perception?
3. Who are Hester Prynne, Dimmsdale, Chillingworth, Pearl in terms of the phenomena, tendencies, etc., that they represent?
4. Ditto for Captain Ahab, and why does he curse the sun?
5. Ditto for witch trials?
6. How do these works approach the "question of women?"
7. How do these books wrench the "Puritan Dilemma" out of the seventeenth century? Do they?
8. Do you think this wrenching is justified?"

## SYNTHESIS

Bloom

Unique Communication -

-to develop a communication that conveys ideas, feelings, and/or experiences; writing skill; organization of ideas

Plan or Operation -

-to develop a plan of work, or propose a plan of operation: outline of requirements, proposes ways of testing

Abstract Relations -

-to develop sets of abstract relations to classify or explain data (etc.), or to deduce relationships from set of basic propositions; to formulate appropriate hypotheses; to modify hypotheses in light of new factors; to make or discover

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Learning Contract Questions

- Is he asked to coordinate diverse information into a meaningful and cohesive unit?
- Is the student asked to integrate diverse reactions and experiences orally or in writing?
- Is the student expected to work with data collected by him or by others?
- Does the contract call for a plan of action to be developed?

Learning Contract Examples - Small Segments

"The purpose of this contract is to:

1. help the student learn the fundamentals of sociology and relate them to her job situation and to her personal perspective.
2. help the student acquire skills applicable to departmental research projects.
3. help the student to improve communication skills, both written and oral."

"The activities related to the seminar on the Teaching of Reading, assisting the reading teacher, and the bibliography, will be synthesized in a program development for the teaching of reading. This program will be presented to the seminar group and will be additionally developed in written form"

"The student will keep a journal of her reactions and impressions to each of the dance, art, music, and theatre events included in the contract, and will culminate the entire experience with an extensive paper on the subject: The Flux of Response. The paper will deal with her reactions to the events she will have attended and will try to get at the nature of her responses to art--the differences and similarities of response to differing art forms and to different events of the same art form."

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Learning Contract Examples - Small Segments (cont'd)

"At the conclusion of her reading the works in each bibliography indicated, the student will write two papers on the following:

1. An analysis of the questions and new problem areas which the readings pose for her. She will describe these reactions in written projects and will include how these areas might be pursued in future study.
2. An analysis of how the readings have either changed or reinforced her conceptions and beliefs about sociology in general; about the nature, extent and cause of social problems; and about the nature, extent and structure of human service systems."

## EVALUATION

Bloom

## Judging Values -

- to make judgments about value of materials and methods
- to make quantitative and qualitative judgments about the satisfaction of criteria and use of standards of appraisal

## Internal Evidence -

- to evaluate a communication from evidence of logical accuracy, consistency, exactitude, documentation, proof, etc.
- to evaluate material by selected or remembered criteria in the field, as with other material of recognized excellence

Learning Contract Questions

Is the student asked to make judgments about the work of others or about his own work?

Does he have a planned opportunity to see and hear other ideas, and to challenge and interact with those ideas?

Is he encouraged to play the Devil's Advocate?

Is he asked to help evaluate his own learning contract?

Is he asked to distinguish fact from emotion, to identify evidence and weigh it?



Learning Contract Examples - Small Segments

"The paper on Educational Theories will analyze the different theories as relevant to the student's own teaching, and will include an evaluation of what the student finds effective and ineffective."

"The goal is to study some of the prevalent theories and techniques used in the treatment of emotionally ill persons. To point out some of the contrasting treatments and to compare and comment on what, in the student's opinion, are valid concepts for good treatment and what may cause further trauma through stigmatizing, labeling or patterning by what are now acceptable methods. The student will read books, both prose and poetry, concerning theories of treatment, the personal experiences, and the institutional and societal ways of dealing with the disfigured and emotionally disturbed, and other types of social deviants."

"This contract deals with the question of pollution and pollution control of the Chenango River, and includes a project consisting of the following activities:

1. Define pollution.
2. Summarize existing laws pertaining to the pollution and pollution control of the Chenango River.
3. Summarize data of analysis done on the Chenango River for the past five years.
4. Report on the measures being taken by industries along the Chenango River to reduce emissions into the river.
5. Report on the natural pollutants of the Chenango River.
6. Correlate the relationship of legislation to pollution and pollution control.
7. Look into the possible effects of river quality on the populace adjacent to the river.
8. Obtain a public opinion profile on the Chenango River quality.
9. Make a judgment as to the improvement or deterioration of conditions and suggest future action."

"The Farmer's Museum in Cooperstown, New York, and Old Sturbridge Village in Sturbridge, Mass., are two of many examples of 'museums without walls' to be found throughout the country. One of their common objectives is to preserve the flavor and texture of life in our country at an earlier time through a study of the crafts. The student is to prepare a written defense of the concept that the crafts serve as a valid means of interpreting a given culture to persons of another age."

Learning Contract Examples - Large Segments

The general format and organization of the following contract examples have been purposely altered; the content has been unchanged except to conceal the identity of the three students and their mentors for reasons of confidentiality. They do not stand as complete contract statements and are not intended to be used in the form given except in the context of illustrating educational objectives.

FIRST EXAMPLEINTELLECTUAL  
COMPETENCIES

## Purposes:

As mentioned in my first contract, I wish to find employment in humanistic, community related jobs. This, undoubtedly, will never alter. To this end, though, and, parenthetically, since my last contract, my immediate goals have become more concrete. I will continue to study for my undergraduate degree but upon graduation I will be seeking employment as a New York State Parole Officer Trainee. I will also be furthering my education part-time either as a law student or as a candidate for a M.S.W. degree.

To continue to ease for me the shock of transition from a traditional learning atmosphere to one experimentally oriented such as Empire's. Presumably by the end of this contract I should be completely acclimated to this new mode of learning.

To study the phenomenon of communication from a philosophical, psycho-social, anthropo-historical perspective. Since communication arises from, and consists of, many forms (language, painting, etc.) there is an extremely copious area open to study. This is conducive to my purpose for I wish to learn as much as possible about "communication".

Knowledge

To prepare me for a test I am scheduled to take in the spring of 1973--that of Parole Officer Trainee. Some of my time (at least five hours per week) will be spent on studying for that test.

Knowledge

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To explore and test any creative, artistic talents I may have and to evaluate myself with reference to these qualities and abilities.

Evaluation

To achieve through this area of study a better, more complete understanding of man thus enhancing my insight and comprehension for later study and work.

Comprehension

#### Learning Activities:

I will engage in an intensive self-study program of reading based largely on my interest in communication and on any books my mentor recommends. Following is an example of some of the questions that will be examined: What is the definition of language? Is this definition the same throughout the social science disciplines? Can facial expression, body movement, etc. be considered language? What are the origins of language? Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny-is this valid for the study of the origin of language? Will man ever be able to bypass vocalization and communicate telepathically? How efficient is communication in general?

Knowledge  
Comprehension  
Analysis  
Evaluation  
Synthesis  
Application

Creative activities-at least two of the following four activities will be attempted, and, so as to make them worthwhile and not haphazard, mentors with proficiency in these areas will be consulted for guidance and evaluation: creation of three original oil or acrylics paintings (possibly one abstract, one neo-realistic, one realistic); creation of four poems in any form dealing with any subject matter whatsoever; creation of a short, short story; use of photographic equipment as an artistic medium.

(Communication ski

Synthesis

Utilization of any of the mass communication medias in any way possible (perhaps a field trip to a radio or television station) for a clear, more comprehensive understanding of communication in general. The philosophical (What impact has mass communication had on society?) as well as the pragmatic (Which is the cheapest form of mass communication-written, visual, auditory, etc?) will be explored.

Evaluation  
Comprehension

Tutorials in photography, creative writing, and/or painting, when and if they can be arranged.

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A reading program designed to equip me with proficiency to take the test for Parole Officer. Since the written test will be concerned with testing "for knowledge, skills, and/or abilities in such areas as: working with clients in treatment or counseling situations; human behavior; and social, economic, and health problems and related programs and services", I will be reading and studying material in such areas.

Knowledge  
Application

In conjunction with preparation for the Parole Officer test, I will participate, when possible, in the Child Care and Counseling Seminar every Tuesday night.

Comprehension

Until the middle of January, I will continue to work approximately twenty-eight hours a week as a supervisor for an insurance company continuing to learn about myself, human interaction, and group psychology. After I terminate my employment, I will work part-time in a clerical capacity at an educational institution.

Evaluation:

I will submit an annotated bibliography on my readings.

Comprehension

I will use a log, diary, or similar device for keeping a written record of my learning activities.

(Communication skills)

In this log I will list the items I read, the field trips I take, and any other pertinent material which pertains to my contract on communication. On the basis of this log I will formulate a statement of self-evaluation for inclusion in my permanent record.

Evaluation  
Synthesis

I will meet with my mentor weekly or bi-weekly for one or two hours to discuss my readings, activities, and for advice and planning.

Knowledge  
Comprehension  
Analysis

I will submit any of my creative works for evaluation to those competent in evaluating them at the learning center.

Synthesis  
Evaluation

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Written reports dealing with particular areas of study (e.g. psycho-linguistics) will be presented to my mentor for evaluation.

Knowledge

One of the practice tests for Probation and Parole Officer from the ARCO study guides will be self-administered and results noted. After sufficient time to prepare, a similar practice test from the same study guide will again be self-administered and the results compared. Any weaknesses will be brought to light and corrected by further study.

Knowledge  
Application

The contract concludes with an extensive bibliography on the nature of language and culture, the psychology of language, and the philosophy of language.

#### SECOND EXAMPLE

##### Purposes:

"To prepare for a career in philosophy, including the further study, the teaching, writing, reflecting, and discussing which this involves."

History of philosophy to be taken in the mode of disciplinary history adapted to exemplary history for contemporary philosophy. (Contemporary Philosophic Thought, Vol. 3 Perspectives in Education, Religion, and the Arts. Ed. Howard Kiefer and Milton K. Munitz, SUNY Press, 1970, sections on communications and rhetoric.)

Knowledge

Study of fields to include logic, speculative, and practical philosophy.

Actualite, to include experiences of conferences, journals, lectures, symposiums, et al.

Study to proceed to point where relation of concepts to philosophical methods is readily perceived.

Analysis  
Synthesis

Acquaintance with problem of possible relations of speculative and practical is sought. Also some disposition of logic to be made and defended.

Application

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Some formulation of current issues and interests of philosophers to be made; probably to be developed in connection with choice of graduate school.	Application Synthesis
Student and mentor agree to maintain the above assumptions for the duration of first contract.	
Student will pursue the course "Introduction to Logic" offered for independent study by State University College at _____.	Knowledge
Student will pursue general interest in medieval philosophy by reading and reporting on the following works: "Before the Humanities", (lecture); <u>Aristotle in the West</u> , (U. of R. B275); <u>The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy</u> ; <u>Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages</u> ; <u>Nominalists and Realists</u> ; <u>A History of Philosophy</u> ; <u>History of Philosophy</u> ; <u>Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism</u> .	Knowledge Comprehension
The student will develop specific interest in medieval philosophy by selecting two or more philosophers for intensive examination. One of these will be St. Thomas Aquinas. Student will peruse McKeon, <u>Selections from Medieval Philosophers</u> (2 volumes) with study guides provided by mentor to select other philosophers for thorough examination.	Knowledge Comprehension
A trial paper on each philosopher, one to be devoted to "The Cogency of St. Thomas", will be prepared by student and discussed by him and mentor.	(Communication Skill: Knowledge Comprehension
Student will begin to develop his acquaintance with philosophers and students of philosophy, their locations, predilections, and preoccupations, by examination of journals, attendance at lectures, etc.	Knowledge Comprehension Synthesis
As background reading he will report on: J. L. Austin, "Performative Utterances", G. Drury, "Twentieth Century Philosophy" (lecture)	Knowledge
Student will attend and report on The Sixth Conference on Value Inquiry: Human Value and the Law, State University College at _____.	Comprehension Synthesis Evaluation

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THIRD EXAMPLE**Purposes:**

To continue and broaden his investigation of the second generation of Romantic poets, with particular emphasis on Shelley.

Knowledge

To broaden his travel by extending it to the Continent, where he will visit Spain, Italy, Switzerland and France.

To broaden his study to include consideration of some philosophic and political theorists of the period, with particular focus on the role of women in society, using texts from eighteenth and nineteenth-century Britain and some from twentieth-century American and Britain as comparisons.

Knowledge

Comprehension

To concentrate on his writing, both through the extension of his journal and through more formal writing exercises.

Comprehension  
Application  
(Communication Skills)

To initiate a study of Shakespeare, here through reading, which should be extended through viewing and continued reading. He will write about Shakespeare in Learning Contract IV.

Knowledge

**Major Learning Activities:**

Readings: (Extensive bibliography appears here-- but not included in this excerpt--on Shelley, Shelley's friends, politics and women, Shakespeare, narrative fancy, on Spain, Italy, and France.)

Knowledge

**Writings:**

Student will continue to keep his journal, recording his Continental experiences and comparing them with his British ones. These will be posted to London at regular intervals.

Application  
Synthesis

He will write a paper on the influence of Shelley on Byron and Byron on Shelley during the Geneva period. This paper will be due by 31 March.

(Communication Skills)

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Paper three, dealing with politics and women, Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft and Women's Liberation will be submitted upon student's return to London at the beginning of May.

Evaluation:

The mentor will read student's journal commenting on it by post. He will summarize his judgments about student's Continental reports in extended tutorial and evaluation sessions in London during May.

Student will write a self-evaluative paper on his return to London.

The mentor will read and comment on the papers which he submits.

Since student will attempt, during this contract period and the one that will follow in England, to concentrate on the development of his ideas in written papers, and he will be attempting to extend and deepen his reading and understanding of British writers of the nineteenth century, he and his mentor will focus on those materials and the writing that he can develop from them.

Since he shall be on the Continent for nearly the full duration of this learning contract, his report on his travel will also make for a major portion of this contract and will be the major activity in it.

Evaluation  
Synthesis  
Knowledge

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In concluding this first Working Paper, we assume that learning center and development faculty members will be generating their own examples and clarifying our definitions as well. We also recognize that case histories covering a student's full program of studies and College career must be developed and assume that consideration of contract elements will soon begin to be built into those larger perspectives.



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REFERENCES

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Bloom, Benjamin S., et al, Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: Cognitive Domain, New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1956.

## Remembering our Colleagues and Friends

Since our last issue of *All About Mentoring* a good number of colleagues and friends of our community have passed away. Here is one rather limited effort to remember them and their contributions to SUNY Empire.

### Kenneth Abrams

Ken Abrams died in August 2023. Over a period of 35 years, his contributions to SUNY Empire were many, varied, and crucial to the history of our institution. A professor of English before he came to SUNY Empire in 1971, Ken served as the founder and coordinator of what was Empire State College's London satellite program, then as dean of the Metropolitan Learning Center (in Manhattan), and finally as Director of SUNY Empire's International Programs. His erudition and, as described by our former colleague, Rhoda Wald, his "unique sense of the world as a complex setting for non-traditional higher education," had a lasting impact on the spirit and direction of this institution.



## Jane Altes

Jane Altes, who died in February 2023, came to SUNY as associate vice chancellor for academic programs in 1984 and to SUNY Empire in 1987 as vice president for academic affairs. She had previously served for more than two decades on the faculty (in sociology and public policy) and as an administrator at Southern Illinois University. After her official retirement in 1998, Jane returned to SUNY Empire as interim president, a role she held until 2000. Our colleague Meg Benke described Jane Altes' significant contribution to our university and to all of higher education in this way: "Altes remained passionate about adult learner success and new models for higher education throughout her career at the state and national levels." Thanks to the incredible generosity of Jane and Wally Altes, the "Jane Altes Prize for Exemplary Community Service" is an annual award that honors a faculty/staff member and that, in so doing, reminds us of Jane's abiding commitment to our larger community.



## Elma Boyko

Elma Boyko died in March 2023. A long-time mentor-coordinator at the then Syracuse office of ESU (she joined ESU in 1981 and retired in 1999), Elma worked with her colleague, mentor Peg Morrison to run this "unit" of what was known as the Center for Statewide Programs (and later, the Central New York Center). Elma, along with mentor Dick Butler, also co-directed Central New York FORUM, a pioneering management program created in cooperation with Verizon and other companies. She also provided leadership as interim dean of the Central New York Center and was an active participant and leader in various community



organizations, such as the Onondaga County's League of Women Voters and the Rotary Club. As our former colleague Dick Butler wrote: "Elma leaves behind an impressive record of service...[She] was selected twice by the college to fill leadership gaps in the college's planned succession and performed admirably. [She] is responsible for hundreds of Empire graduates, grateful for her shepherding them through the process of clarifying their goals and creating an educational experience...that served these goals."

### Charles Breiner

Charles (Charlie) Breiner served for more than 35 years as a part-time mentor and adjunct at SUNY Empire, Center for Distance Learning (CDL). Charlie died in September 2022. He was employed for many years in marketing at Mobil Oil, as a personnel director at various hospitals, and for the Organization of New York State Management/Confidential Employees. At SUNY Empire, he worked with students in an array of business/social/political areas, including studies on employee/management relations, citizen participation, diversity in the workplace, terrorism, and on American ethnic history. As our colleague Frank VanderValk described, "[Charlie] really loved ESC and was always willing to do what we needed him to do...with a smile."



## Andrew DiNitto

Andrew DiNitto (Andy), who died in July 2022, was a faculty member in SUNY Empire's School for Graduate Studies from 1985 until 2010 and was a key architect in our policy program. He also had a long and successful career teaching political science, sociology, and Italian at Fulton-Montgomery Community College where, for 12 seasons, he served as the head coach of the college's soccer team. As our colleague, Alan Belasen, commented: "Students...admired his pragmatism, wisdom, and critical thinking abilities...Students, faculty, and administrators enjoyed his presence and interactions. [He was] always smart and charming [and had the] ability to connect with everyone on the spot." In 1997, Andy received the ESU Foundation award for Excellence in Mentoring. In addition to his university contributions, Andy DiNitto was involved in many local boards and commissions, including serving as Chairman of the Gloversville Board of Ethics.



## Mary Klinger

Faculty colleague, Mary Klinger, emerita mentor in business, management and economics, and coordinator of the Corning/Elmira Unit (a part of the former Genesee Valley Center) died in October 2022. She served on the SUNY Empire faculty for 21 years. Mary began as a part-time mentor and, singlehandedly, recruited 50 adult learners in the Elmira area to study at SUNY Empire. She also was a part of the FORUM program. During her time at ESU, Mary earned the PhD. from the Union Institute and University. As her long-time colleague, Margaret Clark-Plaskie described: "When I came to Empire, Mary was the coordinator of the Corning/Elmira Unit. I was fortunate to have her as my mentor. I shadowed Mary on a daily basis, which was so helpful to me. I was also able to observe how





she could so easily relate to our students and how they could comfortably connect with her. Mary recognized how much she and her adult students had in common. Her playful spirit made her a great colleague.”

### James McMahon

James (Jim) McMahon, who died in August 2021, had a long and important history with SUNY Empire and, in particular, with the Harry Van Arsdale Jr. School of Labor Studies. Jim was a graduate of ESU (1996), served as coordinator of outreach and special events and, in 2010, became the coordinator of student services at Van Arsdale. He also co-chaired the institution-wide Student Affairs Committee, another sign of his abiding and amazing commitment to our students. “He was loved by our students, as much as he was loved by many of us,” our colleague Sophia Mavrogiannis said. “Jim was an events-man, *our* events-man, who created a unique environment in which we came together with our students,” faculty colleague Sharon Szymanski stated. Consistent with his work and his spirit, Jim took the lead on a project in which ESU students went to Puerto Rico to support victims of Hurricanes Maria and Irma.



## James (Jim) Nichols

James (Jim) Nichols died in December 2023. He served as a part-time mentor in Community and Human Services at SUNY Empire from 2002 to 2019. A quintessential unit-based-generalist mentor, Jim came to ESU after more than 25 years at Tompkins Cortland Community College where he taught courses in human services, labor studies, and criminal justice. Jim was a U.S. Navy veteran, a police officer in the Canton (Ohio) Police Department, and earned degrees from Kent State University, the University of Alabama, and Alfred University. Our colleague Cynthia Coleman noted that at local ESU graduations, “it was always clear...that Jim knew and cared about each individual student that he worked with and that his guidance and encouragement was a major factor in their success.” And ESU mentor Paul Miller commented: “Jim Nichols was the consummate mentor: dedicated, knowledgeable, and caring. When meeting with students at his cramped Ithaca office, he dispensed advice on degrees, careers, current events, and sports – everything with enthusiasm in a kind-hearted and big-natured sort of way. He enjoyed debating his colleagues, telling stories, humbling you with his biting wit, and offering his shirt if you needed it. Just one of a kind.”



## Christine Persico

Christine Persico died in November 2021. Chris served as the dean of the “Metropolitan Center,” the New York City office of SUNY Empire from 2002 to 2008. After leaving SUNY Empire, she became a dean at SUNY Purchase. Chris Persico was a graduate of Teachers College/Columbia University, was involved in higher education for more than 30 years, and was devoted to many community programs, including the Boys’ Club of New York. As Nan DiBello, retired fellow-dean wrote: “Chris, passionately committed and caring educator, was a wonderful colleague and friend at Empire State. Her presence brightened every meeting—and there were so many!!!”





## Douglas Sherry



Douglas Sherry, a long-time mentor in the humanities/social sciences at the Center for Distance Learning (CDL) and Empire Online died in December 2022. He was a regular instructor in the popular course, “The Pursuit of Happiness in American History.” Doug served in the US Army and earned his Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Maryland, College Park. In addition to his work at SUNY Empire, Doug, also a musician, taught at the Pennsylvania College of Technology.

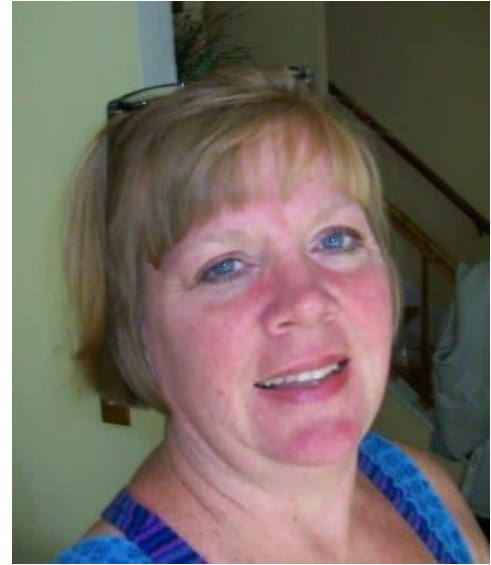
## Susan Hanrahan Turben

Susan Turben, the second graduate of SUNY Empire State University (B.A.1972), died in November 2023. After earning the M.Ed and Ph.D in Early Childhood and Special Education, Susan had a rich and illustrative career as an internationally recognized researcher, teacher, writer, trainer, and consultant in the areas of child development and developmental/family services. Susan and her husband Jack Turben made major financial gifts to our institution that provided funding for two endowed faculty chairs including Susan. H. Turben Directorship for Autism Advocacy, as well as the Susan H. Turben Award for Excellence in Scholarship and many other institution-wide activities. As our colleague Julie Shaw wrote: "I have so much respect for the legacy of Susan H. Turben, PhD. Hers is an example of the kind of impact our university can have on our students." In recognition of a life of contributions to our community, in 2005, Susan Turben was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from SUNY Empire State University.



## Lynae Warren

Our dear faculty colleague, Lynae Warren, died in December 2022. Lynae joined the SUNY Empire community as part of the Master of Arts in Teaching program in 2007 and spent 15 years in the Rochester location serving her students and her colleagues across the institution as a devoted member of the school of Science, Mathematics and Technology, as chair of the mathematics department, as faculty conference co-chair, and as mentor in math who, as a reflection of her ongoing and imaginative efforts to make the study of math meaningful, welcoming, and accessible, received the Joyce S. McKnight Open Educational Resources Fellowship in 2017-2018. Comments from many colleagues attest to Lynae's gift to our community. She always used "flexible and innovative approaches to teaching and learning (Nathan Gonyea); she "looked out for everyone and was a strong advocate for justice and fairness" (Sandy Winn); she "was a strong faculty voice and caring mentor to students" (Paul Miller); and Lynae Warren was a "valued and highly respected colleague who never hesitated to engage and lead, and who had a positive impact on many of us" (Rick Savior).



## iPLA at SUNY Empire: Let the Learning Titles Flow!

*Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) policies at SUNY Empire State University have offered students opportunities to identify and describe their learning in multiple ways. Not tied to a course-match model as is the case in many other institutions, students, with the guidance of their mentors and academic advisors, have been able to craft PLA essays that directly respond to their college-level learning gained at work, in the community, and at home. Indeed, it is not the source of learning, but its identification, description, and documentation that is at the core of our portfolio model of PLA.*

*Gathered here are the titles of individualized prior learning assessments (iPLA) for which students gained credit from 01 July 2021 to the present. (Some editing has been done; duplicates have been removed.) The array is vivid; it's quite a spectacle and reflects the incredible breadth of knowledge/skill areas that our students have included in their degree programs at our college.*

*Thanks to Tom McElroy, director of the Office of Prior Learning, to Amy Giaculli, assistant director, to PLE director, Carl Burkart, to the directors of academic review, Leslie Ellis, Emilie Masiello, Louise Levine, David Puskas, Anjeanette Emeka, Zohreh Aminian, Kathy Hairston, to the assessment specialists, Tom Brady, Debra Monte, Bhuwan Onta, and assistant assessment specialist, Joe Villa, to Mary LaMountain for her aid in this project, and to everyone—really all of us—who contribute to our common prior learning assessment work. And, of course, to our students.*

### PLA TITLES

"A Historical Perspective On The Treatment Of Offenders"	"Introduction to Ballet"
"A History Of 288 Arthurian Legends"	"Introduction to Bass"
"A Look Inside: Autism In Learning Environments"	"Introduction to Computers"
"A+ Essentials"	"Introduction to Databases"
"A+ Practicum"	"Introduction to Education"
"Aart Certification Quality Management"	"Introduction to Law and Ethics"
"Abnormal Psychology"	"Introduction to Policing "
"Abt National Curriculum Training Project Management"	"Introduction to Special Education"
"Academic Support For Underrepresented And Diverse Community College Students"	"Introduction to Speech Communication"
"Academic Tutoring"	"Introduction to Teaching"
"Accounting I"	"Introduction to the Hebrew Bible"
"Accounting Information Systems"	"Introduction to the New Testament"
"Accounts Payable And Accounts Receivable"	"Introduction to Veterans Services"
"Accreditation For A Direct Care Facility"	"Introduction to Web Publishing with HTML"
"Acting"	"Introductory Accounting 1: Financial"
"Active Shooter Response - Instruction"	"Introductory Commentaries 123"
"Active Shooter Response - Protocols"	"Introductory Economics: Micro & Macro"
"Active Shooter Response -Team Leader"	"Introductory Piano"
"Acts & Paul's Letters"	"Invasive Species: Identification and Management"

"Addiction Counseling: Roles And Competencies"	"Inventory Management "
"Addictions, Trauma, Coping"	"Inventory Operating Systems"
"Administration And Management In Higher Education"	"Investigation"
"Administrative Assisting"	"Investigations in Child Protective Services"
"Administrative Educational Leadership"	"Islamic History"
"Administrative Management"	"Isolation in the Prison System"
"Administrative Office Management"	"IT Project Management"
"Administrative Office Procedures"	"Italian Language Intro 1 & 2"
"Administrative Service"	"Jamaican Cultural Diversity & Law Enforcement"
"Administrative Support"	"Japanese History and Culture"
"Advanced Photoshop Techniques"	"Job Coaching "
"Adobe Photoshop Tools"	"Job Coaching for Persons with Disabilities"
"Adolescence And Addictions"	"Judaic Studies "
"Adoption Studies "	"Judaic Studies: Concepts & Applications"
"Adult Development & Aging"	"Judaic Studies: Psychology"
"Adults With Special Needs"	"Judaic Studies: Theology"
"Adv Mixing Techniques"	"Jungian Psychology"
"Advanced Acoustics"	"Juvenile Delinquency"
"Advanced Adobe Indesign"	"Juvenile Justice and Delinquency"
"Advanced Bilingual Communication (American Sign Language And English) In Educational And Human Services Settings"	"Kathak Dance -Journey across Physical Story Telling"
"Advanced Ceramic Wheel Techniques"	"Korean Language"
"Advanced Coaching Practicum"	"Labor Management Studies - Collective Bargaining"
"Advanced Conversational Spanish"	"Labor Management Studies - Labor Management Relations"
"Advanced Credit Challenge	"Labor Management Studies - Union Leadership and Administration"
"Advanced Customer Service Administration"	"Labor Relations in the Public Sector and conflict resolution"
" Digital Audio Workstations"	"Labor Relations"
"Advanced Digital Presentation"	"Labor Supervision and Leadership"
"Advanced Ethics In Criminal Justice"	"Labor/Management Relations"
"Advanced Fishing"	"Land Use Planning"
"Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training"	"Language and Literacy Development of Teaching Reading"
"Advanced Law Enforcement Training And Experience: Field Operations"	"Language and Style of Culinary Arts"
"Advanced Management"	"Law and the Legal System"
"Advanced Microphone Technique"	"Law Enforcement Administrative and Operations"
"Advanced Painting"	"Law Enforcement"
"Advanced Patient Care Skills And Home Care"	"Law Enforcement Management & Security Systems Specialist"
"Advanced Principles Of Leadership & Supervision"	"Law Enforcement Skills 1: Firearms"
"Advanced Procurement And Contract Management"	"Law Enforcement Skills 2: Survival/Defensive Tactics"
"Advanced Spanish Writing Skills"	"Law Enforcement Skills 3: First Responder Field Training"
"Advanced Studies In Audio Production"	"Laws of the State of New York"
"Advanced Studio Photography"	"Laws, Regulations, Standards, and Guidelines"
"Advanced Technical Spanish"	"Lead Radiologic Technologist"
"Adverse Childhood Experiences & Its Impact On Brain Development"	"Lead Teacher"
"Advertising Administration"	"Leadership "
"Advocacy And Legislative Lobbying"	"Leadership and Bench Strength"
"Advocacy And Parent Participation In Special Education"	"Leadership and Managing Up"
"Advocacy For Members Of Minority Groups"	"Leadership and Supervision"
"Advocacy For People With Disabilities"	"Leadership and Teambuilding"
"Advocacy For Survivors Of Domestic Violence"	"Leadership and the Dick Morgan Leadership Program"
"Advocacy In Addiction Services"	"Leadership Communications"
"Advocacy In Corrections"	"Leadership Development"

"Advocacy In Human Services "	"Leadership in Emergency Management"
"Advocacy In New York State Government "	"Leadership in Technology"
"Advocacy In The Workplace"	"Leadership: Capital Markets Personnel"
"Advocacy In Veteran Services"	"Leading a Non-Governmental Organization"
"Advocating For Special Education"	"Leading Change in a Healthcare Setting"
"After School Programming"	"Lean Manufacturing and Continuous Improvement"
"Agricultural Education"	"Lean Six Sigma - Black Belt"
"Airport Operations Management"	"Lean Six Sigma "
"Alexander Technique Teaching Practice"	"Learning & Development"
"Alternatives To Incarceration"	"Learning Environments & Innovation"
"American Comic Art As Cultural History"	"Learning the Art and Business of Acting"
"American Corrections"	"Learning Through Play for Preschoolers"
"American Government I"	"Learning Through Play: Centers & Questioning"
"American Law: Business And Immigration"	"Learning to develop a Phase 1 Clinical Trial Protocol, The Dengue Human Infection Model"
"Analysis And Support Of Medical Workflows"	"Learning, Training, and Professional Development"
"Anatomy And Physiology I"	"Leasing Real Estate"
"Ancient Civilizations Of Israel And Greece"	"Legal Issues in Business"
"Ancient Egyptian Funerary Rites And Practices"	"Legal Research and Writing"
"Animal Rescue"	"Legal Studies"
"Animals In Human Services"	"Legalities and Patient Services"
"Anime And Japanese Culture "	"Lesson Planning"
"Anthroposophy"	"Lessons from Ballet"
"Application Security And Compliance"	"Leveraging Technology in a Classroom Environment"
"Applied Ethnobotany"	"LGBT History"
"Applied Graphic Design"	"LGBTQ Workplace Issues"
"Graphic Design"	"Library Internship"
"Applied Instructional Design"	"Life Coaching "
"Applied Sports Psychology "	"Life Coaching & Consulting"
"Applying For State-Funded Services For Ind. W Disabilities"	"Lifeguarding Instruction"
"Aramaic Language"	"Lifeguarding, CPR, AED, First Aid"
"Art And Music In Human Services"	"Linux"
"Art Curating"	"Listening and Mindfulness Skills in Group Work"
"Art Gallery Management"	"Litigation"
"Art Of Conversation"	"Little Memories, Dreams, and Prayers"
"Artemaking"	"Live Event Safety "
"Arts Research Practice-Based On The Jewish Holocaust Of Wwii"	"Live Performing Technique"
"Asbestos Abatement Program"	"Live Sound Engineering"
"Asbestos Professional (Project Design)"	"Local Elected Office and Public Service"
"ASD Classroom Learning Strategies"	"Location Recording & Mixing"
"Assessment For Development Of Career Readiness Training Program"	"Logistics and Production"
"Assessment Of Learning"	"Logistics Management"
"At Risk Youth"	"Logistics"
"Attachment In Early Childhood: Introductory"	"Loss and Bereavement"
"Audio Equipment & Tech Recording"	"Loss Prevention"
"Working With Archival Audio Recordings"	"Machines and Equipment 1"
"Autism - Special Needs Students"	"Macroeconomics "
"Autism Spectrum Disorder In Education And Behavioral Disorders In Children And Adolescence"	"Magazine Writing and Editing for Publication"
"Autism Spectrum Disorders"	"Managed Care"
"Autism Spectrum Disorders In Education"	"Management and Leadership"
"Autism Spectrum Disorders: Social Emotional Supports"	"Management and Supervision in Food Retail Setting"
"Autism"	"Management and Supervision"
"Autobody Repair: Painting And Refinishing Ii And Iii"	"Management in Healthcare Organizations"
"Autobody Repair: Plastics And Adhesives Painting And Refinishing I"	"Management in Non-Profit Organizations"
"Autobody Repair: Structural Analysis And Damage Repair"	"Management Information Systems and Business Analytics"

"Autobody Repair: Structure Analysis And Damage Repair II"	"Management Information Systems"
"Automotive Dealer Operations"	"Management"
"Automotive Lease And Fleet Management"	"Management of System Lifecycles"
"Automotive Sales And Leasing"	"Management Principles"
"Automotive Sales Management And Customer Service"	"Management Skills"
"Auxiliary Police"	"Management Systems"
"Baking And Pastry Arts"	"Management within SUD Treatment Facilities"
"Baking"	"Managing Anxiety through Yoga"
"Balanchine Technique"	"Managing Behavior in the Classroom"
"Ballet Technique"	"Managing Challenging Behavior"
"Ballet: Classical Pointe Work"	"Managing Change in Organizations"
"Band Management"	"Managing Conflict and Conflict Resolution"
"Bank Management"	"Managing Diversity and Inclusion in Media"
"Banking Law"	"Managing Operations as a District Leader"
"Basic Firefighter Training (Definite)"	"Managing Organizations"
"Basic Life Support Aha Instruction"	"Managing Political Campaigns"
"Basketball Coaching"	"Managing Principles"
"Beginning Spanish"	"Managing Public Health Emergencies and Biohazards"
"Beginning Talmud Intensive"	"Managing the Healthcare Emergency Management Program"
"Beginning Talmud Survey"	"Mandarin Chinese Language"
"Behavior Disorder In Children & Adolescents"	"Mandated Reporter Training"
"Behavior Management In Preschool Settings"	"Manufacturing Management"
"Behavior Management: Conscious Discipline"	"Marketing and Advertising Insurance Products"
"Behavior Modification And Use Of Positive Behavior Supports. "	"Marketing and Sales Management"
"Behavior Modification"	"Marketing Communications"
"Behavior Therapy"	"Marketing Distribution Channels"
"Behavioral Care"	"Marketing for the Music Industry PLA"
"Behavioral Challenges In The Classroom"	"Marketing Management"
"Behavioral Issues In Children"	"Marketing Principles"
"Behaviors In Organizations"	"Marketing Strategies for a Small Business Owner "
"Benefits And Challenges Of Breastfeeding"	"Marriage Counseling"
"Benefits, Safety, And Risks Of Hiking"	"Mass Casualties and Major Events"
"Bilingual Paraprofessional Practicum"	"Master Electrician"
"Bioethics"	"Material Perspectives in Museum Curriculum"
"Biomechanics Of The Golf Swing And Teaching A Beginner"	"Measuring Learning"
"Birthing Doula Certification"	"Media Writing"
"Black Belt Coaching"	"Medicaid Project Management"
"Black Belt Training And Philosophy"	"Medical Assisting"
"Blogging"	"Medical Billing & Coding"
"Blueprint And Schematic Interpretation"	"Medical Billing & Collections"
"Book Marketing"	"Medical Billing Systems & Procedures"
"Bookkeeping For The Private Practice"	"Medical Billing"
"Bookkeeping"	"Medical Claims and Billing"
"Botany: Plant Physiology"	"Medical Compliance"
"Brand Management"	"Medical Diversity for Cancer Center Patients"
"Budget Analytics, Planning, And Control For Healthcare And Construction Services"	"Medical Education & CME Program Administration"
"Budget And Finance In Public Administration"	"Medical Management of ADHD/ADD"
"Budget Management And Planning"	"Medical Office Administrative Support & Coordination"
"Budget Management"	"Medical Office Customer Service"
"Budgeting"	"Medical Office Management"
"Building A Home"	"Medical Practice Billing"
"Building A Non-Profit Organization For The Arts"	"Medical Practice Budgeting"
"Building And Sustaining An Intentional Community: What Worked And What Did Not"	"Medical Practice Office Technology Applications"
"Building Resiliency Through Play"	"Medical Safety in the Prison Systems"
"Business Ethics"	"Medical School Student Recruiting & Onboarding"
"Business Administration"	"Medical Terminology"



"Business Analysis With Sap"	"Medication Administration"
"Business Analytics"	"Medication Management"
"Business Analytics And Reporting "	"Meditation Studies"
"Business Analytics With Microsoft Excel"	"Meditative Movement"
"Business Communication "	"Mental Health Counseling and Servicing"
"Business Ethics"	"Mental Health in NYS DOCCS Reception"
"Business Management"	"Mentoring and Coaching"
"Business Operation Management"	"Mentoring and leading children through coaching"
"Business Operations"	"Mentoring At-Risk Youth"
"Business Ownership And Employee Management Of Child Daycare"	"Mentoring Future Leaders in a Trades Union Environment "
"Business Policy"	"Mentoring Peers"
"Business Practicum"	"Mentoring"
"Business Process Improvement Through Business Analysis And Project Management Techniques"	"Merchandise Purchasing"
"Business Writing"	"Mergers and Acquisitions"
"C.S. Lewis"	"Metacognition and Meditative Thinking"
"Call Center Operations Management"	"Methods of Instruction"
"Campus Emergency Management Planning, Response And Recovery"	"Methods of Instruction: Yoga"
"Cancer Patient Care, Allied Health Care, Phlebotomy"	"Microcomputer Applications and Systems"
"Canine Rescue And Rehabilitation"	"Microeconomics"
"Cardiac Sonography"	"Middle Eastern Dance: What it is, and What it is Not"
"Care & Behavioral Training Of Guide Dogs"	"MIDI Production"
"Care Management And Treatment Coordination"	"Mindfulness for Teens"
"Care Management"	"Mission fieldwork"
"Career Mentoring"	"Mixed Media- Art"
"Career Self-Management And Self-Marketing"	"Models of Instructional Design"
"Career Services"	"Modern Art & Ideas"
"Caribbean Culture"	"Modern China"
"Case Investigation"	"Modern Poetry"
"Case Management In Human Service Practicum "	"Mold Assessment and Remediation"
"Case Management"	"Money & Banking"
"Catholicism Studies "	"Montessori Education and Learning Styles"
"Celiac Education And Awareness"	"Montessori Education in Preschool "
"Celta - Engaging English Language Learners"	"Montessori Education: Philosophy & Practice"
"Ceramic Repair And Restoration"	"Mortgage Loan Officer "
"Introduction To Ceramics"	"Motivational Interviewing"
"Ceramic Sculpture"	"Multi-Format Mix-Surround Sound"
"Certified Nursing Assistant"	"Municipal Emergency Management Planning & Coordination"
"Challenging Behavior In Early Childhood"	"Museum Studies Practicum"
"Challenging Behavior K-6"	"Music and Identity"
"Challenging Behaviors In Children"	"Music and Movement in the Classroom"
"Challenging Behaviors In Early Childhood"	"Music and Politics"
"Change Management"	"Music Band Performance"
"Character Dance: Advanced/Professional"	"Music Business & Music Publishing"
"Child Abuse And Bullying In Schools"	"Music Composition "
"Child Abuse And Maltreatment"	"Music Fundamentals"
"Child Abuse And Neglect "	"Music Instruction"
"Child Abuse And Neglect Recognition And Reporting"	"Music Fundamentals, Musicianship, Instrumentation"
"Child Abuse And Neglect Training"	"Music Industry Entrepreneurship"
"Child Abuse"	"Music Theory/ Music Performance"
"Child And Adolescent Needs And Strength Assessments"	"Music Therapy for Individuals with Disabilities"
"Childcare Practicum"	"Musical Theatre Performance"
"Child Development"	"Musical Theatre"
"Child Welfare "	"Musicianship"
"Childbirth Education"	"Multiculturalism"
"Childcare Programming & Administration"	"Narcotics Investigation"



"Childcare Teaching Assistant - Understanding The Profession"	"Narratives of Neurodivergence: Autism Spectrum, ADHD, and Learning Disabilities"
"Childcare"	"Native North American History & Art"
"Children With Special Needs"	"Natural Disaster Response in Animal Services"
"Children's Music"	"Nature Photography"
"Children's Musical Picture Books: Manufacturing And Production"	"Negotiation"
"Children's Programs Administration"	"Network infrastructure"
"Children's Programs Design And Supervision"	"Networking, Relationship Building, and Ethical Practices in Business"
"Children's Programs Ethical & Professional Standards"	"Networking"
"Children's Programs: Design And Supervision"	"New Media Communication"
"Chinese Language: Cantonese"	"New Media/Journalism"
"Chinese Culture And History"	"New Product Development"
"Chinese History & Culture"	"New York Police Academy"
"Choreography For Dance Professionals And Amateurs"	"News and Feature Writing"
"Choreography For Musical Theatre"	"News Photography"
"Choreography For Solos, Duets, And Ensembles"	"Nigerian Culture"
"Church Leadership"	"Non-Profit Foundation Work"
"Circus Arts"	"Non-Profit Management"
"Civic Engagement/Community Advocacy"	"Nongovernmental Organization: Funding and Finance"
"Civil Court Procedures"	"Nonprofit Boards of Directors - A Guide"
"Claims Examiner And Case Work At A Rural County Department Of Social Services"	"Not-for-Profit Event Planning"
"Classical Ballet Partnering: Advanced/Professional"	"Novel Writing"
"Classroom & Behavior Management"	"NSC First Aid - Instructor Training"
"Classroom Design And Curriculum Development"	"Nursing Administration"
"Classroom Engagement & Management"	"Nursing"
"Classroom Management & Behavior Modification"	"Nutrition Coaching"
"Classroom Management And Creating Safety In The Classroom"	"Nutrition in Early Childhood"
"Classroom Management In Religious Environments"	"NYCHA: Workforce Deveolpment and Community Organizing"
"Classroom Management"	"NYS Legislature Practicum"
"Classroom Teaching Practicum"	"NYS Municipal Property Assessment & Policymaking"
"Client Services Management"	"NYS Offender Rehabilitation Coordination"
"Clinical Management And Supervision"	"NYS Park Management"
"Clinical Operations Administration/Manager"	"NYS Public Policy"
"Clinical Program Triage Design"	"NYSED Certification Teacher Assistant"
"Coaching "	"NYU Continuing Education - Website Development"
"Coaching And Managing Ice Hockey Programs"	"Observation and Assessment of Children"
"Coaching For Health And Wellness"	"Observation and Assessments"
"Coaching Youth Soccer"	"Occupational Health and Safety"
"Collaborative Creation In Devising Theatre"	"Occupations Safety, Health & the Environment"
"Collaborative Piano"	"Office Administration"
"Collaborative Storytelling"	"Office Management"
"Collective Bargaining In A Trades Union Environment"	"Online Curriculum Development and Implementation"
"Collective Bargaining"	"Operating Systems"
"College Football Management"	"Operation Management"
"Color Theory"	"Operation of the District Attorney's Office"
"Commercial & Film Scoring Pla"	"Operations and Management of a Value Driven Not for Profit Organization"
"Commercial Business Sales And Contract Law"	"Operations Management"
"Commercial Digital Wide Format Printer"	"Optimizing Sales Potential through Relationship Retailing"
"Commercial Leadership"	"Organization Development & Change"
"Commercial Real Estate Finance & Investment"	"Organizational Behavior"
"Commission Painting"	"Organizational Development"
"Communicating Via Programming Knowledge & Skills"	"Organizing Children's Afterschool Programs"
"Communication In Human Services "	"Organizing Latin American Film Festivals"

"Communication Skills In The Workplace"	"Organizing Organizers"
"Communication Through Digital Media"	"OS102 Desktop Systems (Dover/CLC)"
"Communication Through New Media"	"OSHA and Workplace Safety"
"Communications For Police Officers"	"OSHA Compliance"
"Communications Skills "	"Osteoarcheology"
"Communications Through New Media"	"Outdoor & Environmental Education"
"Communications"	"Outdoor Education Administration"
"Communication Skills And Behavioral Support In Crisis Situations "	"Outdoor Safety"
"Community Activism In The African Diaspora"	"Overcoming Barriers to Recovery"
"Community And Police Relations"	"Introduction to Painting"
"Community Childcare Program Development"	"Painting Techniques"
"Community Development"	"Painting with Acrylic"
"Community Education In Domestic Violence Programs"	"Palliative Care and Rehabilitation"
"Community Engagement In Education"	"Paralegal and Legal Studies"
"Community Health Nursing"	"Paralegal Services and Certification"
"Community Health"	"Paralegal Studies: Contract Law"
"Community Leadership"	"Paralegal Studies: Law Office Administration"
"Community Nursing "	"Paralegal Studies: Real Estate Law "
"Community Organizing And Advocacy"	"Paraprofessional Learning and Supporting Special Needs Students"
"Community Organizing And Outreach"	"Paraprofessional Practicum and Classroom Management"
"Community Organizing"	"Paraprofessional: Working with at Risk Students and Families "
"Community Outreach"	"Parent Advocacy in Education"
"Community Participation"	"Parent Communication"
"Community Policing "	"Parent Education"
"Community Policing & Outreach Programs"	"Participating in an Archaeological Excavation "
"Community Resources"	"Patient Advocacy and Referral"
"Community Service Experiences With Special Populations"	"Patient and Customer Service Management"
"Community Service Practicum: Managing Religious Education"	"Patient Care and Communication"
"Community Service"	"Patient Care in a Behavioral Setting"
"Community Service/Volunteer Work"	"Patient Engagement in Today's Healthcare System"
"Community Stakeholder Event Coordination"	"Patient Supervision and Crisis Management in a Forensic Psychiatric Hospital"
"Community Volunteerism"	"Payroll Management"
"Community-Based Services For Youth & Families"	"Peer Mentoring"
"Compensation And Benefits"	"Peer Specialist Certification"
"Compliance "	"Peer Specialist--Mental Health"
"Comprehensive Educational Planning"	"Peer Support Group Facilitation"
"Comptia Certified Technical Training"	"Performance Improvement & Project Management"
"Computer Applications For Business"	"Performing Arts"
"Computer Applications For Data Processing"	"Performing Ballet: Romantic to Contemporary"
"Computer Applications For Presentations"	"Performing New Works by Modern Choreographers"
"Computer Applications"	"Personal Coaching"
"Computer Assisted Design"	"Personal Financial Planning"
"Computer Audio Automation & Syncro Systems"	"Personal Training"
"Computer Business Applications"	"Personnel Supervision"
"Computer Information Systems"	"Personnel Management and Fire Emergency"
"Intro To Information Technology"	"Perspectives on Terrorism"
"Computer Organization & Architecture"	"Pest Control"
"Computer Organization & Assembly Language"	"Pharmacy Studies I & II"
"Computer Programs Skills "	"Philosophy of Cooking"
"Computer Security Hardware And Software Hands On Training"	"Philosophy of Freedom"
"Computer Systems Administrator"	"Philosophy of Religious Education"
"Computer Technology Essentials"	"Photo Production"
"Computers And The Law"	"Photography Studio Management"
"Concepts Of Staging Fight Scenes"	"Photography"

"Conducting Significant Incident Investigations In A Mental Health Setting"	"Photography: Cameras and Exposure"
"Conducting Workshops On Healthy Cooking"	"Photojournalism"
"Conference Management For Office Personnel "	"Physical Training"
"Conflict In Human Services"	"Piano Performance"
"Conflict Resolution"	"Pilates Instructor"
"Conflict Resolution In Management"	"Placement Prevention Strategies"
"Conflict Resolution In The Workplace"	"Planning Strategies"
"Conservation"	"Planning, Designing and Delivering eLearning and Online Instruction"
"Constitutional Law"	"Poetry Writing"
"Construction Materials & Methods"	"Poetry"
"Construction Project Management"	"Police Studies"
"Construction Supervision: Foreman"	"Police Community Relations"
"Construction Supervision In The Building Trades"	"Police Criminal Investigations"
"Construction Work Safety "	"Police Crisis Intervention"
"Consumer Behavior"	"Police Ethics"
"Consumer Lending"	"Police Field Problems"
"Consumer Service In Healthcare "	"Police Field Training"
"Contact Tracing"	"Police Instructor and Curriculum Development"
"Contemporary Choreography With Spoken Text"	"Police Investigation and Reporting"
"Contemporary Pattern Making"	"Police Leadership "
"Contemporary Spain"	"Police Leadership & Administration "
"Contract Administration For Union Officials"	"Police Supervision and Management"
"Contract Administration"	"Police Supervision"
"Contract Development"	"Police Supervision, Management, and Administration"
"Contract Language Technical Writing"	"Policing Special Populations"
"Contract Negotiations"	"Political Campaign Management"
"Contracting"	"Political Communications"
" Conversational Spanish"	"Political Lobbying"
"Coping And Resilience"	"Political Science"
"Coping With Life Challenges"	"Pope John Paul II"
"Corporate And Business Law"	"Positive Living, Mindset, and Psychology"
"Corporate Compliance"	"Positive Psychology"
"Corporate Finance And Budgeting"	"Postproduction In Film and Video"
"Corporate Finance"	"Poverty and its Implications in Human Service Delivery"
"Corporate Law"	"Powerful Questions"
"Corporate Loss: Management & Budgeting"	"Practical Nursing"
"Corporate Sponsorship & Event Promotion "	"Practice with Sexual Minority Communities"
"Correctional Supervision And Management-Sergeant"	"Practicum in a Human Service Setting"
"Cost Accounting"	"Practicum in Childrens Health Evaluation and Referral"
"Cost And Price Analysis "	"Practicum in Early Childhood"
"Counseling In Ministry"	"Practicum in Elementary Instruction"
"Counseling Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual And Transgender Populations"	"Practicum in Healthcare"
"Counseling Psychology"	"Practicum in Human Resource Management"
"Counseling Youth And At-Risk Youth In Schools "	"Practicum in Human Services"
"Counterterrorism In A Changing World"	"Practicum in Instruction"
"County Administration"	"Practicum in Management"
"Course Assisting"	"Practicum in NYS Government"
"Covid Planning For Schools"	"Practicum in Special Needs Instruction"
"Covid-19 Emergency Response"	"Preaching in the Lutheran Tradition"
"Covid-19 Hospital Emergency Management"	"Precepting"
"Craft Of The American Cocktail"	"Preparing for Residential Services"
"Crafting The Comic Book"	"Introduction to Residential Services"
"Creating A Historical Exhibit "	"Residential Services Administration"
"Creating A Not-For-Profit Organization"	"Preparing the Municipal Budget"
"Creating Age-Appropriate Activities For Infants And Toddlers"	"Preschool Administration"
"Creating And Producing A Multi-Media Interview Project"	"Preschool Teaching"

"Creating And Running A Business"	"Pre-Trial Process"
"Creating Fictional Worlds"	"Principles of Agriculture and Farming"
"Creating Special Water Districts"	"Principles of Banking"
"Creating, Writing, And Directing Cabaret Performance"	"Principles of Federal Acquisition"
"Creation Of A Non-Profit"	"Principles of Fraud Examination and Financial Forensics"
"Creative Arts For Young Children"	"Principles of Management in a Labor Union Education Environment"
"Creative Crafting"	"Principles of Management in Fine Dining"
"Creative Directing"	"Principles of Management"
"Creative Nonfiction Book Publishing And Marketing"	"Principles of Quick Books"
"Creative Writing"	"Principles of Supervision"
"Creative Writing: Songwriting"	"Principles of Verbal Behavior"
"Creative Writing: Memoir"	"Prior Learning Assessment Leadership"
"Creativity & Entrepreneurship"	"Private Sector Labor Law"
"Creativity & Healing"	"Probate and Estate Law"
"Creativity In The Classroom"	"Procedural Justice"
"Creativity In The Waldorf Classroom"	"Procedural Law"
"Crime And Intelligence Analysis"	"Procurement for School Districts"
"Criminal Investigations"	"Procurement Regulations & Audit"
"Criminal Justice Management & Policy"	"Procurement"
"Criminal Law And Procedure"	"Producing"
"Crisis And Behavior Management"	"Product Design: Rebranding and Development"
"Crisis Intervention Training"	"Production & Design: Theater from Pitch to Performance"
"Crisis Intervention With Ind With Developmental Disabilities"	"Professional Culinary Fieldwork"
"Crisis Intervention"	"Professional Ethics and Core Competencies"
"Crisis Intervention Training"	"Professional Ethics"
"Crisis Leadership"	"Professional Issues and Leadership in Contemporary Nursing"
"Crisis Management And Communication"	"Professional Performance: Musical Theater "
"Crisis Management"	"Professional Performance Preparedness"
"Crisis Paraprofessional Practicum"	"Professional Performance Training and Teaching: STOMP"
"Critical Listening"	"Professional Performance: African Dance"
"Crm Salesforce Administration, Configuration And Management"	"Professional Writing"
"Cross Cultural Communications"	"Program Administration"
"Cross-Cultural Understanding"	"Program Design and Evaluation for Therapeutic Recreation"
"Cross-Sectional Experiment In Museum Programming"	"Program Development and Implementation for Peer Advocacy"
"Ct Operations Management"	"Program Direction"
"Culinary Arts"	"Program Management and Administration"
"Culinary Teaching"	"Project & Budget Management "
"Cultural And Social Meanings Of Women's Hair Styles"	"Project Management"
"Cultural Awareness And Diversity"	"Project Management in Small-Scale Government and Business Env"
"Cultural Competencies In Healthcare "	"Project Management"
"Cultural Competency And Implicit Bias "	"Project Management: Planning and Execution of Healthcare Construction Projects"
"Cultural Competency In Hospitality"	"Project Planning in Healthcare"
"Cultural Competency With Lgbtq+ Communities For Health & Human Services Providers"	"Property Management: Tenant Cooperatives"
"Cultural Diversity Competency"	"Proposal Writing"
"Cultural Sensitivity And Training In Patient Support"	"Protective Factors Framework"
"Cultural Studies In The Dominican Republic"	"Psychoeducational Interventions ACES: Childhood Trauma"

"Culture And Disease"	"Psychological Aspects of Breastfeeding: Challenges and Repercussions"
"Culture Of Incarceration"	"Psychology of Becoming a Mother: Forming a New Identity"
"Curriculum & Environments For Infants & Toddlers"	"Psychology of Ego"
"Curriculum & Environments For Preschoolers"	"Psychology of Wellness: Tailoring Messages and Programs"
"Curriculum & Storyboard Design"	"Psychology"
"Curriculum And Activities For Pre-Schoolers"	"PTA Volunteer Management"
"Curriculum And Environments For Infants And Toddlers"	"Public and Municipal History"
"Curriculum And Planning For Infants And Toddlers "	"Public Art Commissioner"
"Curriculum Development & Instructional Procedures"	"Public Budgeting"
"Curriculum Development For Peer Advocacy"	"Public Finance"
"Curriculum Development: Workshop Facilitation"	"Public Health "
"Curriculum Development"	"Public Health Project - Covid 19"
"Curriculum Development: College Peer Program"	"Public Healthcare Systems"
"Curriculum Development: Consumer Science "	"Public Policy"
"Curriculum Environments For Preschool"	"Public Relations and Social Media Communications"
"Curriculum Models In Early Childhood Education"	"Public Relations Project/Events Coordination"
"Curriculum, Instruction And Assessment"	"Public Relations"
"Customer Relations"	"Public Sector Labor Relations"
"Customer Relationship Management And Technology"	"Public Service Capstone Project"
"Customer Relationship Management"	"Public Speaking "
"Customer Service "	"Public Speaking & Organizational Communication"
"Customer Service And Retail Sales"	"Public Speaking and Presentation Skills"
"Customer Service And Sales"	"Public Speaking for Public Service"
"Customer Service Management "	"Public Speaking: Media & Crisis Management"
"Customer Service Techniques"	"Publishing"
"Customer Support Management"	"Quaker Spirituality "
"Cybersecurity"	"Quality Assurance in Medical Information"
"Dance & Wellness"	"Quality Control Management "
"Dance Composition"	"Quality Improvement in CT Imaging and Dose Reduction"
"Dance Education: Youth, Teens, And Adults"	"Quality Improvement Management and Administration (3 liberal and 4 non-liberal credits)"
"Dance Studio Management"	"Quality Issues Analysis"
"Dance Terminology, Technique, And Performance"	"Quality Management and Survey Preparedness in a Healthcare Facility"
"Dance With Special Needs Populations: Kathak Abhinaya And Laban Movement Analysis"	"Race & Community/Police Relations"
"Dance: Programming And Practice"	"Race, Crime and Justice"
"Dance-Ballet"	"Radar Operator Instruction"
"Dancing & The Mindset"	"Radio On Air Contributor"
"Dancing & Contemporary Choreography "	"Radio Production Assistant"
"Data Analytics"	"Radiological Technology"
"Data And Information Management"	"Reading in the Content Area: Social Studies"
"Data Communications & Networks"	"Reading Instruction"
"Data Literacy Credential"	"Real Estate Agent/Customer Service"
"Data Management Tools"	"Real Estate Law and Contracts"
"Data Management"	"Real Estate Management"
"Data Networking Administration"	"Real Estate"
"Data Structures And Algorithms"	"Recording Solo Albums: Performance as a Singer-Songwriter"
"Database For Human Services"	"Recording Technology"
"Database Management"	"Recovery"
"Daycare Administration"	"Recovery, Wellness, and Support"
"Daycare Center Management"	"Recreational Camp Activities"
"Deaf Culture"	"Recreational Planning in

	Behavioral Health "
"Decorative Painting"	"Recruiting & Advocacy for Gender Equality"
"Delivering And Documentation Veteran Services"	"Recruiting and Retaining Employees"
"Delivering Human Services"	"Recruitment for Public Sector Employees"
"Delivering Services In Non-Profit Settings"	"Recruitment"
"Delivering Workforce Services To Underserved Communities"	"Re-entry essay final"
"Dementia Care For Older Adults"	"Regulations and Compliance in Veteran Services"
"Depth-Psychology"	"Reiki Traditions"
"Design In Weaving"	"Reintegration After Incarceration"
"Design/Production"	"Relationship Violence"
"Designing Canine Training Programs"	"Rental Property: Real Estate Investing"
"Desktop Services Management"	"Represented Project Management"
"Developing Curricula For Gifted Students"	"Research Practicum in Cancer Biology: Characterization of arsenic- induced cancer stem-like cells and underlying signal pathways involved in the transformation of human bronchial epithelial cells."
"Development And Meaning Of Play"	"Residential Care and Self-Care (Practicum)"
"Development Of Training Programs In Healthcare"	"Residential Care Management and Supervision"
"Developmental Activities In Childcare Setting"	"Residential Counseling and Care"
"Developmental Relationships: Developing And Maintaining Healthy Relationships Following Trauma"	"Residential Counseling for Disabled Geriatric Individuals"
"Diabetes And Obesity Management In Homecare, Clinical And Community Settings "	"Residential Program Management in Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation"
"Introduction To Diabetes Education"	"Resolving Conflicts in Collateral Lending Management "
"Digital And Print Production"	"Responsive Classroom Management"
"Digital And Social Media Marketing"	"Restaurant Management"
"Digital Arts And Design"	"Restorative Justice Facilitation"
"Digital Marketing"	"Restorative Justice in the Community & Schools"
"Digital Media Production"	"Retail Administration and Management"
"Digital Photography"	"Retail and Store Management"
"Digital Recording Technology"	"Retail Customer Service"
"Direct Care For Persons With Disability"	"Retail Management"
"Direct Supervision Of Individuals With Intellectual Disabilities"	"Retail Sales Management"
"Direct Support Professional Practicum"	"Retail Store Operations"
"Directing For Musical Theatre"	"Retailing"
"Directing"	"Revenue Cycle Management"
"Director Self-Assessment"	"Revenue Cycle Training"
"Disabilities And Resources And Supports (Practicum)"	"Risk Analysis & Hazard Mitigation"
"Disabilities In The Workplace "	"Risk Management, Insurance, and Employee Benefit Planning"
"Disabilities"	"Rites of Passage"
"Disability Studies"	"Rituals for Death and Dying"
"Disabilities: Assessment, Evaluation And Proactive Strategies"	"Rock and Roll History"
"Disability Advocacy"	"Roles and responsibilities while serving in the NYSSRS (for DP, see degree works)"
"Disability And Gender"	"Running a Restaurant and Catering Business"
"Disability In History"	"Safety and Concussion Prevention in Youth Sports"
"Disaster & Pandemic Response"	"Safety Awareness"
"Disaster Recovery, Networking"	"Safety Management"
"Diseases Of Hair Skin And Nails"	"Safety Protocols"
"Disparities In Healthcare"	"Sales and Customer Service"
"Dispute Resolution"	"Sales and Information Systems"
"Diversity In Educational Settings "	"Sales and Product Management"
"Diversity And Cultural Competence In The Classroom"	"Sales Enablement"
"Diversity And Inclusion In Early Childhood Education"	"Sales Management and Tactical Execution"
"Diversity And Inclusion In The Workplace"	"Sales Management"
"Diversity And Military & Veteran Cultural Competency"	"Salesmanship"
"Diversity, Equity And Inclusion"	"Scholastic and Youth Group Advising"
"Diversity In Banking"	"School Leadership and Program Management"

"Diversity In Community Policing"	"School Leadership Teams"
"Diversity In Emergency Services"	"School Level Parent Governance"
"Diversity In Healthcare Management"	"School Record and Account Management"
"Diversity In Human Services"	"School Safety Procedures"
"Diversity In The Elementary Classroom"	"School Wellness: Policy & Practice"
"Diversity In The Healthcare Workplace"	"Science and Safety in Cosmetology "
"Diversity In The Workplace"	"Science Of Cooking"
"Diversity Management"	"Science of Cosmetology"
"Diversity, Equity And Inclusion In Adult Education"	"Science of Distillation"
"Documentation And Supervision In Foster Care Visitation"	"SCIP-R Strategies in Crisis Intervention and Prevention"
"Documentation In Addiction Services"	"Screenwriting"
"Documentation In Health Services"	"Scripting for Systems Automation"
"Documentation In Human Services "	"Scriptwriting for Film"
"Documentation In Youth Services"	"Scriptwriting"
"Dog Training "	"Secondary Trauma in Animal Service Workers"
"Doll Repair, Restoration, And Conservation"	"Secondary Trauma in Human Service Workers"
"Domestic Relations Law"	"Secondary Trauma in Social Workers"
"Domestic Violence "	"Secure Psychiatric Residential Treatment"
"Domestic Violence Advocacy"	"Securing the Courtroom"
"Domestic Violence And Elder Abuse"	"Security Management Practicum"
"Domestic Violence And Preventive Education In The Community"	"Security Management Training"
"Driving Safety For Disabled Individuals"	"Security Program and Policy Design"
"Drugs And Drug Trafficking "	"Self-Advocacy in Mental Disabilities"
"Drums"	"Self-Education"
"Early Childhood Attachments"	"Self-Publishing Book Budgeting"
"Early Childhood Curriculum And Environments"	"Senior Administrative Manager in Healthcare"
"Early Childhood Development Services "	"Senior Book Photo Editor"
"Early Childhood Development"	"Sensory Activities for Developmental Disabilities (K-6)"
"Early Childhood Education"	"Sergeant Training"
"Early Childhood Environmental Education"	"Service Management"
"Early Childhood Observation And Assessments"	"Services for People with Developmental Disabilities"
"Early Childhood: A Practicum"	"Services to At Risk Young Adults"
"Early Intervention In Mental Illness "	"Sewing and Seamstress Knowledge and Skill"
"Early Intervention"	"Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention"
"E-Commerce"	"Sexual Health Education-Disease Prevention"
"Ecofeminist Theory"	"Shop Steward Learning"
"Economic Issues In Healthcare"	"Site Safety Compliance"
"Editorial Writing For The Audio Podcast Industry"	"Site Supervisor"
"Education, Training And Development"	"Six Sigma Green Belt Methodology"
"Educational Program Development"	"Skills Building with Children in the Foster Care System"
"Education Program Direction"	"Skills for Coping and Recovering from Trauma"
"Effective Communication "	"Small Artisan Business Operations"
"Effective Communication In Human Services"	"Small Business Management"
"Effective Crisis Intervention In Educational And Residential Settings"	"Small Business Operations"
"Eldercare"	"Small Farm Management"
"Elderly Care Advocacy"	"Social and Emotional Health in Early Childhood"
"Electrical Hands On Training And Adult Learners"	"Social and Ethical Issues in Computing"
"Electronic Commerce"	"Social Context of Learning"
"Electronic Medical Records Systems"	"Social Emotional Learning in the Classroom"
"Elements Of Logistics Management"	"Social Emotional Learning"
"Elements Of Supply Chain Management"	"Social Media - Communication & Culture"
"Introduction To Lgbtq+ Studies"	"Social Media Management"
"Emergency Communications/Safety Management In Healthcare Settings"	"Social Media Marketing & Promotion"
"Emergency Action Response Plan"	"Social Movement Theory"
"Emergency Communications"	"Social Movements in US politics"
"Emergency Dispatching / Logistics"	"Social Responsibility and Philanthropy in Business"

"Emergency Management"	"Social Service Delivery Systems"
"Emergency Medical Services Communication"	"Social Support for Newcomer Population in Middle School"
"Emergency Medical Services Management"	"Social Theories in Education"
"Emergency Needs And Services "	"Social Welfare Benefits Administration"
"Emergency Preparedness"	"Social Welfare Policy"
"Emergency Response To Terrorism"	"Softball"
"Emergency Response Training"	"Software Alpha Test [ng, Music & Audio Manufacture PLA15"
"Emergent Learning In Early Childhood Education"	"Software Engineering"
"Emergent Literacy Curriculum Development"	"Software Implementation"
"Empathetic Interviewing"	"Software Testing"
"Employee Discipline In The Public Sector"	"Solo Arts Exhibition: Gallery Preparation and Design"
"Employee Mentoring And Career Development"	"Songwriting Music Composition"
"Employee Relations"	"Songwriting"
"Employee Supervision & Training"	"Sound Engineering and Music Production"
"Employee Training"	"Spanish Composition"
"Employment And Labor Law"	"Spanish Conversation"
"Emergency Medical Services Instruction "	"Spanish for Healthcare Professionals"
"End Of Life Care For The Elderly"	"Spanish Language and Culture"
"Engineer For High-Risk Projects"	"Speaking and Reading Spanish"
"Engineering & Structures, And Blueprint Reading"	"Special Education - Professional Standards"
"English Composition I"	"Special Education in Middle School (Practicum)"
"English Composition II"	"Special Education Teaching Assistance"
"English-French Crusades In The Early Thirteenth Century"	"Special Education"
"Entrepreneurship And Small Business Management"	"Special Education/Teaching"
"Enterprise Architecture"	"Special Events Management"
"Entrepreneurial Finance For Small Business"	"Special Needs Case Management"
"Entrepreneurship"	"Special Needs Housing Placement"
"Environmental Mythology"	"Special Needs Paraprofessional"
"Environmental Photography"	"Special Operations"
"Establishing A Childcare Program"	"Special Topics in Marketing: Disruptive Strategy"
"Estate Paralegal"	"Special Topics: Diversity & Urban Policing"
"Estimating"	"Speech and Drama Methods"
"Ethical Behavior (Perspective Transformation)"	"Spiritual Resilience & Practice"
"Ethical Dilemmas In Criminal Justice"	"Spirituality in Helping Relationship"
"Ethical Issues In Human Services"	"Sports Psychology"
"Ethical Practices In A Business Setting"	"Sports Team Management"
"Ethics And Compliance In Healthcare"	"Staff and Training Development"
"Ethics And Professional Standards"	"Staff and Volunteer Training"
"Ethics For The Service Sector"	"Staff Development and Coaching"
"Ethics In Business"	"Staff Education & Training"
"Ethics In Human Services"	"Staff Supervision & Management"
"Ethics In Real Estate"	"Staff Trainer/Teacher - Adults with Disabilities"
" Ethics In Substance Abuse And Mental Health Services"	"Staff Training & Development"
"Ethics In The Workplace"	"Staff training in a clinic setting "
"Ethnoentomology"	"Staffing in Healthcare"
"Event Management & Fundraising"	"Staffing the Human Services Organization "
"Event Organizing"	"Staffing the Organization"
"Event Planning And Management"	"Staffing"
"Event Planning And Volunteer Coordination: Special Olympics"	"Starting a Bilingual Newspaper"
"Events Coordinator For Private And Public Events"	"State and Local Political Campaigns"
"Events Management"	"Statistics"
"Evidence Based Policing"	"Stigma & Mental Illness"
"Execution Of A Warrant"	"Stock Market Exchange"
"Executive Assisting"	"Stone Sculpture"
"Experience & Learning In Community Health Nursing"	"Storytelling"
"Explorations In Drawing"	"Strategic Human Resource Management"
"Export Compliance In Aerospace "	"Strategic Leadership in a Trades Union Environment"



"Facilitating Dance Making With Middle School Non-Dancers"	"Strategic Management MGMT-4035"
"Facilities Management Information Systems"	"Strategic Management"
"Family Childcare: Business Management"	"Strategic Perspectives of Global Management"
"Family Childcare: Record Keeping "	"Strategic Planning and Forecasting"
"Family Credential Facilitation"	"Strategic Planning"
"Family Development Instructor & Training"	"Strategic Human Resource Management "
"Family Early Intervention For Speech Development"	"Street Theater Performance"
"Family Intervention"	"Stress and Coping"
"Family Law"	"Stress Management and Mindfulness"
"Family Medicine Residency Administration"	"Students in Temporary Housing"
"Family Shelter Operations"	"Studio Business Management"
"Fashion Industry"	"Studio Management, (Operations and Ownership) PLA 09"
"Fdny Mentoring Program"	"Studio Production"
"Federal And State Court Systems - Comparative"	"Studio Recording"
"Federal Income Tax I: Individual Income Tax"	"Substance Abuse Detoxification and Rehabilitation Programs"
"Federal Rules And Regulations For Hipaa"	"Substance Abuse Treatment with Special Populations"
"Federal Taxes"	"Substantive Law"
"Feng Shui Interior Design"	"Suicide Prevention and Crisis Intervention Training"
"Fetal Structure, Function, And Future Impact"	"Supervising Children in a Professional Setting"
"Field Service Operations"	"Supervising Young Children"
"Fight Choreography"	"Supervision "
"Fight Direction For Camera"	"Supervision and Administration in a Medical Environment"
"Fight Direction For Theatre"	"Supervision and Management"
"Finance Management "	"Supervision and Staff Training"
"Finance Society And Ethics"	"Supervision and Training and Development"
"Finance"	"Supervision in Healthcare"
"Financial Counseling/Navigation"	"Supervision In Human Services "
"Financial Management"	"Supervision in Human Services"
"Financial Plan Development"	"Supervision in Patient Care"
"Financial Reporting"	"Supervision in Programs for Young Children"
"Fine Carpentry And Cabinetmaking"	"Supervision"
"Fire Inspection"	"Supervisory Management"
"Fire Prevention"	"Supporting Recovery with Medications for Addiction Treatment (MAT)"
"Fire Services And Emergency Medical Instructor"	"Surreal Poetry"
"Firearms & Tactical Handling & Operations"	"Sustainability for Engineers"
"Firehouse And The Community"	"Sustainable Restaurant Design Consultation"
"First Aid/Cpr/Cpro Instructor"	"Sustainable Textile Manufacturing"
"Fitness"	"Suzuki Method Training and Teaching Exp."
"Flight Attendant"	"Swimming Instruction"
"Flood Insurance"	"System Administration"
"Food Safety In Food Service"	"System Lifecycles Analysis and Design"
"Food Sanitation & Safety"	"Systems Analysis & Design"
"Food Service Operations Management"	"Tae Kwon Do: Marketing & Management"
"Food Styling For Tv Program"	"Tape Based Audio Recording Systems"
"Food Systems And Social Justice"	"Teacher Assistant Practicum (Kindergarten)"
"Foster Care Parenting"	"Teacher Assistant Practicum"
"Foster Care"	"Teachers Aide in Special Education"
"Foundations Of American Education"	"Teacher's Assistant Practicum in Private School"
"Foundations Of Management And Leadership"	"Teaching and Training in Healthcare"
"Foundations Of Management"	"Teaching Armed Stage Combat"
"French Language And Culture "	"Teaching Assistant in Special Education"
"French"	"Teaching Assistant Practicum"
"From Blogging To Column Journalism"	"Teaching Ballet: Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced"
"From Page To Stage: Adapting 'The Red Shoes'"	"Teaching Ceramics to Children"
"Full Stack Development With Mern"	"Teaching Coping"

"Fundamentals Of Audio Technology"	"Teaching Creative Dramatics Ages 4 To 12"
"Fundamentals Of Classical Ballet Technique: Embodied Practice And Concepts "	"Teaching Early Childhood Dance"
"Fundamentals Of Hockey "	"Teaching English to Non-Native Speakers"
"Fundamentals Of Music Theory"	"Teaching ESL to Restaurant Employees"
"Funding & Human Services Organizations"	"Teaching Methods for Social Studies"
"Funding For Non-Profits"	"Teaching Methods in Distance Learning"
"Fundraising And Event Management"	"Teaching Patient Care and Service"
"Fundraising And Philanthropy"	"Teaching Physical Fitness"
"Fundraising"	"Teaching Preschool"
"Game Design"	"Teaching Self-development"
"Game Design Pedagogy"	"Teaching Special Education Students"
"Games As Culture: Thinking Beyond Screens"	"Teaching Taekwondo: Philosophy and Practice"
"Gardening"	"Teaching Technology"
"Genealogy Research And Applications"	"Teaching Unarmed Stage Combat"
"General Management"	"Teaching Yoga"
"General Psychology"	"Teaching Youth Leadership: A Taekwondo Approach"
"General Topics Instructor "	"Team Timmy: Developing and Implementing a Program that raises awareness and support for Brain Trauma, Veteran Resources, and Suicide. "
"Geology: Stones And Their Historical Uses"	"Teams and Organizations"
"Geriatric Care"	"Teams and Technology"
"Gifted Child Development"	"Teamwork in the Ed Tech Environment"
"Gospel Music Composition"	"Technical Writing"
"Gospel Music"	"Technologies for Digital Marketing "
"Government Contracting"	"Technology Implementation"
"Government Regulations"	"Technology in the Workforce"
"Grant Administration & Reporting"	"Terminal Agency Coordinator Administrator & Instructor (Administrator Responsibilities)"
"Grant Writing And Management"	"Terrorism and Homeland Security"
"Grant Writing"	"TESOL Methodology"
"Grant Writing And Fundraising"	"Testing and Implementation of Systems"
"Grief And Coping"	"The Abrahamic Religions"
"Grievance Procedures"	"The Art of Mixing"
"Group Facilitation"	"The Business of Cosmetology"
"Group Fitness Instructor"	"The Call to Service"
"Group Work In Corrections"	"The Clinical Appeals Process"
"Group Work In Human Services "	"The Culture of Early Childhood Caregiving"
"Group Work"	"The Culture of Online Gaming "
"Guitar"	"The English Monarchy in the Twelfth Century"
"Gymnastics Coaching"	"The Evolution of Gangs in the United States: Insights from a Deputy Marshal"
"Habitation Planning And Documentation "	"The Foster Care System"
"Hands On Investigations Training"	"The Foundation of Interfaith/Inter-spiritual Ministry"
"Harm Reduction In Human Services"	"The History of the United States during the 1960s"
"Harm Reduction"	"The Holocaust"
"Harassment Investigation"	"The Human Connection in Museums"
"Hazardous Waste Operations"	"The Legacy of Walt Disney and his Company."
"Head Start Para Teaching Practicum"	"The Music Industry"
"Healing With The Arts"	"The Path of Skillful Sacred Service: Creating Rituals and Ceremonies"
"Health & Safety In The Early Childhood"	"The Protestant-Catholic Conflict During the Tudor Dynasty"
"Health And Fitness"	"The Science of Cosmetology"
"Health And Safety In Children's Programs"	"The Sun and the Moon: A Detailed Look at the Sun and Moon in Astrology"
"Health Care Administration"	"The Viking Era: The History and Relation to Anthropology"
"Health Center Management And Leadership"	"Theatre Dance Ensemble Performance: Advanced"

"Health Coach Program Coordination"	"Theatre History"
"Health Informatics"	"Theatrical Performance "
"Health Paraprofessional"	"Theatrical Producing"
"Health Physics"	"Theology, Faith Community, and Pastoral Care"
"Health Services Office Operations"	"Therapeutic crisis intervention"
"Health, Safety & Nutrition "	"3-D Design"
"Health, Safety, And Nutrition In Childcare"	"3-D Game Character Animation"
"Health, Safety, Nutrition"	"Title VI/Affirmative Action Compliance "
"Healthcare Advocacy"	"Toddler Curriculum Play-Based Learning"
"Healthcare Billing & Collections"	"Tour Management"
"Healthcare Customer Service"	"Tourette's Journey and Recovery"
"Healthcare Disparities Serving Populations At Risk"	"Town Tax Collection"
"Healthcare Ethics"	"Trade Development in the Global Marketplace"
"Healthcare Facility Operations"	"Trade Teaching"
"Healthcare Information Systems"	"Trade Union Education Project Leadership"
"Healthcare Leadership"	"Training & Development"
"Healthcare Management And Leadership"	"Training and Development for a Family Shelter"
"Healthcare Management Information Systems"	"Training and Development in Healthcare"
"Healthcare Management"	"Training and Development in Human Services"
"Healthcare Medical Coding"	"Training and Development of Bank Tellers"
"Healthcare Office Management"	"Training and Development of Police Officers"
"Healthcare Operations Management"	"Training and Instructing Emergency Management"
"Healthcare Policy"	"Training in the Fire Service"
"Healthcare Project Management"	"Training Management Information Systems"
"Healthcare Services Administration"	"Training to Enforce Learning Through Enrichment"
"Healthcare Supply Procurement Processes"	"Training with Lupe Serrano"
"Hebrew Language"	"Training, Supervision & Mandated Reporting in Childcare"
"Hebrew In Conversation"	"Training: Asbestos Awareness"
"Helping Skills And Counselling"	"Train-the Trainers"
"High School Administration"	"Transformational Life Coach Certification"
"Hippa Compliance"	"Transformative School Culture"
"Hiring And Supervision"	"Transition and Adulthood"
"History And Culture Of Trinidad And Tobago"	"Transition and implementation of EMR in Clinic Setting"
"History Of Black American Music"	"Transportation Management"
"History Of Classic Recording Tech"	"Trauma Informed Care in Human Services"
"History Of East Asian Martial Arts"	"Trauma, Illness, and Recovery: A Holistic Process"
"History Of Irish Spirituality"	"Travel and Event Coordination"
"History Of Veterans Activism"	"Travel/Transportation Paraprofessional"
"Hiv/Std Field Service Project"	"Trial Master File Expert"
"Holistic Approach For Students With Oppositional Defiance Disorder"	"Trumpet Studies at the Introductory level "
"Holistic Healing "	"Turkish History and Culture"
"Holistic Healing In Human Services"	"Tutoring Young Children in French"
"Holistic Healing In Massage Therapy"	"Twelve Step Programs"
"Home Health Aid Studies"	"Twi (Akan) Language"
"Home Health Care Management"	"Typesetting and Typography"
"Home Remodeling "	"U.S. Unions since the 1960's"
"Home School Connections"	"U.S. Intellectual Property Law: Patents, Trademarks, and Copyrights"
"Home, School And Community Collaborations"	"Undercover Operations "
"Horticulture"	"Understanding Emotional/Behavioral and Mental Health Disorders in Children, Adolescents, and Adults"
"Hospice Care"	"Understanding Mental Illness in Children"
"Hospital Administration Services"	"Union & Non-Union Workforce Supervision"
"Hospital Billing"	"Union Activism"
"Hospital Emergency Management"	"Union Administration"
"Hospital Medical Record Coordination"	"Union Grievance"
"Hospitality Management"	"Union Organizing"

"Hostage Negotiation "	"Union Representation (or labor-management relations)"
"House Manager"	"Using Leadership to Promote Ethical Policing"
"HR Information Systems"	"Using Yoga for Trauma Informed Care"
"Human Development And Disabilities"	"Utilizing Technology in the Classroom"
"Human Motivation And Resilience"	"Vaganova Classical Ballet Technique and Breath Awareness"
"Human Nutrition"	"Vendor Management "
"Human Resource Allocation In The Public Sector"	"Vendor Management"
"Human Resource Information Systems"	"Vendor/Account Management"
"Human Resource Management"	"Veteran Benefits Training"
"Human Resources - Employee Recruitment, Onboarding & Administration"	"Veteran Service Case Management & Computer Applications"
"Human Resources "	"Veteran Service Management"
"Human Resources Administration"	"Veteran Services Ethics"
"Human Resources And Hiring"	"Veterans Law "
"Human Resources Policy"	"Veterans Legal Writing"
"Human Resources Practices: International Visa Hiring"	"Veterans Services Special Populations"
"Human Service Advocacy"	"Video Animation"
"Human Service Delivery"	"Video Production"
"Human Services Delivery-Case Management"	"Visa Regulations"
"Human Service Ethics"	"Visual Merchandising"
"Human Service Practice With Disabilities"	"Vocal Performance"
"Human Service Practice With Individuals Diagnosed Schizophrenia"	"Vocal Technique"
"Human Service Supervision"	"Vocal Training"
"Human Service Volunteerism"	"Vocational Counseling and Rehabilitation"
"Human Service Worker"	"Voice and Speech"
"Human Services Documentation "	"Volunteer Crisis Counseling"
"Human Services Ethics"	"Volunteer Management"
"Human Services Management"	"Volunteer Program Evaluation"
"Human Services Practice With Disabilities"	"Volunteerism"
"Human Services Supervision"	"Volunteerism: Event Planning, Fundraising, and Leadership"
"Human Services With Special Populations"	"Waldorf Education 1919-Present"
"Human-Computer Interaction"	"Waldorf Pedagogy"
"Hypnotherapy"	"Warehouse Operations "
"Igbo Language Introductory"	"Waste Chemical Rep"
"Immigrant Experience "	"Wearable Defibrillator Use for Cardiac Function"
"Impact Of Poverty On Children And Families"	"Web Design (submitted)"
"Impact Of Serious Illness On Family Dynamics"	"Web Design"
"Implementation Of A New Communication Application"	"Web Label Ownership & Operation PLA21"
"Implementation Of Gifted Education Programs"	"Web Systems Development"
"Improving Cultural Competency For Behavioral Health Professionals"	"Website Design"
"Improvisation"	"Welfare to Work"
"Incident Management "	"Wellness and Meditation"
"Incident Management And Leadership"	"Wellness Coaching"
"Inclusion Classroom"	"Wellness Coaching: How to Initiate Client Buy-In."
"Incorporating Theater Practices For Teaching Methodologies With Children"	"Wellness"
"Independent Studies In Anthropology Women's Micro Credit Project, Nigeria"	"What I Learned in Culinary School"
"Independent Studies In Anthropology: Prehistoric Rock Art: Stone Chambers"	"Windows 2016 Server"
"Independent Studies In Anthropology: Prehistoric Transformational Sculpture"	"Windows Sharepoint"
"Individualized Approaches In Autism Spectrum Disorder"	"Women in Addiction"

"Industrial Facilities Management And Plant Electrical Systems Operations"	"Women in Helping Professions"
"Industrial Supply Training, Development And Sales Management"	"Women in Leadership"
"Infant & Toddler Care"	"Women in Management "
"Infant & Toddler Development"	"Women in Management and Leadership"
"Information Assurance"	"Women in Management"
" Information Design And Publication"	"Women Recovering from Substance Abuse"
"Information Management"	"Women's Health in Female Veterans (Specialized Population)"
"Information Storage And Management"	"Work Experience: Information and Library Science - Public Library"
"Information System Implementation & Training"	"Workforce Development within Community Colleges"
"Information Systems Security Operations"	"Working with Adolescents"
"Information Technology For Healthcare Management"	"Working with At Risk Children"
"Injury Prevention And Conditioning For The Dancer"	"Working With At-Risk Youth"
"Instructing Gifted Children"	"Working with Children with Autism and Learning Disabilities"
"Instructional Practices & Classroom Management"	"Working with Children with Autism"
"Instructor Development: Police Studies"	"Working with Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach"
"Insurance Adjuster"	"Working with Developmentally Disabled Adults and Children"
"Insurance Sales"	"Working with Disabled Adults"
"Intake/Outreach Assessment On Mental Health And Substance Abuse"	"Working with Diverse Populations"
"Integrating Cultural Diversity In Early Childhood Education"	"Working with Immigrant Children"
"Integrity, Communication & Decision Making In Leadership "	"Working with Individuals with Disabilities"
"Intellectual And Developmental Disabilities "	"Working with Parents"
"Intellectual Disabilities"	"Working with People with Developmental Disabilities"
"Intellectual Property"	"Working with Persons with Traumatic Brain Injury"
"Intentional Use Of Self For Staff Working In Residential Placement"	"Working with Residents of a Family Shelter"
"Interactive Media"	"Working with Special Needs Children"
"Intercultural Communication"	"Working With Special Needs Populations"
"Intermediate Commentaries"	"Working with students with Disabilities"
"Intermediate Talmud Intensive"	"Working with Students with Mental Disabilities"
"Intermediate Talmud Survey"	"Working with Students"
"Internal And External Customer Support"	"Working with the Disabled"
"Internal Communications"	"Working with the Incarcerated"
"International Business Management"	"Working with the Mentally Ill"
"International Business"	"Working With Youth (Mainstream, Special Education & At Risk)"
"International Cross-Cultural Management"	"Workplace Communication Fundamentals"
"International Finance Corresponding Esc Course International Finance FSMA 3030"	"Workplace Communication"
"International Human Resource Management"	"Workplace Project Management"
"International Production"	"Workplace Safety"
"Internet Marketing"	"Workplace Supervision"
"Internship-Marketing"	"Writing and Producing Songs"
"Interpersonal Communication"	"Writing for TV"
"Interpersonal Communication Through Live Theater"	"Writing History for Elementary and Middle School- History Bites"
"Interpersonal Communications "	"Writing Lyrics for Musical Theatre"
"Intervention With Teen Girls At Risk"	"Yoga Philosophy and Hinduism"
"Intervention/Mentoring At-Risk Youth"	"Yoga Teacher Training & Teaching Practice"
"Interventions With Addiction Disorders"	"Yoga: Applications and Practice for Recovery"
"Interview & Interrogation"	"Young children and technology "
"Interviewing And Investigation"	"Young Children and Technology"
"Interviewing For A Family Shelter"	"Youth Advocacy"

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"Intimate Partner Violence"	"Youth Coaching "
"Intimate Relations / Marriage"	"Youth Development"
"Intro Audio Equipt & Tech Pla02"	"Youth Group Counseling "
	"Youth Group Mentoring"
	"Youth Mentorship"
	"Youth Religious Education K-5"
	"Youth Service and Community Outreach"
	"Youth Sports Management"
	"Zumba Instruction"

## We Did It Together 1993-2023

*All About Mentoring* was first published in the fall of 1993. It was part of an emerging “Mentoring Institute,” and served as a significant effort to create “a visible culture to honor our work.” Colleagues Miriam Tatzel and Lee Herman were its first editors; the first issue offered writings by Rhoada Wald, Laura Weed, Jim Case, Xenia Coulter, Judy Gerardi, Jim Robinson, and John Flynn. The Mentoring Institute’s initial advisory board included colleagues from across the institution: Bob Carey, Jay Gilbert, Susan Hallgarth, Marjorie Lavin, Tim Lehmann, Sylvain Nagler, Susan Oaks, Irene Rivera de Royston, Bob Rodgers, Chris Rounds, Paula Silver, and Evelyn Ting.

What has emerged over these 30 years and, now 56 issues, is a compendium of contributions of all kinds from members of the support staff, professionals, administrators, ESU faculty, and adult educators from outside of our institution. The names of those who contributed (included here) are wonderful to see in one place. It reflects a big common effort. Indeed, we did it together. With deep thanks to everyone. And a million thank you’s to Jeanine Pero whose efforts made this list possible.

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Meredith Brown	Jack Mezirow
Fernand Brunschwig	Mhamed, Ali Ait Si
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John Lawless	Eric Zencey
	Joe Zoske



## Empire State Core Values

### **Empire State University Core Values**

*Over its more than 50-year history, SUNY Empire State University has had two statements of “core values.” The first was presented by a group of faculty and administrators including Keith Elkins, Walt Frykholm, Bob Carey, and Jim Case at the 1993 All College Conference and published in All About Mentoring, Issue 1, September 1993; the second (that we have included in each issue of this publication since 2005) grew out of the work of a task force made up of Marianne Arieux, Eric Ball, Joyce Elliott, Leslie Ellis, Cathy Leaker, and Alan Mandell and was endorsed by the Empire senate in 2005. Here, we present both of these documents as one way to honor our institution’s ongoing commitment to a set of “core values.”*

### **Core Values of the College, 1993**

1. The student is at the center of all educational decisions.
2. Mentoring is the best way to implement these decisions.
3. The quality of the mentor/student relationship largely determines the quality of the student’s education.
4. We believe in making ourselves and the College accessible to students in terms of place, time, and programming.
5. The College works collaboratively with students in a variety of programs and studies and on a number of levels: we believe in serving individual students in a manner appropriate to their needs.
6. Our goal is to foster the development of self-directed learners who are intellectually curious, open to new ideas, own their own learning, and have the academic skills to continue learning beyond college.
7. The College should be a diverse academic community which serves a diversity of students.
8. We believe in the mentor as an adult learner, in collaborative learning, in collegiality and mutual support. We need to be reflective practitioners.

9. We believe in recognizing learning wherever it occurs and however it is acquired, and in the community as a learning resource.
10. The College should serve the community and the broader society both directly and, through its graduates, indirectly.
11. We should be open to new ways of learning and teaching, and innovative in pursuit of achieving these core values.

### **Core Values of Empire State College, 2005**

The core values of SUNY Empire State College reflect the commitments of a dynamic, participatory and experimenting institution accessible and dedicated to the needs of a richly diverse adult student body. These values are woven into the decisions we make about what we choose to do, how we carry out our work in all parts of the institution, and how we judge the outcome of our individual and collective efforts. More than a claim about what we have already attained, the core values support our continuing inquiry about what learning means and how it occurs.

We value learning-mentoring goals that:

- respond to the academic, professional, and personal needs of each student;
- identify and build upon students' existing knowledge and skills;
- sustain life-long curiosity and critical inquiry;
- provide students with skills, insights and competencies that support successful college study.
- support critical exploration of knowledge and experience;
- provide opportunities for active, reflective, and creative academic engagement.

We value learning-mentoring modes that:

- respond to a wide array of student styles, levels, interests, and circumstances;

- foster self-direction, independence, and reflective inquiry;
- provide opportunities for ongoing questioning and revising;
- reflect innovation and research.

We value a learning-mentoring community that:

- defines each member as a learner, encouraging and appreciating his/ her distinctive contributions;
- recognizes that learning occurs in multiple communities, environments, and relationships as well as in formal academic settings;
- attracts, respects and is enriched by a wide range of people, ideas, perspectives, and experiences.

We value a learning-mentoring organization and culture that:

- invites collaboration in the multiple contexts of our work;
- fosters innovation and experimentation;
- develops structures and policies that encourage active participation of all constituents in decision-making processes;
- advocates for the interests of adult learners in a variety of academic and civic forums.