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and made all of this work possible.

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EDITORIAL



Photo credit: Lawrence Henderson

Our Jubilee Issue

"A beginning is the purpose of ritual. A beginning is not a repetition. People sometimes say: 'Look, it's starting all over again,' meaning that there's no change. The important element in that is 'starting.' Starting again is living through a new beginning, a birth."

– Marc Augé, *The Future* (2014, p. 23)

OK. I admit it, this is not yet SUNY Empire State College's "jubilee year"; the trumpets are not blaring; and, sadly, our little ESC journal is not able to announce the "holy year" of Leviticus in which all slaves and prisoners will be freed and all debts relieved. Especially at a time like this one, it might be appealing to think that we had the power to "proclaim liberty throughout the land," but it's just not the case. What we can do, with a bit more humility, with deep appreciation to many, many people who have contributed to this writing venture, and with a big hope for new beginnings, is to recognize this, the 50th issue of *All About Mentoring*.

All About Mentoring (AAM) was first published in 1993. The "newsletter" was the in-house effort of a group of incredibly dedicated colleagues (including Xenia Coulter, Jay Gilbert, Lee Herman, Chris Rounds and Miriam Tatzel, and mentor-"advisors" from all over the college) who wanted to encourage deep dialogue among mentors across the college. It was not by mistake that what became called the Mentoring Institute

(the precursor of the Center for Mentoring and Learning, and now of the Center for Mentoring, Learning and Academic Innovation), formed as a voluntary association of faculty across the college to keep the conversation going, announced its spirit in the subtitle of the first issue of *AAM*: "Mentors for Mentors." How can we, they asked, find ways to talk and share and debate and dive in, together, to think carefully about what we do every day and to recognize in our mentoring practices a quite radical way to rethink and even redo how we teach and how students learn? (We've included editorials from two of the early issues to give you a sense of what was going on and how relevant those views are today.)

Empire State College (like other kindred colleges and universities of the time) was an experimenting institution: We all knew that; it was part of the challenge and the joy. In the early years of the college, The Center for Individualized Education (CIE), ESC's faculty development and research center initially funded by a Danforth Foundation grant in 1973, not only sponsored workshops (that often went on for a week at a time), but published a series of "white papers," truly imaginative research, on many aspects of college practice. (My favorite among these was a 1973 qualitative study by Ernie Palola and Paul Bradley of the experience of the 10 earliest graduates of ESC that was part of an ESC "research series" called *Ten Out of Thirty*.) But the CIE fell victim to one of the many

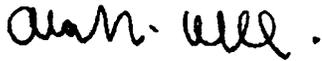
fiscal crunches the college has periodically felt over almost five decades, and while faculty development activities never disappeared (they were always bubbling up in the centers and units across the college and at larger college gatherings), by the early 1990s, it was clear to many that more systematic across-the-college conversations about that strangely contested term "mentoring" needed a real boost and that faculty had to take the lead. *All About Mentoring* was born in this context. It recognized the need to "start all over again," but, of course, not.

It is pretty extraordinary for me to look back at the 49 issues and to see that so many people have contributed to *All About Mentoring*: hundreds of full- and part-time faculty at this college, adjunct faculty, ESC professionals and administrators, and, of course, colleagues from outside of ESC, as well, all of whom have been part of an effort to champion and facilitate a much larger and ongoing conversation about alternative higher education over the last half-century. What great thanks all of the contributors deserve.

Do we have something to celebrate with this 50th issue of *All About Mentoring*? Without doubt, I'd say: Yes! The terrain of higher education has radically changed, the term "mentoring" is just about everywhere, and adult-friendly institutions have become the bread-and-butter of many colleges that, not so long ago, would not have touched an adult learner with a 10-foot pole.

And yet, at the same time, I'd say that the promise of a true difference – the possibility of colleges devoted to a mentoring culture that provides students and faculty with a more humane, flexible, responsive, academically-rich and student-centered learning environment – that promise is, right now, uncertain and insecure – it's pretty wobbly.

It's exactly for this reason that we need to continue thinking and writing and experimenting and researching and keeping track of what we're doing and sharing that new learning with each other. That's what this journal has been "all about" and must continue, forever, to shoot for. It can't be about being stuck in the old. "Starting" is the key, now with an impressive 1-50 as a foundation. That's surely a reason for our particular jubilee.



Alan Mandell

“Until an institution’s purposes are clear, conflicting priorities and competing interests will prevail. Once clear purposes concerning desired outcomes for students are defined, then educational practices can be coordinated in their service. Each institution needs its own, widely shared, definition, in language consistent with its mission, culture and constituents. For what it’s worth, my outcome candidates are knowledge, intellectual competence, interpersonal competence, emotional intelligence, integrity and motivation. It is no coincidence that these outcomes are almost identical to those given for Empire State College in that first bulletin [the college “guide” for all new students, 1971-1972]. They were, ‘developing competence, increasing awareness, clarifying purposes, becoming autonomous, understanding oneself, understanding others and developing integrity.’”

– Arthur W. Chickering, “Strengthening Civic Learning”
All About Mentoring, 25
Spring 2003, p. 5

Precarity

Peggy Tally, School for Graduate Studies

Recent writings on the transformation of work have spoken to the ways in which work has become more insecure in a variety of fields as a result of technological changes, changes in social relations and the needs of industry in late capitalism (Kalleberg, 2009). The word “precarity” has been adopted to signal these changes and to describe how such changes have created a contingent workforce in response to the needs of the neoliberal labor market. Another way of thinking about precarity is to view it as the increasing condition of many workers in the labor force who are being asked to be flexible in terms of their hours, skills, wages, etc. It particularly affects those in the service industries, and also those who are traditionally most vulnerable in the labor market, including women, immigrants and young people (Ricceri, 2011).

While this is arguably not a new condition in capitalist countries in the sense that since the Industrial and post-Industrial Revolutions labor has always been subject to contingencies, the idea is that we have now moved beyond Fordism to a situation where contingency is the defining labor option for most workers. In fact, recent studies have shown that there are a growing number of jobs that are temporary, contingent and not restricted to any particular field (Aronsson, 2001).

Whereas this kind of labor in post-industrial economies might be seemingly confined, as well, to those who occupy the lower rungs of the labor hierarchy, including workers who are doing direct service such as retail, cleaning, home health care, etc., what is now also being observed is that people who possess advanced degrees and intellectual skills and are the so-called “knowledge workers” are also similarly experiencing the same sense of precarity (Casas-Cortés, 2014).

And, while some have made a virtue of this unstable work arrangement, citing the fact that millennials are more interested in collecting a

“toolbox” of skills from a variety of employers rather than finding loyalty from and to one stable employer, when looked at from another perspective this may be seen as an adaptation to the lived reality in an insecure labor market (Jhally, Donovan, & Klein, 2003). In the sociological literature, more generally, precarity has been linked to the larger processes of globalization, and attempts to mobilize service workers have been a response in Europe and the United States to counteract the damaging impact of an insecure livelihood and the toll this takes on families, both financially as well as materially (Moghadam, 1999). It also has been linked to the needs of the neoliberal economy, which profits from the creation of originally state-funded educational institutions that produce workers who can then serve the needs of corporations, while the students and increasingly, academics, find that they are immiserated under the weight of student loans and low wages, respectively. As Mariya Ivancheva (2015) has observed:

While higher education has been turned into a profitable business in which mostly state funds are invested, it does not pay back into the state exchequer. It benefits industries, commercial publishers, marketing consultancies, retail and service providers. The profit, however, is accumulated by exploitation of students and an increasingly growing number of academics who have joined the ranks of the working poor. (p. 40)

In terms of the knowledge sector, it is also clear that those who work in higher education in the United States and Europe also have been experiencing the phenomenon of precarity with respect to their positions as university instructors (Ivancheva, 2015). American universities have been experiencing a high degree of transition over the past 30 years, brought on in part by changes in the financing structure of public colleges. At the same time, there also have been technological changes,



Peggy Tally

Photo credit: Bill Tally

which have facilitated the increasing use of computers that serve as virtual classrooms, and allow students to engage in learning from a distance with nontraditional teaching methods and instructors who may be remotely located (Ryan, Scott, Freeman, & Patel, 2000).

Another transformation has been the call for increasing accountability by governments to assess whether students are actually learning what the colleges purport to be teaching them (Duncan, 2011). This call has led to a marked increase in not only the kinds of strategies of surveillance and assessment of teaching effectiveness, but also the accountability of teachers as reflected in student evaluations. In fact, more administrators have been hired to oversee this large-scale effort to evaluate the learning that has occurred. As Hiltonsmith (2015) has found, this has led to increasing labor expenses as more administrators are hired, which causes costs to escalate in universities.

This emphasis on administration has meant that there is less funding available for tenure-track positions, and thus savings are encouraged through the hiring of contingent or adjunct faculty. In addition to the increase

in online education programs, as well as an increase in “watchdogs” initiated from federal mandates, there is also the reality of the graying of the academic labor force by virtue of the fact that the faculty who were hired during the ramping up of higher education 30 years ago are now over 65 and are retiring in droves. However, instead of hiring new faculty to tenure-track positions, these teaching duties are increasingly left to a growing army of adjuncts.

At the same time, one of the key factors in the increasing tuition costs at the university that have significantly affected the quality and kind of labor that is performed is that colleges have had to deal with ever growing deficits in their budgets as a result of defunding by the federal government for public colleges. For private colleges, there are similar challenges to their budgets, even with endowments, as schools find that they are now engaged in an “arms race” to make their colleges attractive so as to get the best crop of students to apply to their schools. This has led to funding some projects over others, and the so-called “country club” amenities such as climbing walls, state of the art sports facilities, gourmet food, high-end residence halls, etc., which in turn has led to lower salaries for faculty and additional hires of adjuncts. In fact, the majority of faculty now at many colleges consists of over 51 percent contingent, or part-time instructors.

However, the main driver of escalating costs in the United States for all colleges is by far the loss of state and federal spending. As Robert Hiltonsmith (2015) has stated:

We find that declining state appropriations for higher education is indeed the primary driver of rising tuition, responsible for 79 percent of tuition hikes at public research universities between 2001 and 2011 and 78 percent of tuition hikes at public master’s and bachelor’s universities over the same decade. Increased spending on administration accounts for another 6 percent and 5 percent, respectively, at the two categories of institutions, and increased grant and loan aid has had a negligible effect, at most. Finally, the purported construction boom’s impact on tuition has been minimal as well, as we estimate spending on construction

has accounted for 6 percent of tuition increases at both research and master’s/ bachelor’s universities. (para. 2)

What has this meant for the faculty who do have tenure-track or tenured jobs? One of the outcomes of this new academic order is that there are simply fewer colleagues to share in the responsibilities of shared governance, for example, and there are fewer who can have a close relationship with students or other faculty. The sense of belonging to a larger college community is seriously compromised when the majority of faculty finds that they simply can’t participate due to the contingent nature of their work, which necessitates trying to work at as many places as possible to put together a minimum standard of living. For the senior faculty, then, who in many respects may have contributed to the situation of the overproduction of academics for jobs that are no longer there, there is then the sense that the industry they originally entered has radically changed in this new, neoliberal regime. They experience the competition for funding for each project as well as the reality that they have become in many respects “part of the problem,” working alongside colleagues who are adjuncts at a vastly lower pay scale and, through their own activities, contributing to a system that overproduces Ph.D.s who will have no secure job to obtain when they graduate. As Ivancheva (2015) noted:

Senior academics, who contributed to the overproduction and competition, are also increasingly anxious about the bureaucratization of the application, recruitment, and self-evaluation, the brutal competition for short-term funding, and the excruciating income inequality between an ever smaller cohort of star academics and an ever growing reserve army of adjunct faculty. Yet, instead of a profound rethinking in of academic labor relations, the skyrocketing number of Ph.D. places within a shrinking job market is still the norm rather than the exception. (p. 41)

For all the difficulties of those tenured faculty who “remain” after the retirements and budget cuts, it is far more difficult for those part-time instructors who often have very difficult working conditions, including not knowing often until the last minute whether

they are even going to be hired to teach a given class; having little to no office space to be able to conduct office hours; and having very little connection to the larger college community as they scramble to put together even the basic necessities of a computer or desk, much less to engage in the kinds of professional development activities that might help them become more engaged scholars and practitioners.

Even with recent political calls by then President Obama, for example, as well as the progressive former Democratic candidate for president, Bernie Sanders, to make community college free, this has not as yet become a reality. And, in the meantime, part-time faculty experience lower pay and a permanent state of precarity. For those who teach online, in addition, this is arguably even more the case, as permanent faculty are increasingly being replaced by contingent faculty who can, with the switch of a button, replace the original instructor, but themselves have no security from one term to the next.

In terms of a brief personal anecdote, as a full professor in the State University of New York system, and a middle-aged white woman, my sense is that the impact of precarity is one that is felt most acutely by my colleagues who do not have tenure and who are not on a tenure track. I have watched as adjuncts have been hired and fired, often at the last moment, in order to fill a “hole” that is left after term “prep” has already occurred. I also have seen the opposite experience, where full-time faculty have very few students, but complain that they are overworked. This is not to minimize their situation because, as stated earlier, the work of a college community is seriously diminished when there are fewer full-time faculty to do the work of course development, program development, committee and service work as well as the mentoring and advising of students and serving as a mentor to other colleagues, as well. For every privileged full professor, there is a cadre of part-time faculty who in turn are asked to do the most teaching with the least time available – often none – to engage in any kind of research, and if so, on their own time and with their own funding.

And, while there are numerous issues in terms of the microaggressions that are experienced by faculty of color in the university, the additional

problem is that there are very few tenured spots for them, and there are structural, institutional and affective barriers at play that often result in few faculty of color working full time. What this means is that students of color have even fewer opportunities to be mentored by and find common ground with professors who may have had similar life experiences. And for those adjuncts of color, they find that they are seldom able to find stable employment that would allow them to even begin to undertake the kind of teaching and support that could make a real difference in the lives of all of the students, of all races and ethnicities. The lack of diversity, then, becomes a vicious cycle, whereby fewer students perceive the academy as a hospitable environment to find possible future employment, and thus there are fewer people of color going on for higher education degrees, and even if they do, they confront a labor market that is increasingly contingent. For those students, the barriers are also formidable, because the cost of a higher education to the doctorate is often so prohibitive that few people can afford to undertake this kind of financial commitment, especially those who are in a lower-income bracket.

These same issues obtain, in varying degrees, for women. While women have made great strides in the academy, if you look at the number of full professors, for example, you will still see a “glass ceiling” at work. At the other end of the spectrum, the majority of adjunct faculty are female, and for many of the same reasons that women experience discrimination in the larger labor market. They may have to take time off for family responsibilities; they have a precarious relationship to the labor market, if they are lower-income workers; they may have alternatively deferred bearing children while they obtained a higher degree, and find that they are experiencing difficulties conceiving and then caring for children because they are challenged to find work that is able to support them economically, etc.

Rosalind Gill (2010) has spoken more generally to the ways in which the current academic job is structured so that even those who have full-time work and a tenured or tenure-track position feel as if they are working 24/7, with few if any supports to fully realize their desire to be caring and engaged teachers

and conduct meaningful scholarly research. She has spoken to the larger structural issues at play in the contemporary university, citing Graham (2002), Evans (2004) and Washburn (2005), who have focused on the increasing privatization and “corporatization” of the modern university. In practical terms, this has meant that even full-time tenured faculty live in fear that the students, who are now “consumers,” can easily thwart their ability to be honest and objective evaluators of student work, dreading that they might receive a damning evaluation or bad comment on RateMyProfessor.com. While this has made work itself a kind of market and transactional relationship, for adjunct colleagues, this can mean the very real difference between being rehired from one term to the next.

“... now this has translated into a permanent sense of being behind, and not just because of research but also because of the multiple tasks and roles that they have been asked to perform in the absence of full-time faculty to share the burden.”

I believe what Gill also referred to, though, is the increasing number of jobs that are contingent overall in the academy. People who were once able to apply for and obtain tenure-track jobs are now finding that they may be offered a one- or two-year temporary appointment, even if it is full time. And, increasingly at even elite colleges, this is the case. For example, Bard College in New York has effectively done away with the tenure system, and schools like New York University are more often now structuring their employment to offer three-year contracts. While these contracts may come with a series of benefits that are enviable (reduced teaching load, money for travel and research, etc.) they are often a “gilded cage,” such that it is not a foregone conclusion that these positions will

be rehired indefinitely. If tenure was under siege in earlier periods, it is now effectively being chipped away at because of this new university order to the extent that the balance between tenure and nontenure-track positions is about even.

And, as earlier noted, for those who remain, there are increasing burdens placed upon their time to make up for the absence of those who have been lost to this game of academic musical chairs. If students have now become accustomed to immediate feedback via email, this has translated into an expectation that faculty will similarly be available to respond, and this is especially the case, in my experience, in working in an online graduate program. And, whereas the stress of meeting another faculty person used to be that they might, as often as not, answer a question of “How are you doing?” with a recitation of the paper they just presented or the article they just published, the answer now is more likely to be, “I am so busy, I have so much to do; I have so many papers to grade, etc.” Academics have always felt guilty that they were somehow not doing enough; not writing enough or engaging in enough research. They often had a difficult time taking a vacation, because they felt that this was the time when they could be doing their research. However, now this has translated into a permanent sense of being behind, and not just because of research but also because of the multiple tasks and roles that they have been asked to perform in the absence of full-time faculty to share the burden. Again, this is not to compare the complexities of full-time faculty life to the plight of part-time workers, but only to illustrate the ways in which the new academic order has translated into a diminished work life for all.

In terms of possible solutions, the first order of business is for full-time faculty and especially those who have the most security, to speak on behalf of those who have less of a voice in the current system. We have the opportunity to speak up at our college meetings, in our classrooms and through our union, United University Professions. We can take up the role of public intellectuals and take seriously the idea that in a political climate that has constructed “big government” and public education as “broken,” we need to make our

voices heard to offer a counter-narrative that promotes the importance of a commitment to a reinvigorated public sphere.

A second strategy is to engage in collective forms of education and bring students into the discussion of how to restructure the work life of their teachers. Students can vote with their wallets, or their parents' wallets, and let administrators know that they will take their tuition dollars elsewhere to colleges that have more full-time faculty at their disposal.

A third strategy is to begin to further the effort of legislators and elected officials who are calling for additional funding for higher education. The scaling back of federal dollars has had a devastating effect on not only the labor pool of universities, but of the very ability for students to graduate without staggering student loans. By fighting for and electing public officials who will push for additional funding for higher education, we can begin the process of reinstating the partnership between teachers and students that has been eroded as a result of these cutbacks.

In the end, the sense of exhaustion and despair that adjuncts experience to a large degree, and those who remain full time but with a sense of collective guilt and increased workload experience, is something that diminishes us all. In a democratic society, higher education can serve not only as a positive force for social good, but it can be essential in terms of learning how to be global and ethical citizens. In this sense, it should serve as a leader in terms of a humane structuring of labor in a modern and now postmodern society, and must therefore be challenged to switch gears, even as the market system asserts countervailing pressures.

And, for academics who have had the luxury to think about social change, it is ultimately a call to those of us who do have tenure and have been promoted to focus on the needs of others, rather than our own career advancement. Academia has been an incredibly luxurious calling, in the time and space that it has allowed so many of us to have, relative to the rest of the population. This new situation demands a call-to-arms to resist this focus on our own career advancement, and instead

take up the responsibility for changing the situation that now exists for others. As Ivancheva (2015) concluded:

Last, but not least, the question remains if the new conjuncture is not a painful but timely reminder for academics. Being in the academy has often been a privilege that has allowed the majority of us, even when we have researched marginalized groups' plight for survival and dignity, to stay far removed from these political struggles. 'Academic freedom' has often been used to fend off demands for public engagement of intellectuals at the service of the society at large. Against this background, the casualization of academic labor is a good lesson to remind us that while a system creating extreme inequalities persists, no one is immune from the 'neoliberal race to the bottom.' (pp. 44-45)

Note

This essay was part of a collaborative presentation made by colleagues Dianne Ramdeholl, Jaye Jones and Peggy Tally at the International Sociological Association meetings in Vienna, Austria, July 2016.

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“There is a somewhat fraught line that a professor who is committed to liberatory pedagogy walks as he or she works to de-center herself in order to foster course experiences that multi-center around students’ self-identified interests. As a professor, I want to meet each student where she is and support her in going where she wants to go. At the same time, I must meet the responsibilities of institutional employment; that is, to award credit in accord with the generally recognized academic standards that will garner students recognition in the larger world.”

– Menoukha Case, *“A Tale of Negotiated Agency”*

All About Mentoring, 37

Spring 2010, p. 83

“A ‘learned learner’ is not a bad way to begin understanding what a ‘mentor’ is. For example, it nicely evokes the idea that a mentor is not so much someone who transmits her/his expert knowledge to students but is rather a well-informed participant or collaborator with students in inquiry, in the vocation of learning. And certainly this formulation supports the claim that mentors should be scholars as well as teachers. It suggests as well that mentoring is inherently scholarly.”

– Lee Herman, *“Scholars and Mentors: Ideas and Questions”*

All About Mentoring, 19

July 2000, p. 3

“Helping to develop independent learners is a key task with which we are charged and we cannot accomplish it by taking the conventional professorial role of the ‘dispenser of knowledge.’ We must work collaboratively with our students in a balancing act of providing support and encouraging independence.”

– Rebecca Bonanno, Michele Forte and Thalia MacMillan, *“The Mentor Is In’: Human Services Skills in the Mentoring Relationship”*

All About Mentoring, 42

Winter 2012, p. 35

“Without doubt, caring is hard to define, but whatever its specific definition, it moves us to be committed, give effort to, and to think beyond our own personal desires – to act selflessly for or on behalf of others. In effect, I have come to see how caring is mentoring, and as Empire State College faculty, we take to heart our mentoring role. For the M.A.T. program, our caring efforts also should model the way for our students who also are teachers; and for these teachers who, we hope, should model this caring for their own students.

This is the essence of the ecology of caring.”

– Patricia Isaac, “Toward an Ecology of Caring: Teaching Our Teachers”

All About Mentoring, 36

Fall 2009, p. 62

“Global educators must also find a balance between resilience and humility. Here we define resilience as the combination of optimism and persistence that is necessary to move forward despite adversity, coupled with the hardiness required to cope with the inevitable stresses inherent in global relationships. Humility, the antithesis of arrogance and ethnocentrism, is an equally important quality for global educators to possess if they are to allow themselves to be open to learning from other cultures. ...”

– Richard Savior, “International Education at SUNY Empire State College:

Understanding the Value of Cultural Diversity”

All About Mentoring, 48

Winter 2016, p. 65

“As I consider and learn more about faculty scholarship, the motivation behind it, and the topic of self-directed learning, it has become clear to me that faculty scholarship is clearly a self-directed learning activity.”

– Lorraine Lander, “Mentoring Institute Reassignment Report”

All About Mentoring, 32

Spring 2007, p. 24

Stalking Robert Frost

Elaine Handley, Northeast New York Region

I fell in love with poetry when I was a young teenager. I can't account for it. Beyond nursery rhymes, my parents never read me poems or read poetry for their own enjoyment – and neither did anyone else in my family. I can't point to a particular teacher, experience or poem that caused my love affair with poetry. I liked the conciseness, the focus, the intensity of poetry. I liked that it described or named my chaotic adolescent feelings, how poems sometimes made sense of what I witnessed or had questions about. Sometimes poetry provided the still small voice of reason and understanding I needed that those around me couldn't provide or didn't even know I required. Poetry seemed like a special secret I had discovered. A well of understanding, of hope. Poetry was a means of emotional survival.

My father's alcoholism colored my world gray and the ramifications of my parents' split curtailed my childhood: my mother found herself a single, unemployed mother of five children, out of the workforce for decades. My brother and I suddenly became her surrogates: my brother as wage-earner and me in charge of afterschool child care, cooking supper and the like when we were on the cusp of teenagehood. A certain sober darkness settled in me that poetry either spoke to or provided comfort from.

One poem that I fell especially in love with was Robert Frost's (1928) "Acquainted with the Night." It spoke to me of the loneliness I felt as a kid with too much responsibility and shyness, to that adolescent perception of not being really seen or understood, while the people around me in my small, Western New York town thought they knew me. I spent my senior year in high school feeling bound by all the confinement and lack of opportunity my little town represented to me – it was like a fever burning in me, to get away, to discover myself, discover the world. Poetry was symbolic of possibility: "I have outwalked the furthest

city light" Frost wrote – I *wanted to* outwalk my town, and to some degree my family who experienced so little joy in life. Poetry used *words*, something I had access to, to name my pain, my confusion, my occasional wonder and showed me how to create context and story. And so I wrote poems.

Probably most academics can point to at least one teacher who inspired them. Mine was Mary Wheeler, a white-haired, bespeckled woman of formidable bearing. She was legendary as the commanding, and we thought demanding, junior and senior English teacher. In my junior year I started handing in extra credit writing to her. She returned my poems with the wisest possible feedback. "Wonderful. Write more!" It was this permission and affirmation that I so needed, to use words and my voice to describe life as I knew it. And with words and a voice came a sense of self and intrinsic power. One day after we had been studying poetry, Mrs. Wheeler turned to me and said: "When you teach poetry remember to not overdo it – give students just a taste and don't analyze it to death." I remember thinking this was a curious thing for her to say to me – I was never going to be a teacher. I think at that point I was contemplating a life in theater, but certainly not a teacher. My mother wanted me to be a teacher, so in case I too found myself with five children and a drunk for a husband I would have a profession that could sustain me and my family. It was my mother's parochial imagination that wished her oldest daughter should be a teacher, I thought – it was the early '70s, the world was opening up and there were so many other things a woman could do and be. To be a teacher was a cliché, prosaic.

College was all I hoped it would be – a world of ideas, new experiences, filled with people unlike me. It was a place where I could read literature with a new kind of purpose, where I could continue to secretly write poetry. I visited Mrs. Wheeler after my first semester



Elaine Handley

of college. I had made a decision and she was the person I confided in: I was going to pursue an academic career; I was going to go on for my doctorate. Upon hearing my confidence, she began to rifle through her files. "Here," she said. "I think you might want to consider this graduate school." It was a booklet about the Bread Loaf School of English. On the cover was a picture of what looked like an old fashioned, charming inn surrounded by wide green lawns and Vermont's Green Mountains. She uttered no words of caution, showed nothing but complete confidence that of course, I would go on to graduate school, although no one I knew in my working-class town had such odd aspirations. I went home and read it and studied the pictures – of scholarly looking people in deep conversation, classrooms with students in rapt attention. I loved the concentration, the reflection, the seriousness the pictures conveyed.

Five years later, when I was accepted at Bread Loaf for a Master of Letters degree in American Literature, I learned Robert Frost had a close association with the school; he had lived in a cabin just down the road in Ripton, Vermont. Bread Loaf is Middlebury College's summer English school located up in

the mountains outside of Middlebury, on land that was an old inn, and named for Bread Loaf Mountain that rises up behind it. Middlebury bought and maintains Frost's cabin as a national historic site. Frost came to Bread Loaf in 1921 and returned there for 42 summers. In the late 1970s they were still telling stories of his bad boy behavior, like lighting a fire in the audience when his rival, Archibald MacLeish was reading there. We were invited to tour Frost's rustic cabin. Finding myself alone in his bedroom I sat on his bed for a moment, just to try and feel what it was like to be him.

The four summers that I returned to Bread Loaf to complete my degree, I walked the paths that Frost walked, looking for inspiration and solace. I read a lot of Frost poetry too, coming to especially love the conclusion of "Wild Grapes."

... The mind – is not the heart.
I may yet live, as I know others live,
To wish in vain to let go with the mind –
Of cares, at night, to sleep; but nothing
tells me
That I need learn to let go with the heart.
(Frost, 1920, lines 99-103)

During one of my Bread Loaf summers a beloved American literature professor drowned in the Middlebury River while saving another faculty's child from a whirlpool. At his memorial service Frost's (1923a) poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay" was read.

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay. (lines 1-8)

Throughout my adult life, reading Frost's poetry and writing my own have been a constant. I turn to Frost's work especially in times of turmoil; there is something in his rhythms, along with his deep connection to nature, that I find steadying. So it seemed a little fortuitous this spring, after remarking to my poetry writing group that I felt my own poetry had plateaued and I didn't know how to get to the next level, that an email arrived advertising a poetry seminar at The Frost Place in New Hampshire. Frost rented a



Robert Frost's view from his Franconia, New Hampshire farmhouse.

farmhouse in Franconia and lived there with his wife, Elinor, and four children exactly 100 years ago. His first book of poetry had been published in England and he was just starting to gain a reputation in the U.S. But he wasn't so well-known that there weren't always money worries, so he farmed land in New Hampshire, which he reputedly rented because of the magnificent mountains the farmhouse faced.

And so I spent a week in summer 2016, back in the familiar territory of Robert Frost. Twenty participants and three poet-seminar leaders lived and worked at The White Mountain School, a private school tucked into the woods in Bethlehem, New Hampshire, where I heard the thrush music that Frost wrote about. Each evening we drove the 12 miles to Frost's farm, and in his small barn that now holds rows of chairs and a riser we heard wonderful poets read, including the seminar leaders. There are two traditions that happen whenever there is a reading at The Frost Place:

everyone is invited to turn and contemplate for a moment the mountains that so inspired Frost, and a Franconia resident is invited to read a favorite Frost poem.

One night we ate supper on Frost's porch. It was a lovely, gentle, early August evening and I sat swinging my legs off the porch gazing at the mountains, absorbing the peace and simple beauty of the place. After supper we were invited inside Frost's house. Again I found myself in Frost's bedroom, which he shared with Elinor. One other poet was there looking around the upstairs of the farmhouse. I told her that I had once sat on Frost's bed in his cabin in Ripton. She nodded in understanding and I sat for a moment on this Frost bed and looked out the window at his mountains, seeing what he saw every morning.

Our daily schedule at the poetry seminar consisted of a two-hour craft talk in the morning delivered by one of the poet-seminar leaders, each one memorable and passionate.

(Perhaps the most memorable was the one conducted by Cornell University poet Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon, who had us all on our feet dancing to Stevie Wonder's *Songs in the Key of Life*.) In the afternoon we met for three hours in our workshop groups of six or seven people, discussing a poem by each of us. I was assigned to work with Patrick Donnelly, who teaches poetry at Smith College and is also the director of the poetry seminar. My group consisted of six other poets – varying greatly in age and profession, but all serious about poetry, and all experienced writers. On the last day of the seminar, instead of meeting in our workshop we each met with our seminar leader one-on-one for feedback. And that night it was our turn to read where Frost had milked his cows, facing the mountains he loved.

That week at the poetry seminar made me feel like I'd had an eye transplant, or maybe just cataracts removed. Patrick Donnelly was a thoughtful, firm, knowledgeable teacher who guided us to see the strengths in our poetry and what didn't work and why. I was pretty clear about what didn't work in my poems I brought to the seminar, but I didn't quite know why – and more importantly how to fix them. I came home knowing how to make them deeper, more resonant and more carefully-crafted. After the group discussed one of my poems, Patrick held my poem up. He had highlighted parts of what I submitted. "Here's your poem!" he declared. "You just wrote more than you needed to. It was there all along – now just send it off to *The Paris Review*." He taught me to see how often I had gotten the poem on the page, but then had obscured it by overwriting.

And then there were the people I met in both my up close and personal experiences with Frost. It is no small thing to be able to spend time "with your own kind" – it's affirming and gratifying to find people who care deeply about what you care about. I was so grateful this summer to encounter people who were dedicated to poetry and all it entails; who understood how writing makes us vulnerable and who could share their work without ego or grandstanding; who offered thoughtful feedback; who were genuine in their passion and generous in spirit.

The day before our individual meetings with Patrick, he asked us to think about what prevented us from wholeheartedly committing to writing poetry. I didn't have to think about what prevents me: it's time. When we met, we commiserated a bit about the time our teaching demands and concluded that the way to keep writing is to steal time. I write around the edges of my life, and will continue to do so – but somehow on a regular basis I am

"I write around the edges of my life, and will continue to do so – but somehow on a regular basis I am going to give myself a whole morning or afternoon to focus just on my writing."

going to give myself a whole morning or afternoon to focus just on my writing. When I write I am centered and lose myself in flow. I am a happier human being. I am a better teacher too because I am practicing what I preach, and struggling with all the aspects of writing that my students struggle with.

As I wandered about Frost's farmhouse in the Franconia hills, I wondered how he managed – he was running a farm, had four children and at times an ill wife (Elinor, who had a bad heart, was put to bed during a pregnancy that ended in miscarriage while they lived in Franconia). He was trying to write and tend to his growing literary reputation and farm enough to provide for his family. In one letter he describes being sick but still helping his oldest son build a chicken coop in the wind and getting the roof on and the chickens in right before a storm. Frost reportedly "trained" his cows to be milked at noon and midnight because that suited his writing schedule better. I imagine him sitting in the drafty farmhouse near the fire, a blanket draped over his shoulders, writing by kerosene lamp once the family went to bed and before it was time

to go out into the blue-black New Hampshire winter night to milk those cows. I wonder if he tried out lines of poems in those lonely nights on his cows. There is a certain feel in that barn that I can attest to – that more than milking happened there.

So Frost continues to inspire and steady me, to bring me back to my wholehearted love of poetry, to the confidence that I can and must make time for what feeds me even if I " ... have promises to keep, / And miles to go before I sleep, / And miles to go before I sleep" (Frost, 1923b, lines 14-16).

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Found Things

From the Editors

The “Real Thing”: A Visible Culture to Honor Our Work

All About Mentoring, Issue 1, September 1993

Lee Herman, Central New York Region; Miriam Tatzel, Hudson Valley Region

It's late summer, early fall, start of a new academic year at the University of Heidelberg, approximately the one thousandth academic year. In hallways and quadrangles students are walking to class, chatting, beginning to pore over books. Professors are resuming their places at lecterns and heads of seminar tables. On the ground floor of the library – whose walls and arches are the foundations of a medieval abbey, whose atrium skylight is made of hi-tech “low-e” glass – the card catalogue, database terminals, and illuminated manuscript collection, each comfortably next to the other, are already busy.

Maybe you've never been to Heidelberg and don't understand German. But you know exactly what's happening, just as you would if you were on campus in Tokyo or Paris, Jakarta or Beijing, Albany or Middletown. In the perfect light of a seemingly eternal present, the academic gyre completes and begins another spin. You know because you see it. An idea is made visible with signs – a campus, a library, classrooms, clusters of younger students tended by older professors. Their familiarity surpasses the strangeness of languages, races or canons. This is the world-wide material and public culture of learning. You are comforted; you are awed. You know what's going on, that you are part of a community with which you share ancient collective memories and constant purposes. You know this is honorable work, the “real” thing.

What signs of ESC can we show to visitors, students or to fellow workers? Where are the classrooms, the libraries? Where are the houses of mentoring? Where are its honorable signs, the things which require no explanation and seem to abide of themselves?

Upstairs, above a bank, in a couple of rooms nestled in a warren of former law offices now transformed into the Nyack learning satellite of Rockland Community College, lies an outpost of SUNY Empire State College. Here, an administrative assistant and five or so mentors bring a college into being. A student has travelled many hours to this “campus” to meet with the two mentors who are tutoring her contract. She says she feels so energized and stimulated when she comes to this place. The mentor realizes that for this student, “college” means mostly sitting home reading books. The Nyack Unit is her “Heidelberg,” however remote and however transformed from the “real” thing.

The near ubiquity and brilliant flexibility of this college make our work nearly invisible, even to each other. For powerfully good reasons we lack classrooms and libraries. It's to our honor that at this college one can't tell the teachers from the students. The intense, wondrous encounters between mentors and students, shining four, five, six times a day, every day in our offices, flicker and wink across long dark distances. How shall we make a visible posterity?

The Mentoring Institute is about all that is connected with mentoring. It's about our lives, especially the parts that have to do with creativity. It's about how we are fashioning ourselves as thinkers, practitioners, writers and colleagues. The Mentoring Institute is about collecting our separated and diverse work, done mostly in the privacy of our offices, and making it visible and accessible to each other. *All About Mentoring* is a medium for telling our stories and finding each other in our shared yet intangible world.

Through collaborations between individual and small groups of faculty, help for “new” mentors from “old” ones, workshops at every center and collegewide, the Mentoring Institute exists to connect and sustain our work. *All About Mentoring*, the Institute's newsletter, is a place to share your stories, to write about what you do, your scholarship, your interactions with students, your participation in conferences and other projects. Interview one another about yourselves and what you do; tell your stories; try out mentoring ideas; write down your work in progress. *All About Mentoring* will publish them. *All About Mentoring* is ours to make our culture visible, a thing as real as a campus centuries old but perhaps not so distant after all. As editors and the first cochairs of the Mentoring Institute, we are pleased to present this first issue.

Empathy and the Ally Model: Toward Serving Our Transgender Students

Connelly Akstens, Northeast New York Region

"If you would know me, look in your own heart."

– Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching

It is vitally important for the health of our college that we embrace students and colleagues in our community who experience gender identity in ways that are nonconforming. This is the case, not simply because *Time* magazine and other national media have declared that our society has reached a "transgender tipping point." Rather it is because, more than any other college, SUNY Empire State College thrives on direct personal engagement and communication grounded in trust. Our mentor practice gives us special opportunities to make a real difference for our transgender students as we strive to actualize our highest aspirations as mentors. From my perspective, this important endeavor begins with an empathic application of the "ally model" in our mentor-student encounters.

In her valuable article "Considerations in Mentoring from a Transgender Ally" in the winter 2016 issue of *All About Mentoring*, Sara Farmer encouraged fellow Empire State College mentors to "seek assistance, gain knowledge and better understand how to address differing gender expressions" (p. 41). Her suggestion shifts the focus away from the conventional institutional mandates outlined by one of her sources (see Carter, 1999): that colleges should end gender "divisions" and provide support services and education about the transgender experience. Farmer's focus was on the personal interaction between mentor and student. This shift in emphasis is very appropriate for our college because, under the best of circumstances, we already have a trust relationship with each of our students – a relationship that serves as a foundation for cooperative and candid communication. As Farmer went on to suggest, the ally model may

provide some guidance as we conceptualize how mentors and students might interact around gender identity, and she laid out excellent positive advice and some important strictures for mentors who would like to assume the ally role.

As a transgender person who has mentored and instructed several trans students at Empire State College, who has been an ally and advocate in a residential college environment, and who has done outreach on campuses from Connecticut to Illinois, I would like to add my own perspective to what I hope will become an energetic discussion of trans experience in our college.

Working with students at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in 2013, I facilitated an empathic approach to ally-transgender engagement that envisioned the ally role based on the needs of the transgender students themselves, rather than on an institutionally-fabricated "model" of what an ally is and what an ally ought to do. Most of the 40 or so students in the group with whom I worked were engaged in training to be allies for their LGBT contemporaries.

I asked them to list three attributes that they *themselves* would value most in an ally if roles were to be reversed. As consensus developed, three attributes emerged as extremely important: 1. Be a good listener. 2. Be accepting – don't try to fix me – don't try to solve anything. 3. Know resources that might be able to help me.

This exercise, of course, assumed that members of a college community who are not transgender themselves can empathize with those of us who are. Let's take a moment to think about what it means to be empathic. "Empathy" comes from two Greek roots, *em* and *pathos*; together they mean, literally, "in feeling." Empathy goes beyond sympathy, beyond compassion. To be empathic is to have the capacity to *feel* as if we are *in* the place



Connelly Akstens

of another, to "walk a mile in someone else's shoes," as the saying goes. Empathy cannot be mandated; it must be discovered. My conviction is that our practice as mentors, by its nature, invites empathic connection. To be sure, I am not an unemployed, divorced mother of two youngsters who is caretaking an elderly parent while she takes 12 credits a term – any more than I am a medieval prince of Denmark. But (to continue the analogy) when I watch Shakespeare's play about a medieval prince of Denmark, I *feel* Hamlet's emotional burden as if I were *in* his place. Similarly, I work to feel the burdens of my students – not simply to think about them. I don't believe this is sentimental or patronizing. I believe it uses empathy as a bridge to foster enhanced trust, understanding and communication.

It must be acknowledged that the mentoring role and the ally role are distinct in their objectives and practice. As a mentor, I am dedicated to helping students develop workable strategies and enjoy successful academic outcomes. My practice as a mentor is to guide, suggest, question and instruct. As an ally, I am dedicated to a process that involves the three

priorities I developed with those students at RIT: listening, acceptance and knowledge of resources. Reviewing my notes from that session, I am struck by something one of the students said: “I would want my ally to assume nothing. It’s not about them or what they know. It’s about them *knowing me*.”

The *Tao* guides us to look into our own hearts to know another person. We aren’t Hamlet, or the divorced mother struggling to earn a degree, or the transgender student or colleague sitting across from us in the office or on the other end of an email. But an empathic mentoring practice can help us build a physical, intellectual and emotional space that is open, safe and without judgment.

The question remains: As a college, how do we foster an environment that would enable us, as a community, to realize that goal? Based

on my experience as both a mentor and as a transgender person, I would encourage us to consider three initiatives that, I believe, would advance the inclusion and well-being of transgender people in our college. First, I think it would be helpful for Empire State to establish a mechanism for faculty, administration and staff to identify themselves as allies to the college community at large. Secondly, there ought to be coordinated orientation and training for allies; some excellent protocols for ally training are currently in practice at other campuses. Finally, specific resources should be made available to allies – resources that allies could be confident suggesting to students and colleagues who seek them out. These are specific, concrete steps that could help our college to offer genuine support, inclusion and advocacy to our transgender students and colleagues.

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“By getting to know my mentees as individuals, and not simply as students, I can better gauge how to lead them to the understanding that their life learning is relevant to what they will pursue in their degree programs. As a writing and literature mentor, I can tie in the scope of their experience to writing assignments and give them a chance to express views on a variety of subjects, including their perceived place in the world. I can bring their attention to a vast canon of literature, produced by human beings at various points in history in numerous contexts, and share how the stories, poems and novels we come to value will have something relevant to convey about ourselves. At the end of a study, when it comes time for my students to provide a self-reflective essay on what they’ve learned, I marvel at the critical concepts they have absorbed and how they have come to value their own ability to digest, assess, and (especially) enjoy the skills they are eager to reapply.”

– Mindy Kronenberg, “Mentoring: A Partnership in the Learning Process”

All About Mentoring, 30

Winter 2006, p. 51

"I Swear I Lived"

Robert Altobello, Hudson Valley Region

*"In the clearing stands a boxer and a fighter by his trade
And he carries the reminder of every glove that laid him down
And cut him till he cried out in his anger and his shame
I am leaving, I am leaving but the fighter still remains."*

– Paul Simon, "The Boxer" (1969, track 6)

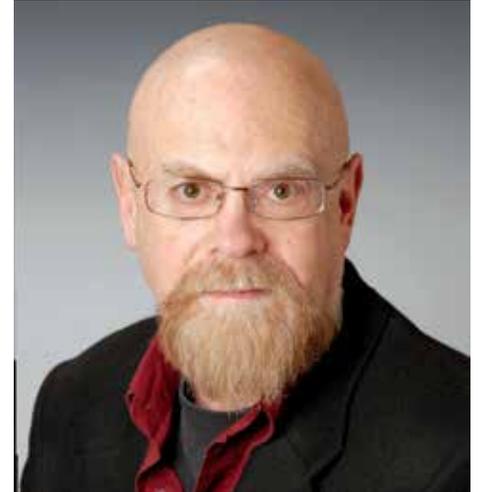
I am writing this essay during my last reading period (August 2016) as a faculty member of this college. I always thought that I would work until I was literally unable to do so. I loved teaching here at SUNY Empire State College. I believed in our mission, and I clearly identified with the value of offering motivated adults the opportunity to earn a college degree. In a way, I always saw the college's mission as giving those who missed the "chance" a second chance. Perhaps this sentiment reflects the fact that I was one of those who experienced the value of a second chance. As I now leave the college and enter my retirement, I'd like to reflect on my experiences and how the love for my job was being overpowered by deep feelings of dissatisfaction and sadness as I struggle with change, unable to accommodate "progress" into my educational worldview.

In early 1986, I had a life-changing experience. I attended an Empire State College information session in what was then Nyack Unit. The session was given by a mentor, a real college professor, who spent hours with the group answering all our questions in a way that made me feel like "this guy is really committed to education"; and more importantly, it felt like he knew what I needed and could help me make it happen. That feeling of pure professorial enthusiasm permeated the room and animated his every word. According to my outdated and not-so-business-savvy academic worldview, the college began its decline when information sessions were "professionalized" and took on a sales presentation veneer.

I always considered myself a progressive. Lifelong learning is the key to maintaining one's vitality and vibrancy as the weight of temporal gravity pulls one toward comfort and stagnation. However, the notion of progress, being progressive, challenges me as I have struggled with the concept's different nuances. On the one hand, "progressive" or "progress" can be used in a purely descriptive manner; everything is literally progressing (moving forward in time) in this sense. "Progress" can also carry a value judgment that implies "getting better" or moving forward in a way that challenges previous assumptions about the nature of the "good." My struggle comes when the two nuances collide. Simply put: Is progress always good or positive? Are things really always getting better? Or put in another way: When I struggle with the ramifications of progress, am I simply succumbing to the pull of temporal gravity?

Impermanence and Progress

According to the central Buddhist principle, all of one's suffering in life stems from one's inability to come to grips with the law of impermanence. Whether or not that position is an absolute truth is something for another time. Nevertheless, I do think that grasping at and/or clinging to the impermanent while tacitly denying the impermanence is certainly a recipe for discontent and suffering. The phenomenon of aging brings the lesson in Buddha's principle clearly to light. Loss, sickness, physical decline and death are prime examples of how we all eventually face the suffering embedded in impermanence. However, the general phenomenon of change can be disquieting. Changes in one's comfort zone can drive home the lesson in Buddha's message in a very unsettling manner. This phenomenon manifests quite strongly when that comfort zone is something we devoted time and energy toward because we deeply believed in the value of what we were building.



Robert Altobello

Buddha's recommended therapy for this condition was to approach the impermanent with an attitude of nonattachment. We learn to live and let go by developing a deep understanding of the law of impermanence. Sometimes this works; sometimes it doesn't – probably my fault, not Buddha's. Sometimes no matter how we slice it, the collision of worldviews (e.g., the old with the new, different or even progressive) just does not feel very good; but I suppose, that could be because I am just plain stuck in an outdated model. I am too attached, and Buddha was right! Another antidote for this discomfort with impermanence/change is to be a progressive person. This solution is not a Buddhist view, but it offers a way to embrace rather than feel alienated by the impermanence. For example, I could just believe in the myth of progress – like The Beatles said, "It's getting better all the time."

For me, the most challenging aspect of change is how change impacts settled values. In many ways, our values are the central aspect in creating a stable core identity and in shaping one's character. When one's values conflict with the values that the current of progress imposes upon us, we can feel a sense of alienation

and loss: I have struggled with both of these feelings for some time now. I feel alienated in an academic world where I strongly feel that business considerations drive the academic programs. It just seems to me that business considerations should *serve* the academic program. Maybe this is another example of my lack of progressiveness, but the changing priorities undermine my sense of higher education: Learning, not business, should always be our priority.

I feel alienated in a professional world in which genuine collaborative governance often dissolves into a top-down model where every avenue for constructive disagreement is implicitly met with what feels to me like a chronic disingenuous exchange; that is, administration knows what is best, and we settle the issue by administration's determination of a dubious consensus. Yes, at ESC, we certainly disagreed in the past, but there was listening. This is not what I feel today. Today, I have come to feel a kind of demoralized oppressive culture slowly eroding what used to be a vibrant academic community.

I miss something else – students! Sure I still occasionally meet with “customers,” but the office where I work used to be filled with the faces and sounds of students interacting with their mentors. Now I work in what often feels like a ghost town. I suspect my sorrowful sentiments are simply another revelation of my unprogressive nature. After all, what need do we have to meet our customers when we can simply serve them online? I suppose that's more “progress” and more feelings of alienation for me. However, I simply cannot fathom how losing personal contact (i.e., the face-to-face meeting that, for me, was at the heart of my work) for the sake of expediency is not a substantive loss in terms of academic development. I know that is not a very progressive perspective. It is what I feel.

I also feel weary in an environment where the student population (and, too, our students' interest in learning) has declined, while more and more power and resources are diverted to administrative offices (for example, offices dealing with “enrollment management”). Perhaps some see this as another sign of progress (of moves to efficiency and clarity), but in my view, the decline of the

college corresponds to the growth of these administrative offices. For example, I wonder: As our focus on enrollment management has disproportionately grown over the years and faculty lines have declined, has the student population (and their interest in learning and their intellectual curiosity) risen or declined? I am fully aware that the market is changing and that there is now fierce competition for the kinds of students who had been attracted to ESC, but can we ignore the relationship between enrollment decline and the growth of the market/business model?

However, as Buddha would probably remind me, my feelings probably stem from my attachments and my inability to cope with the law of impermanence. Still, there is something wrenching to me about the trends themselves. Yes, all of us may just be going through the proverbial “darkest hour before the dawn.” Things *are* really getting better and the pall I feel is really some kind of chrysalis awaiting its blossoming into an explosion where a new way of thinking about and carrying out education suddenly blooms. Maybe it is possible that soon we will have many more “customers” upon whom to leverage our “deliverables”! Maybe I am just missing the impermanence of what I have held sacred.

Language

My lack of progressiveness manifests quite strongly in the area of language. I just cannot find a sense of belonging as the language of my academic world shifts toward a business/marketing-driven vocabulary. Yes, students are customers and degrees and courses are deliverables. We hear much more talk about “leveraging our resources” than about student learning, especially when it comes to the status of the college's reorganization. I just cannot get used to viewing my colleagues as “human capital.” I find the chancellor's declaration (I've heard her state this twice) that we as SUNY are in the “enrollment management business”¹ incredibly disheartening. I always thought we were in the “education business” where creating learning environments was our fundamental priority.

I feel the language issue is really important. Borrowing from a Kantian argument, I note that our language is shaped by our perceptions

while at the same time our perceptions are often shaped and shaded by our language. If this symbiotic interdependent relationship did not exist, the value of using “politically correct” language would make no sense; we'd perceive the world as it is and what we call things would make no difference. Viewing educational opportunities as commodities changes the fabric of what we do. Thus, when we view courses, studies, degrees, etc. as “deliverables,” our relationships with our students change. This is especially pertinent when at admission, the “customer” receives the message that an education is a purely transactional (read “cash”) exchange. I am reminded of the old business adage that “the customer is always right.” When our “customers” are always right, something feels radically wrong to me.

Perhaps more importantly, the language we use every day penetrates the fabric of our culture. More and more customers tell me that they “paid” for these credits. They expect us to deliver our deliverables. And when we don't, even when they can't write in complete sentences, they become angry, as they cling to the adage that as customers they must be right. There is in my admittedly unprogressive mind a kind of deep discomfort that emerges: We're not selling deliverables; we're offering opportunities to *learn*.

The way we talk also matters and influences our cultural milieu. From my stodgy old perspective, our language should reflect and respect learning as the summit of the academic community. When we reduce the language of the learning community to the vocabulary of business, marketing and the sales presentation, something changes that shifts the cultural mores. It may ultimately reflect progress (at least in the “moving forward” sense), but as the subtle deflation of the mission of learning begins to permeate our entire environment, I see the real objective of higher education (i.e., learning) relegated to an afterthought – or so it feels to me. Put in another way, as the prioritization of business/market language seeps (from the top down) deeply into our predominant vocabulary, I feel a disconcerting shift in the way we relate to our work. It does not feel good, even though I am sure this is a progressive change. Even in my best Buddhist embrace, I just can't relate anymore.

The Investment

The language of ROI (“return on investment”) has come to permeate our thinking and our actions. Many, including those in our college, have described the need as one having immediate impact on our nontraditional students. Apparently, the “customer-minded non-traditional student” (a phrase used by EvOLLution in an interview with President Merodie Hancock, 2015) expects an immediate return on investment. So, I guess my nonprogressive question would concern the exact nature of that “return.” Are we supposed to guarantee them a job? My sense of a college education was always one of earning the credentials necessary to compete for a position by gaining an education that provided the training and skills that gave the student opportunities that did not previously exist. And then, the better they had learned, the greater their opportunities. But I suppose adding something like an implied guarantee of “immediate impact” (words used by Hancock, 2015 to describe nontraditional students’ more specific focus on ROI) could be viewed as real progress!

However, here again, I feel a deep discomfort as we become more and more customer-conscious. When degrees become “immediate impact deliverables,” learning as the heart of the college’s mission fades into the background. When the pernicious and ubiquitous undercurrent of marketing strategies begins to infect the development of academic programs, the value of higher education not so subtly shifts from one of real education to the ominous need to feed our customers’ ROI, and this perspective, in turn, becomes a rationale for more administrative resources and fewer resources for the academic side of things (including academic support services).

In the interview referred to earlier, President Hancock (2015) admitted that in the need to feed the ROI, institutions trying to serve nontraditional students may be sacrificing their students’ academic development. “This is one of the things I struggle with quite a bit,” she stated. “If they [students] are interested in an immediate ROI, which is almost always employment-defined, do they then miss out on studying the theory and understanding how the theory might impact or inform their

practice? We might lose the theory if we’re only focusing on the on-the-job ROI” (para. 3). This is the subtle shift I mentioned earlier; it’s my “struggle” about our “progress” too. And here’s my response: If any of us, including the president of a liberal arts and sciences college, worries that our students are missing out on studying theory, we and she should be announcing an all-out strategy to alleviate the problem. To my unprogressive mindset, a college education without theory is like a car without an engine. Sure we can build them if all our customer wants is a nice shiny piece of metal in the driveway; but once they go to turn on the intellectual engine, is it any wonder that many are questioning the value of higher education? In *We’re Losing Our Minds*, Richard Keeling and Richard Hersh (2011) nicely captured the pervasiveness of this problem:

Too many colleges and universities have chosen a dark and rocky road that leads towards a pattern of unbalanced responsiveness (which might less kindly be called obedience) to consumer demands. Note the key word *unbalanced* – we do not suggest that institutions of higher education should adopt a hermetic disinterest in the preferences and wishes of their students. But responsiveness that subjugates mission to consumer satisfaction is dangerous. (pp. 13-14)

From my perspective, in what I take to be an effort to make Empire State College look like any other college, we have forgotten what made us great at what we did (oops, I mean, do!). We are not like anyone else. We offer motivated adult learners genuine alternative ways to *learn*, not just another way to recoup their ROI. And the mission of reorganizing the college should be about finding innovative ways to keep us ahead of the competition rather than subjugating our values to the dumbing-down demands of consumer satisfaction. I know my idealization is antiquated, but then, as much as I try, I’m not terribly progressive.

If we dig deeper into the notion of language of the ROI, we find that the discussion reduces the investment to a mere monetary exchange, a transaction where customers

purchase the deliverables. My old-fashioned framework questions both the value and the correctness of that transactional model as representative of the learning process. Transactional relationships lack emotional and deep intellectual commitment. Students need to invest something much more than money in order to receive a college education; they need to be intellectually and emotionally committed to the learning process. This part of the “transaction” needs to be made clear right from the start. Even if we could guarantee them immediate impact (e.g., they find a job because they now have the degree), they will have little chance of keeping the job or finding any upward mobility if they did not attain the college-level knowledge and skills expected of the person holding that degree. They need to invest real intellectual curiosity and a willingness to work. I was a bit shocked by the video for a recent collegewide “open house” and what I took to be the lack of emphasis on learning. But then, why let the investment of intellectual effort in learning get in the way of marketing our deliverables?

I have one last question on ROI. As stakeholders in the college, I wonder when we should ask about *our* ROI from the Office of Enrollment Management? When are we to expect the return on our massive investment in this office? I understand. OEM needs more control over our deliverables in order to better do their job, and the “progressive” intervention is to give them more control over the academic program, despite the fact that even as we have ceded more control to marketing models, the decline in enrollment continues its downward spiral. Using their own language from an ROI perspective, we don’t seem to be getting much “bang for our buck” by trusting that continuing to invest power and influence in OEM makes sound economic sense. Finally, I note that we are supposed to be an institution based upon objective outcome assessment (evidence-based assessment). Hence, I ask: Where is the evidence that the enrollment management and marketing-driven approach to the development of academic programs improves from both an enrollment and academic perspective the quality and quantity of the student learning experience?

Time to Go

Bob Dylan (1963, track 7) nicely captured my feelings about the ending years of my time at the college.

But goodbye's too good a word, gal
So I'll just say fare thee well
I ain't sayin' you treated me unkind
You could have done better but I
don't mind
You just kinda wasted my precious time
But don't think twice, it's all right.

I'd like to end my farewell with a little musical tribute. For those who care, please search for and listen to the YouTube videos; it will hopefully provide some feeling context for what is ultimately a wonderful transition time for me.

My first tribute song is to the faculty of Empire State College. The song is by the great British band, Muse. The song is called "Uprising" and represents all of the fire of a good old '60s protest song (Bellamy, 2009, track 1). It is time to scream, "Stop the madness!"

My second tribute song is to all of my colleagues with whom I've worked closely over the years. I will always fondly remember driving home following a residency or the final meeting of one of our team-taught blended learning study groups. Inevitably, this warm "Wow, we did good!" feeling would begin to permeate my body and mind, and I would bask in that feeling all the way home. Successful student learning is magical to experience, especially when we share this experience with colleagues and friends. At these times, I would

feel the chorus of "It Means Nothing" by the great Welsh band Stereophonics (Jones, 2007, track 1): "It means nothing / if I haven't got you." Thanks to all of you!

Finally, I dance off into my new life feeling the wonderful refrain from One Republic's "I Lived" (Tedder & Zancanella, 2012, track 1). But you do need to listen to really feel my message as my granddaughter and I happily dance away.

Hope that you spend your days
But they all add up
And when that sun goes down
Hope you raise your cup
Oh, oh
I wish that I could witness
All your joy and all your pain
But until my moment comes
I'll say

I, I did it all
I, I did it all
I owned every second that this world
could give
I saw so many places
The things that I did
Yeah, with every broken bone
I swear I lived.

Note

- ¹ For example, see Chancellor Zimpher's mention of "enrollment management business" on the blog "Cost of College" at <https://costofcollege.wordpress.com/2012/08/30/suny-reacts-to-state-cuts-by-aligning-enrollment-with-projected-job-growth/>.

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"I believe that if we, the faculty and administration of Empire State College, are to say that we have been successful in our mission, it needs to mean more than hoping that you will carry on the mission of mentoring with others. ... It means that we have somehow helped each other become better citizens of the world, committed to bringing to our respective communities a much greater sense of caring and tolerance, and indeed, celebration, for how we are different."

– Sylvain Nagler, "Practicing Mentoring"
All About Mentoring, 23
March 2002, p. 5

Last Report on the Miracles at Aazhoomog, Lake Lena¹

Menoukha Case, Center for Distance Learning

Introduction

The original title of my 2015 Keep-Mills Research Grant project was “Indigenous Knowledge in the Climate Change Era.” It was motivated by a message from Elders:² 80-year-old Leonard Moose (Mille Lacs Ojibwe, Aazhoomog Band); his wife Mary Moose (Canadian Ojibwe-Cree); and Leonard’s daughter (my adoptive daughter), 49-year-old Connie Moose (Mille Lacs Ojibwe, Aazhoomog Band). Leonard and Mary Moose have been cited by and contributed to a number of studies of Ojibwe history and culture, including *Aaniin Ekidong*³ (contributors; Moose et al., 2009); *Sacred Water: Water for Life* (Foushee & Burneau, 2010); *Ezhichigeyang* (contributor; Jones, Jourdain, & Tainter, 2011); and *Everything You Wanted to Know about Indians But Were Afraid to Ask* (Treuer, 2012), which is one of the texts for SUNY Empire State College’s First Peoples of North America course. Connie Moose, a returning college student, is the 2014 recipient of the Mark M. Welter World Citizen Award (from the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Foundation). Since Leonard and Mary Moose were getting on in age and faced health challenges, they conveyed an urgent desire to share particular aspects of indigenous knowledge that they feel are needed so that future generations will be able to navigate the rapids of change that our world is undergoing. They indicated that they were strongly motivated to share their knowledge of Ojibwe astronomy, seasonal cycles and related topics.

During various extended visits over a week, it became evident that the condition of the Waters is central to problems raised by climate chaos. Global distribution of Water from streams, lakes and oceans laden with toxins through winds and clouds whose movements are disrupted by temperature changes lead to droughts, floods, stagnant unpotable Water and other conditions that threaten the lives of plants and animals, including humans. In

Anishinaabe culture, women, as Water Keepers, work to maintain or restore the health of those living beings, those bodies of Water, through activism and prayer (Bédard, 2008). Some women, following Josephine Mandamin,⁴ circumambulated the Great Lakes and walked the traditional Anishinaabe Migration Route followed from 1000-1500 CE (Common Era), performing traditional Water ceremonies each step of the way and raising awareness of abuses of Water. Other Anishinaabe women, such as Winona LaDuke (previous Green Party vice presidential candidate) are working to prevent mining, pipelines and fracking from occurring on sovereign native lands. Such women are part of a larger global movement initiated by four Canadian women (three of whom are indigenous) called “Idle No More.”⁵ So it’s not that there are no women leaders. Along with these outstanding women are many women leaders who are unrecognized: there are women who lead families, communities, cultural circles, healing groups; and the inverse who lead gangs, criminal organizations and so on. But it is an uphill road for women who want to lead in traditional ways. Some of the resistance is external; some is internal.

Discussions of indigenous women’s contemporary status, both in hegemonic culture and in their own tribes, suggested that in order for more women to step up for Mother Earth and the Waters as Mandamin and LaDuke have, restoring traditional gender equity is crucial, as it is also crucial to supporting women in fighting for better ways of life among the people generally. This led to a shift in focus in this project from remedying climate change to empowering women. According to Anishinaabe tradition, you can’t have one without the other. To better understand this, I met with several groups. Tobacco, prayers and blankets were given as stories were gathered, and offerings to the Elders, the earth, and the Waters were made according to tradition.



Menoukha Case

Our discussions illuminated how stakes are very different for academia and the Native community. For example, while the findings are very moving to me, they did not re-traumatize me; that is, while we sat around the sacred fire, people were open and honest and stated that they want to share their thoughts with their communities if anything they say can help anyone, but when they read their words in print it was shocking and painful for them. It was all the more so when they considered the idea of their thoughts being exposed to “outsiders” (non-Natives). Therefore, we handled the verbatim text like a live grenade. Over the period of a year, Connie and I worked hard on a collaborative version, and in the end, it seemed we would need two iterations that each of us produced separately. Hers is geared for community service; she may use different excerpts or interpret parts differently. She requested that participants remain, for the most part, anonymous in my piece, too (thus the lack of named citations). Also, I have framed our findings in this academically-oriented introduction. I have worked to produce a version that will not harm anyone. What follows is my interpretation of the knowledge that was shared.



Photo credit: Menoukha Case

Meeting on the shore.

The Mess We Are Born Into

"Life is simple – people make it hard."

– Larry Matrious-iban

We are born into problems. There are many ways to describe or name those problems, although, sometimes the way we name one – for example "mental illness" – can be a problem in itself. We are all born into pollution, and also may be born into poverty and abuse. From an Anishinaabe perspective, all this takes place in a manipulative system based on greed that affects the spiritual integrity of the wealthy as well as the poor, in people of every race.

European white culture has left a toxic trail of chemicals created, according to one Elder, to help "control us through religion and kill the Indian, to kill Mother Earth. ... The body is like the earth. We can heal parts of it – for example we can replant trees." But what about the things that were taken and changed – like oil pulled from the ground and burnt up? There's no going back. There's trash that doesn't break down, such as plastic in the ocean. And yet, we need to find a way to survive and heal whatever possible.

She said, "We talk about wanting to clean up the earth, but what happens at a pow-wow – afterward we will find trash everywhere." This is not due to intergenerational trauma, but instead to assimilation. Having fun and leaving a mess is the American way.

To seek traditional wisdom on these problems, Connie Moose and I visited with Elders Mary and Leonard Moose. They told us about the original gender roles among the Ojibwe and Anishinaabe people, and specific ways in which women's powers were eroded by European actions and cultural norms. They conveyed the oral history of the mid-19th century that they had received from their parents. As they told

it, everything men had, they had received from women, and women had played equal roles in polity; specifically, they were responsible for the Waters. Europeans, used to dominating their own women and wanting to maintain that ascendancy at all costs, kidnapped, enslaved, raped, tortured and harmed Anishinaabe women. In response, the men hid the women to protect them. This disrupted bilateral power within tribes as women lost the ability to participate in the political and ceremonial realms. European norms were internalized and still affect women today. The Elders spoke on how language loss affects this problem. For example, there are no gender pronouns in the Anishinaabe language, and English forces people to think in gendered terms when it is irrelevant. Male dominance built into the English language seeps into all thinking.

Associated readings supplied by Connie Moose from her work as an advocate in a homeless shelter, specifically a study of human trafficking of native women in the Great Lakes area, contained scholarly research and data that supported the oral history provided by the Elders. Along with historical trauma (from the events conveyed by the Elders) there was also intergenerational trauma. Both Mary and Leonard spoke of experiences in boarding school that affected and damaged their own children. The study outlined how contemporary women dealing with this heritage, as well as continued racism and poverty, may end up addicted or in sex slavery.

After sitting with the Elders for eight hours, a family group of 10, ranging in age from infant to 66, went camping. At the fire circle that evening, I recorded and transcribed an unstructured, freely-flowing conversation loosely addressing these questions. Ms. Moose and I conveyed the Elders' teachings and asked:

- What are your thoughts on losing traditional gender balance, and how does this affect you today?
- What ways of healing have helped you with these problems? How do we find hope and move forward?

Contemporary expressions of gender imbalance were directly associated with drug and alcohol use as well as the rapes that some had experienced. Ways of healing included traditional ceremonies, treatment (rehab) and forgiving oneself to heal from a sense of shame

that victims carry. Ms. Moose said, "I want to inspire the person who feels like a pitiful, hopeless, orphan child who just cries around this Earth thinking s/he has nothing."

Possibilities for Healing

"If you want to understand something, you need to stand under it."

– Larry Matrious-iban

The traditional expression of hope for Anishinaabe people is associated with the phrase "Mino-Bimaadiziwin," loosely translated as Good Way of Life, and associated with Seven Teachings (see below). Continuing our discussions, each person then described what Mino-Bimaadiziwin means to them in contemporary context.

Those from ages 15-28 felt that what they were saying could make a contribution to others' healing, and wanted to be quoted if it would help restore traditional women's powers. They called for a mode based in oral history rather than analysis, a tone more personal than academic. To accomplish this, and with Ms. Moose's agreement, I designed the gathered stories as a patchwork quilt organized around the Anishinaabe Seven Teachings. I made visual images of these teachings, adapted from the White Earth Tribal & Community College (2014) website, that were used to frame comments made by participants:

Debwewin (Truth) TURTLE –

The literal translation of this word is the sound of your heart. Each of us holds the truth in his/her heart and when we live the value of debwewin, we express that truth in everything we do. ...

Zoongide'ewin (Courage) BEAR –

The literal translation of the word is strong heart. When we have a strong heart, we are able to face challenges with courage and integrity. A person living the value of zoongide'ewin acknowledges his/her own weaknesses and faces them with a strong heart. ...

Gwayakwaadiziwin (Honesty) BIGFOOT –

The literal translation of this word is to be correct or straight in everything that we do. If an individual lives the value of gwayakwaadiziwin, he/she must do what is right for the group and hold himself/herself and others to high standards of integrity. ...

Manaaji'idiwin (Respect) BUFFALO –

When we live the value of manaaji'idiwin we give respect to each other. In the Anishinaabe worldview, everything has a spirit and therefore deserves respect. This concept is included in this word. ...

Zaagi'idiwin (Love) EAGLE – If we act out of love for each other and ourselves in everything we do, we are living the value of zaagi'idiwin. ...

Nibwaakaawin (Wisdom) BEAVER –

The literal translation of this word is an abundance of wisdom. When we live the value of nibwaakaawin, we seek to learn all that we can in a respectful manner and take the time to reflect upon our teachings. ...

Dabasendizowin (Humility) WOLF –

When we live the values of debwewin, zoongide'ewin, manaaji'idiwin, gwayakwaadiziwin, zaagi'idiwin and nibwaakaawin, we can hold ourselves in low regard as this word indicates, without having low self-esteem. We understand that we are humble beings and conduct ourselves accordingly. ... (Anishinaabe Values and Teachings section, paras. 1-7)

The images based on these teachings could indicate that the speaker was calling on, or calling for, Courage, or Wisdom, or Truth – that is, each piece represents an expression of one element of the Seven Teachings, or, the challenge that happens when that element



Figure 2. Mikinaak, the Turtle: Truth

is missing. The following patchwork pieces indicate the general trajectory of the work and portray some of the trauma and modes of healing we discussed. (See Figures 1 and 2.)

In subsequent, sensitive pieces, young people discussed their experiences with racism, domestic violence, rape, drugs, alcohol, prison and poverty that they identified as exacerbated by the loss of gender balance. What had begun as protection had become loss of voice in the public sphere. Patriarchal practices of dominant U.S. culture that were internalized were most likely to be acted upon during

intoxication. Therefore, sobriety is a critical part of regaining agency, and young participants wanted some version of this work presented at rehabilitation centers, as well as homeless and domestic violence shelters.

Both young and old spoke of the need to heal from shame. One described how peer pressure encouraged a young man to rape her, and said, "I'm pretty ashamed of it, but everybody already knows, I don't want to talk about it, I just say it." An

Elder said,

Even though those things were done to me, I'm the one who felt the shame, so I had to forgive myself in order to go on. As a woman I have a strength like nothing else, a strength nothing could take away. I felt that woman strength in me and I survived. I forgave. I followed what my grandmother gave me. The main thing is to forgive, to regain strength and willpower. You have to find yourself, it's the only way to get better. (See Figure 3.)

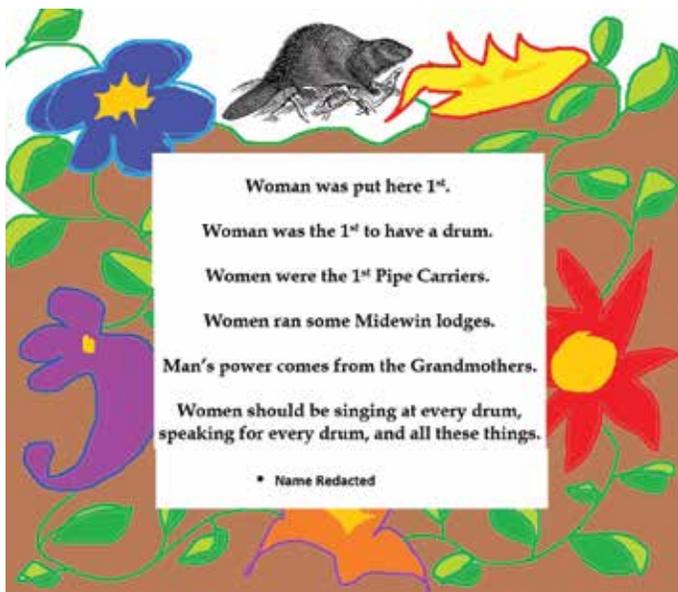


Figure 1. Amik, the Beaver: Wisdom

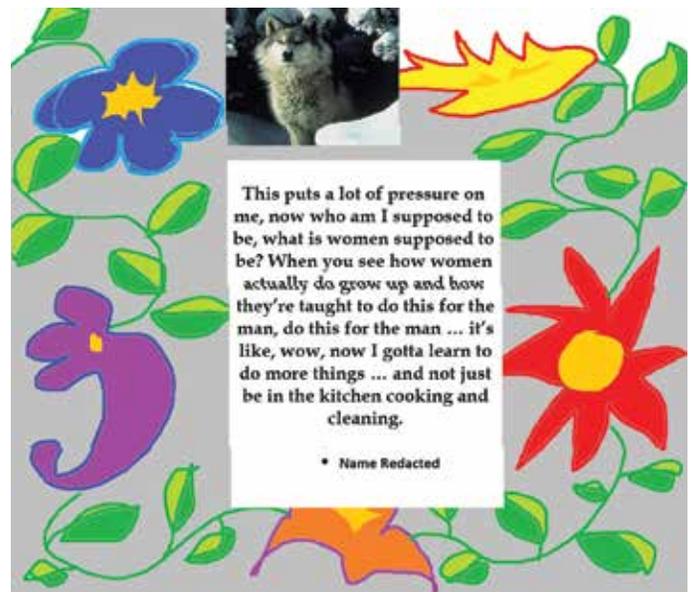


Figure 3. Ma'ingan, the Wolf: Humility

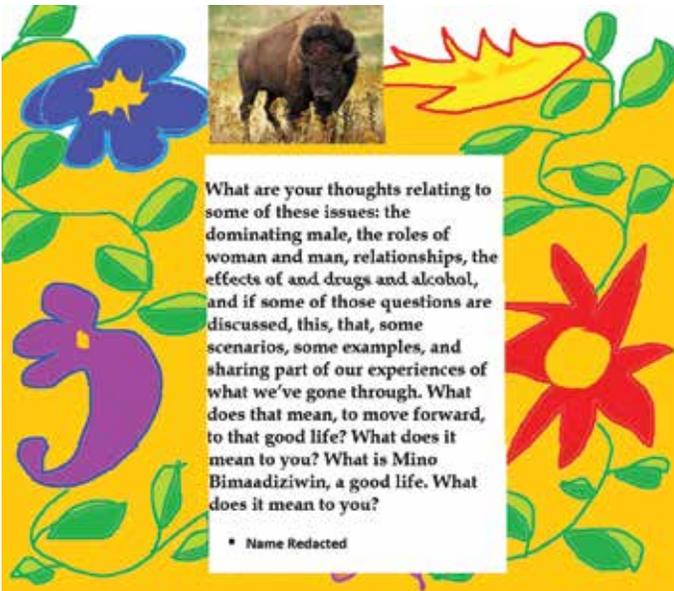


Figure 4. Bizbiki, the Buffalo: Respect

We then asked the questions in Figure 4; a response is illustrated in Figure 5.

Both Elders and younger participants, many of whom had been in rehab more than once, described why these processes had failed them. For one thing, the Elders said, people sit around “talking about the past, good times, and related stories.” Elders stated that “before you were put here on Earth you promised to do something.” They wanted different discussions during treatment, such as, “Why are you on this Earth? Do you know who the Great Spirit is? Are you ashamed of yourself for being an

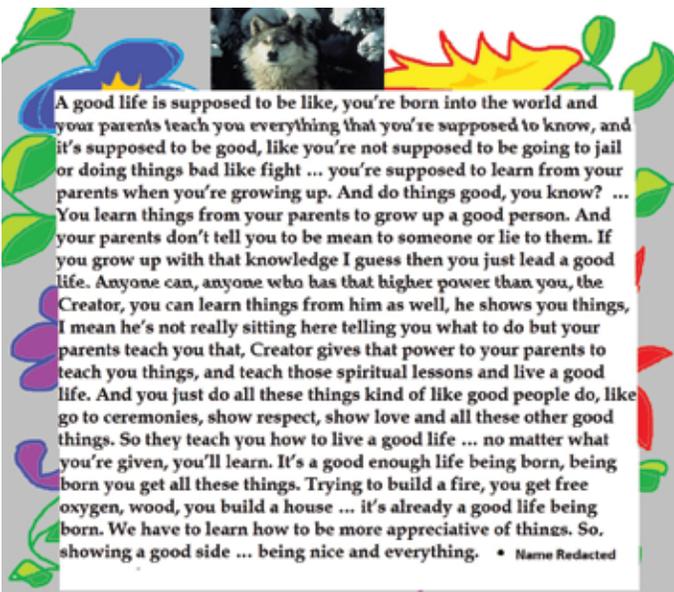


Figure 5. Ma'iingan, the Wolf: Humility

Indian? Or for what was done to you? What happens to the people who hurt you? That’s their problem. Your problem is, can you forgive yourself for suffering?” Younger people wanted to be asked, “Why are you here? What help do you need?” (See Figure 6.)

Framing the narrative in Anishinaabe values such as Mino-Bimaadiziwin and the Seven Teachings is, participants said, healing in and of itself because it re-centers a traditional cultural understanding of the causes of personal and community issues. It is therefore decolonizing and liberating.

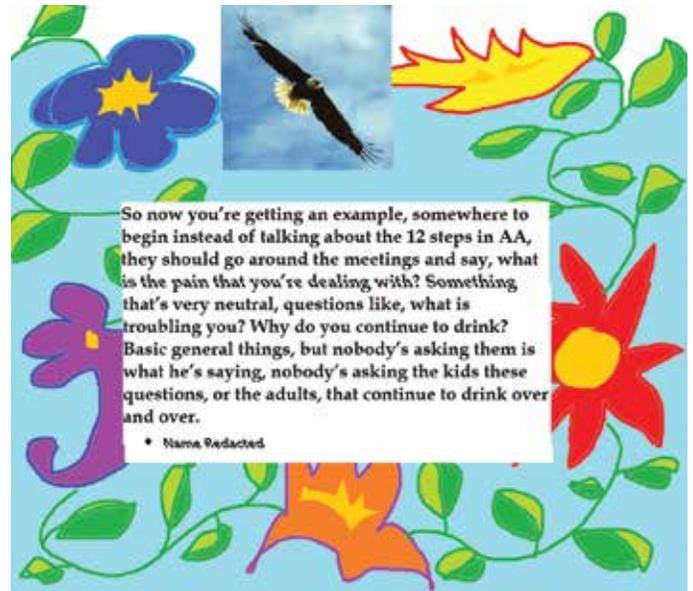


Figure 6. Migizi, the Eagle: Love

Notes

- ¹ Play on the title of Louise Erdrich’s 2001 novel, *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, which traced some of the histories herein.
- ² Per cultural meaning, words such as “Elder,” “Water” and “Native” are capitalized, as each has a living spiritual presence that requires them to be indicated as a proper noun.
- ³ More information about *Aaniin Ekidong - “How do you say ...”* is available through the Minnesota Humanities Center at <http://minnesotahumanities.org/resources/aaniin>. The new dictionary, “Ojibwe Vocabulary Project,” also is offered for free download.
- ⁴ See the blog post “Meet Josephine Mandamin (Anishinaabekwe), The ‘Water Walker’” at <http://indigenouising.org/josephine-mandamin/> to learn more about her sacred walk.
- ⁵ To learn about this movement, go to <http://www.idlenomore.ca/>.

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“This suggests something else about an educational institution that values student-centered learning: that educators continually seek to learn more about teaching and learning itself by reflecting on their experiences working with students. This entails, once again, maintaining open-mindedness about the ways that teaching-learning might occur. But, since teaching-learning is an integral aspect and a core assumption of education, this also suggests that a college’s open-mindedness translates into another quality I would call reflexivity: Educators simultaneously treat their deepest assumptions about education – for example, what ‘teaching-learning’ means or how it occurs – as open questions in and of themselves, not as immutable givens. And, they adopt this reflexive stance not only when they are safely isolated from students ... but also when – especially when – they are working with students.”

– Eric L. Ball, “Some Qualities of a Learner-Centered Educational Institution”

All About Mentoring, 30

Winter 2006, p. 40

Found Things

From the Editors – *All About Mentoring*, Issue 5, January 1995

Jay Gilbert, Hudson Valley Region; Chris Rounds, Central New York Region

Empire State College's reputation is built on mentoring. Mentoring is what distinguishes us from others in the educational marketplace; it is our unique "differential advantage." Other colleges may promise the recognition of prior learning and flexible scheduling, but they can't match the extraordinary and invaluable record that we have accumulated at ESC – more than 20 years of experience with mentor-mediated learning for adults, all kinds of adults, women, men, older, younger, part-time, full-time, singly and in groups, studying the full spectrum of the liberal arts and sciences, across the desk or across the country, more than 100,000 of them – who else can even come close to making this claim?

As ESC mentors, we have developed and perfected many different ways to work with our students. We meet with them at lunchtime, in the evening, on weekend, on e-mail, and over coffee at 7:00 a.m. We use print and media and community-based resources and sometimes each other. We support their study at home and at their workplaces and even at sea! And in each region and location and

special program, we have over the decades developed procedures and adapted our styles such that there is now a wide range of practice in mentoring at the College. However, get a group of us together in a room for a meeting, and just listen to us defend how our own approach indeed serves "individualization" and "student-centered learning" and other parts of a clearly shared value system of mentoring that we all have worked so long and hard and successfully to develop.

As cochairs of the Mentoring Institute, we see it and *All About Mentoring* as strong and proactive vehicles for the encouragement and support of this shared system of values. We want the MI and *AAM* to continue to serve as the primary medium within the College for encouraging conversation and sharing across the boundaries that have been created for us by others and that we ourselves have created.

We want to encourage and support each other in our professional development activities, and we want to make it easier for mentors who have been here for a few months to share insights and discuss practices with

those who have been here "since the dawn of time." We want to serve as catalysts to help mentors "visit" with each other – in person, in groups, electronically. We want to advocate for mentoring as we have all practiced it, and continue to welcome innovations rooted in our shared commitment to education and learning that values the student as an individual, whole person.

Mentoring is what we do, all of us, sometimes brilliantly, sometimes not so well, in all of its varying appearances. We are a community of mentors, creative, experienced, professional, and the Mentoring Institute is committed to sustaining and encouraging the growth and development of that community. We and the members of the MI Advisory Group want to hear from you. There is somebody from every center on the MI Advisory Group – see the list in MI News – please talk to them and to us! We need to know what you'd like us to do, and how you can help us to do it. Let us know what activities or actions or support structures would help you and your colleagues, and we'll do our best to provide them.

"The centrality of the mentoring relationship was an attractive feature of the college for me, and a key reason for my taking the job. But online relationships, I quickly learned, were different than relationships that develop in face-to-face contexts. Rather than being less personal, mentoring relationships at a distance became more personal; they became more, rather than less intimate. Without the signifier of the body, I had to share more about my personal life in order to reassure my mentees that they were, in fact, dealing with a real person. In the absence of shared disciplinary interests and expectations, I had to share more about my personal life in order to establish a sense of experiences in common."

– Dana Gliserman Kopans, "Embodying Mentoring"
All About Mentoring, 42
 Winter 2012, pp. 39–40

SUNY Empire State College's Mission to Expand Educational Opportunities to Incarcerated Persons¹

Patrice M. DeCoster, Office of Academic Affairs

Introduction

It is a well-established fact that prisoner education leads to more orderly prisons, lower recidivism rates, successful re-entry into the workforce and stronger communities (Vacca, 2004). Yet, some of the current societal hotbed questions – Who should fund prisoner education? How should it be funded? Is it an equitable solution for all citizens? – continue to be deliberated.

The United States holds the notorious title of having the largest population of incarcerated persons in the world with more than 2.2 million currently in federal, state and local correctional facilities (World Prison Brief, n.d.). According to the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (NYSDOCCS), as of September 2015, there were 52,673 incarcerated people in New York state prisons (this number does not include the 9,804 prisoners in New York City jails or the 15,991 in county jails) (New York State Commission of Correction, n.d.). Of this population, roughly one-third are serving time for drug-related crimes and more than half are nonviolent offenders. When they get released, their odds of recidivism (calculated as returning to prison within three years of release) are approximately 40 percent (Goldstein, 2014). Key public officials across New York state are currently looking to significantly improve the rate of recidivism by growing its investment in prison education programming.

Historical Background

Prisoner education – both formal and informal – has been around for hundreds of years. The first documented case of prisoner education in the United States was in 1789 at Philadelphia's Walnut Street Jail where instruction was provided by clergyman William Rogers. The Walnut Street warden had concerns that this "innovative

rehabilitation" might lead to rioting, and, indeed, "... he required that two guards attend the meeting with a loaded cannon aimed directly at the convict students." But quite the opposite happened – it was peaceful, though the "struggle" around prisoner education remains in America today (Gehring, 2008, para. 2).

New York state has been a leader in correctional education since the mid-1840s. In 1844, Sing Sing Correctional Facility in Westchester County was known for its prison education curriculum that included "history, astronomy, geography, physiology, and physical education" (Gehring, 1995, p. 53). In 1847, New York was "the first state to mandate that correctional education be available in all institutions" (Wolford, 1989, p. 357). "The reform movement, which began in Elmira, New York about 1870, spread quickly throughout the U.S." (Messemer, 2011, p. 92).

During the Second Industrial Revolution (1870-1914), vocational training at prisons enabled prisoners to acquire skills that parlayed into employment upon their release. By the 1960s, a large part of a prisoner's rehabilitation efforts included his or her educational endeavors while in prison. Inmates who successfully completed their studies while incarcerated tended to be looked upon more favorably by parole boards, which led to earlier discharges and greater job prospects upon release. During the 1960s and into the 1970s, a philosophical shift took place in prisoner rehabilitation that went from basic vocational and General Educational Development (GED) diploma preparation in reading, writing and math proficiency, to the inclusion of higher education.

By the early 1990s, the political winds shifted. Many wanted to get "tough on crime" and became more concerned with punishment than rehabilitation. It was therefore no surprise that educational funding for prisoners was on the



Patrice M. DeCoster

Photo credit: Kris Qua

chopping block. Despite the many benefits of incarcerated educational programs, such as safer environments and more orderly prisons, federal funding ceased with the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (VCCLEA). This act amended the Higher Education Act of 1965 and denied individuals the right to obtain Federal Pell Grant funding while incarcerated. "The following year, New York Gov. George Pataki facilitated efforts to prohibit TAP [Tuition Assistance Program] grant eligibility for people in prison. After TAP and Pell funding was eliminated, in-prison college education programs in New York almost disappeared" (Human Impact Partners, 2015, The Context section, para. 3).

Prior to the VCCLEA, "... TAP and Pell grants helped incarcerated people in 45 New York prisons enroll in courses offered by 23 colleges" (Human Impact Partners, 2015, The Context section, para. 1). In 1994, the last year of funding, approximately 3,500 students in New York state prisons received assistance amounting to less than one percent of New York state's TAP Budget (Human Impact Partners, 2015).

On Feb. 16, 2014, New York state Governor Andrew Cuomo tried to launch a new initiative that would provide funding for college classes at 10 New York state prisons, one in each region across the state (New York State, 2014). This initiative got considerable downstate support from black and Latino lawmakers and several faith-based initiatives, but became so politically controversial that six weeks later the governor stated that he would no longer pursue public money to finance it. As *The New York Times* reported, “A Siena College poll ... found that 53 percent of voters supported the governor’s proposal, compared with 43 percent who opposed it. But the poll found strong opposition among some groups: 68 percent of Republicans and 66 percent of upstate voters” (Kaplan, 2014, para. 15).

Even though this poll showed that a slight majority of New York state citizens supported the governor’s proposal, it provoked outrage in Washington where “three Republican congressmen from upstate New York introduced what they called the Kids Before Cons Act, which would prevent federal money from being used to pay for college classes for federal or state prison inmates” (Kaplan, 2014, para. 13). In July 2015, the Kids Before Cons Act was referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce for review and, as of this writing, had been referred to the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training (Congress.gov, 2015).

Financial Sense

The undisputed truth is that it costs much more to house an inmate than to educate one. The state of New York spends approximately \$60,000 per year to incarcerate one person, while one year of college costs approximately \$5,000 per inmate (New York State, 2014). Health Impact Partners’ (2015) assessment found that “for New York, in-prison college education is a cost-effective investment in reducing crime and recidivism. A study on crime control strategies found that every \$1 million spent on building more prisons prevents about 350 crimes, but the same amount invested in correctional education prevents more than 600 crimes” (para. 2).

Moral/Societal Obligation

“A rising tide doesn’t raise people who don’t have a boat. We have to build the boat for them. We have to give them the basic infrastructure to rise with the tide.”

– Rabul Gandhi, 2013

Approximately 50 percent of all New York state prisoners identify as African-American, while 24 percent are Hispanic and 4.5 percent are military veterans (New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, 2013). If the State University of New York (SUNY) Empire State College (ESC), as a public institution of higher learning, wants to fulfill its mandate of college access and degree completion, we must be willing to serve all students wherever they are in their lives. Many current ESC students are going through life changes – whether divorce, job loss, or trying to gain the skills to improve their current socioeconomic situation – and as such, we must ensure access for all citizens of New York, including those who are the most marginalized.

... *“research confirms that the more education an individual receives while incarcerated, the more likely he or she is to be successful and to avoid recidivism upon release.”*

The chair of the Assembly Committee on Correction, Daniel O’Donnell, declared, “Reducing the unfortunate cycle of recidivism is a moral imperative, especially because of the discriminatory and disproportionate impact this system has on minority communities” (New York State, 2014, para. 10).

Since the passing of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, many lower income prisoners have lost the prospect of bettering themselves through educational opportunities while incarcerated.

As a result, recidivism rates are not expected to improve and there will likely be more unrest in the prisons that will feed a continued cycle of hopelessness and despair (New York State, 2014). This hopelessness trickles back to the prisoners’ home communities, thus creating a cycle of crime and incarceration.

Many religious and community groups support rehabilitation and are advocating for positive re-entry into society for ex-offenders. Organizations such as the Marshall Project (a news organization reporting on the U.S. criminal justice system; see Goldstein, 2014) bring to public attention many of the inequities that exist in today’s penal systems and have advocated strongly against racially-biased mass incarceration in the United States. A Legislative Agenda article from the New York State Catholic Conference (2012) proclaimed, “research confirms that the more education an individual receives while incarcerated, the more likely he or she is to be successful and to avoid recidivism upon release. There is clearly a need to increase the education and vocation training programs in prisons” (p. 2). It’s in this way that we can help those incarcerated “rise with the tide.”

Ban the Box Initiatives

“Ban the Box”² is a grassroots initiative to remove check boxes (such as the ones found on college admissions applications) that ask a person to disclose past criminal convictions. In New York and three other states, it is illegal to discriminate based on criminal convictions but unfortunately, discrimination does happen and is often hard to prove.

Studies have shown the negative consequences of public disclosure for persons who have strived to improve their lives but are constantly forced to disclose a part of their past. “The attrition rate of college applicants who check the box is double, and for some schools quadruple, the rate of applicants who do not” (Law, 2014).

Safety on campus is a concern and has been highlighted since the 1990s when the Jeanne Clery Act³ was voted into law. Since 1998, all of the 64 SUNY campuses have asked the question “Have you ever been convicted of a felony?” on their common application. In New

York state higher education circles, the ban the box movement has begun to gain traction and continues to move forward.

In May of 2015, Empire State College formally requested an exemption from SUNY allowing it to remove the felony question from its college application and was asked to join a SUNY-wide working group to look at this issue. On Sept. 14, 2016, the SUNY board of trustees passed a resolution to remove this check box after receiving recommendations and support from the SUNY Student Assembly and the SUNY chapter of the United University Professions union, as well as other SUNY schools. "Instead," the SUNY board agreed, "students will be asked to declare a prior felony conviction post-admission and only when they seek campus housing or participation in clinical or field experiences, internships, or study abroad programs" (SUNY, 2016, para. 1). This policy goes into effect on July 1, 2017 for the 2018 admissions cycle and only applies to the SUNY state-operated campuses and community colleges.

The cities of Rochester, Buffalo and New York have passed laws to remove the felony check box from pre-interview forms. In Buffalo, it applies to all employers operating in the city of Buffalo, whereas in Rochester and NYC it only applies to city agencies and not to private businesses (Law, 2014). A website devoted to laws related to sealing criminal records in New York state powerfully addresses the high stakes involved with moving this initiative:

The Ban the Box initiative is likely to continue to gain steam as more and more fully reformed, worthy individuals suffer unfair penalties for mistakes they made long ago, and long after they have fully paid back their debt to society. Without Ban the Box laws, we will continue to fuel an ever-expanding population of unemployed and underemployed people to the great detriment of society at large. (NewYorkSealingLaw.com, n.d., para. 11)

Current Initiatives

The New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision strongly supports educational initiatives in its correctional facilities, and has developed partnerships between colleges and universities,

the correctional facilities and private funding sources. These initiatives have brought education to many of the prisons in New York state. Several of these programs are led or co-led by SUNY community colleges that include Cayuga, Genesee, Jefferson, Mohawk Valley and Sullivan Community Colleges, and are financed with private foundation funding and/or in partnerships with private universities across the state (NYSDOCCS, n.d.).

In November 2014, Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance Jr. announced the award of \$250 million to support the new Criminal Justice Investment Initiative (CJII). This plan sought proposals from higher education institutions to provide in-person college coursework for current inmates in New York state prisons (CUNY, 2014). Still, there were many drawbacks to this grant, including the mandatory one-to-one grant match, in which colleges must match every dollar provided through its own funds, as well as other ancillary restrictions. As such, these requirements made it impossible for many institutions, including Empire State College, to apply for funding.

While these many efforts are significant, educational opportunities for prisoners in New York state remain very limited in their scope and availability.

ESC's Previous Prison Education Experience and How ESC Fits the Need Today

It is important for us to recognize the educational realities of New York state prisoners today:

There are approximately 53,000 people in New York state prisons, 59 [percent] of whom have a verified high school diploma and could therefore be eligible for TAP funding. Based on data from programs we surveyed, current enrollment in college education programs in New York state prisons averages 924 students per year, with an average of 80 associate degrees and 32 bachelor's degrees awarded each year. Lack of resources is one reason that only one-third of prison applicants are accepted for college study. If tuition assistance funding was restored, existing programs would be able to

enroll up to 3,234 people a year. (Human Impact Partners, 2015, Recommendations section, para. 2)

It's also important for us to know that ESC has been involved in prison education over many years. The college's early history includes teaching college-level coursework to incarcerated youth at Camp MacCormick (MacCormick Secure Center, an Office of Children and Family Services facility). Also, ESC worked both independently, and in partnership, with Cayuga Community College to deliver higher educational instruction at both the maximum security Auburn Correctional Facility and the medium security Cayuga Correctional Facility.

Another college initiative in the New York City area was a successful 10-year program (1975-1985) with the Metropolitan Correctional Center, a federal detention center located in Manhattan. This program was grant-funded for its first three years by the New York City Council. In years four through 10, Empire State College covered the faculty costs, and the students used eligible Pell and TAP funding for tuition, books and supplies. It was noted that this was a highly successful program with a relatively high graduation rate. Empire State College's work with incarcerated students helped to make the program a national model, and an example of how a successful prison program could be run.

During that same time frame, the college's Urban Study Unit of Manhattan established a program at the Queens House of Detention. This and other initiatives became unsustainable when, as noted earlier, Pell and TAP funding availability ceased for incarcerated persons in 1994 and 1995 respectively.

Empire State College's 35 locations around the state and its experience with nontraditional students makes it a good choice to serve the higher educational needs of prisoners who are interested in obtaining a college degree or certificate.

If funding were available, Empire State College could initially partner with some of the participating SUNY community colleges to deliver advanced-level courses and prior learning assessments for bachelor's degree options. As ESC already has articulation agreements with every SUNY and CUNY

community college, this program would be a natural extension of our existing partnerships. In addition, ESC could work with NYSDOCCS to identify the unmet needs for prison education across the state of New York.

Conclusion

With the college's ability to offer individualized degrees, we can work with each student's strengths, past experiences, and assessment of both individual and group prior learning evaluations that would decrease costs and time to degree completion. Students who are released from prison could continue to study at ESC from anywhere in New York state or beyond to complete their degree or certificate and increase their chances of finding meaningful employment. Many individuals in the current prison population are from the downstate area but serve their sentences in upstate prisons (Wood, 2014, p. 4). Additionally, many prisoners are transferred to different locations around the state, and from maximum to medium security facilities. With our statewide footprint, we have the breadth of access to provide continuity of educational services across the state.

The need is great and the stakes are high for educating our incarcerated population in New York state. As citizens of this state, we need to recognize that there is a moral, social and humane imperative to make the opportunity for higher educational attainment available to all of our fellow New Yorkers. It is in the interest of the individual's betterment, as well as that of their families and communities – and thus it benefits us all.

"You're not just educating prisoners. You're educating society. I'm a mom of four ... I'm helping stop the cycle."

– Sharlene Henry
(former incarcerated student,
Program Aid at Project Renewal)
(Human Impact Partners, 2015)

Notes

- ¹ The ideas and point of view of this essay reflect those of the author and not necessarily those of SUNY Empire State College nor its stakeholders.

- ² To learn more about the Ban the Box campaign, visit <http://bantheboxcampaign.org/>.
- ³ The text of the Jeanne Clery Act is available at <http://clerycenter.org/jeanne-clery-act>.

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“Using the ‘common language’ of Touchpoints [an approach to child development inspired by the work of T. Berry Brazelton], adult educators are encouraged to view learning as a process of trial and error, focusing on the learners’ strengths; and recognize that adult learners want to do well and have something critical to share, yet often have ambivalent feelings. Valuing disorganization and vulnerability as an opportunity within an adult learning environment can lead toward competence. As an educator with credentials, it’s easy to believe that I am the one with the knowledge to impart, but being mindful of this andragogically-spirited Touchpoints approach forces me to pay attention to how I convey the information and move toward mutual exploration and cooperative learning.”

– Desalyn De-Souza, “Touchpoints: An Approach for Mentoring, Teaching and Learning”

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50+ for 50: Reflections on Mentoring, Part I

Colleagues From Inside and Outside SUNY Empire State College

In mid-2016, we invited All About Mentoring readers in our SUNY Empire State College community, as well as more than 200 people from outside of the college who regularly receive AAM, to offer their written reflections on “mentoring” on the occasion of our publication’s 50th issue. More than 50 colleagues responded in very different ways to our call – about their understanding of mentoring; about their mentoring work; about being mentored themselves; as well as about the impact AAM has had on them. Gathered here (and in a later section of this issue) are the words we received for which we offer a big thanks. It seems a particularly nice way to celebrate our common work.

Pamela Bock, support staff, Lockport A Little “Twist” on a Typical Mentor/Student Relationship

Years ago when “mentors” would write out their learning contracts and evaluations to be entered into the system, I had the privilege of entering Lou Wood’s chicken scratch. For those of you who didn’t know Dr. Wood, he was a brilliant math professor, and a very patient and truly amazing human being. This is where I will get to the mentoring part ... I would circle the words (in red) that I just could not read ... and show up at his door shaking my head. He would look up at me and smile, rewrite the word and then try to explain what the word meant. Hey, I didn’t even know some of these words existed – algorithms, differential equations, etc. Dictionary.com defines a “mentor” as “a wise and trusted counselor or teacher.” Even though our relationship was a little different than mentor/student, I was also learning!

David Starr-Glass, mentor, International Programs (Prague) Congratulation on All About Mentoring’s Golden Issue!

“Then to Telémakhos the grey-eyed goddess appeared again with Mentor’s form and voice, calling him out of the lofty emptied hall:

“Telémakhos, your crew of fighting men is ready at the oars, and waiting for you; come on, no point in holding up the sailing.”

– Homer’s *The Odyssey* (1998),
Book II, Lines 418–423

In an early contribution to *AAM* (Number 5, 1995), I reflected on Athena appearing with the “feature and voice” of Mentor. I return to this theme, perhaps slightly wiser.

The Odyssey is not a practical guide to mentoring, but it provides profound insights into human transformations. Athena-as-Mentor materializes and encourages Telémakhos to begin the first part of a journey to regain his self-confidence and rightful inheritance. She knows it is not *her* journey – it is a journey only *Telémakhos* can undertake – so she waits on the shore before calling him from his emptied hall.

I understand the *emptied hall* as the liminal space: a place filled with potential, but emptied of internal structure; filled with past memories and future dreams; a discontinuity between the certainties of what has been and the possibilities of what might be.

Only when Telémakhos acknowledges the liminality of the emptied hall can he embark.

As a mentor, I have learned that mentoring only begins when the other recognizes that initial pre-mentoring liminality. I have learned to stand on the shore, encourage gently and wait until the other has left the emptied hall. Until then, there is *every* point in holding up the sailing.

Duncan P. RyanMann, mentor, Northeast New York Region

The mentoring model is a true blessing for most students I work with. The complex of academic advising, career planning, curricular investigation and personal reflection that typically surround mentoring, in my opinion, provides a highly effective, personalized

framework for adult student success. The rewards for me as a mentor/practitioner are immense.

Alan Tait, professor emeritus, The Open University, UK

[All About] Mentoring, the journal: This original and distinctive journal has for many years brightened my week on its arrival at my home in Cambridge, England. It has for me twin characteristics: commitment above all to a framework of practice that binds adult learning with a progressive humanism; and secondly, *Mentoring* makes a unique contribution to our understanding of the scholarship of practice. While the college has appropriately developed a wide range of learning and teaching approaches over the years, the practice of mentoring for learning has been the innovation associated with Empire State College that is most well known outside the USA. The insistence that adult learners are active in constructing their understanding and defining their field of knowledge, and that they bring their own knowledge to the table and are not asked to pretend to leave it at the door, has influenced the practice of adult learning very widely. *Mentoring* the journal is thus a major channel of promotion for the distinctive reputation of the college.

Mentoring the journal insists in its scholarship that the understanding that its practitioners in the college develop, struggle with, challenge and defend is worthwhile and something to be proud of. In this it mirrors the values of its practice with college students. The approach to the scholarship of practice that is embodied in the journal is heartening to me. It is plural, including many kinds of written text – essays, scholarly articles, poems, fiction – as well as visual arts and photography. It is insistent on the multi-faceted nature of reflection by practitioners of mentoring, as it is with its adult learners. This is courageous in a period of homogenization of academic behaviors and

conventions, as is the practice of mentoring for college learners at a time of the marketization of higher education.

Mentoring the journal is my closest link to a valued institution that I have visited off and on for 30 years, and which has always had a special relationship as an innovator with my own, the Open University in the U.K. I read *Mentoring* with a great deal of pleasure, and thank the team who put it together and all who contribute. I hope I am permitted to thank Professor Alan Mandell in particular, whose intellectual leadership is evident in every issue.

Anastasia L. Pratt, mentor, Plattsburgh

For me, mentoring is a form of collaboration, a means of using all of the available resources to help a student achieve his/her educational goals. Whether through the more formalized degree program planning process or more generalized discussions, as a mentor, I am able to find out why a student chose to pursue a college education and then to help him/her develop a plan of action, a means of achieving his/her goals. Although my relationship and work with the student is at the heart of the mentoring experience, the collaboration of mentoring extends beyond that relationship. Indeed, although I am at a geographically-distant unit, I have always been able to discuss an individual student's needs with my colleagues in the Northeast New York Region, who cross both disciplinary and professional boundaries to provide the services that a student needs – services that range from accommodations to academic supports to area of study guidance. And, in doing so, we work as a team to help our students succeed academically. I think that is the very best kind of mentoring ... and I am grateful that I have been able to work with my colleagues and students in this way.

Todd Siben, assistant director, portfolio assessment, Thomas Edison State University

The mentor is a combination of teacher, guide, sounding board and often other things. As a portfolio advisor, I have mentored (guided) students through the development of more than 50,000 portfolios, mentored (taught)

them so that they can better understand how to construct a successful portfolio, and mentored (been a sounding board) for their questions, comments and concerns.

Among the most memorable was a wonderful portfolio received by postal mail some years ago, presented in a well-written, well-organized, three-ring binder.

I'm a "process" person, not necessarily a "content" person. I feel as if I know a little bit about everything, but don't know "a lot" about many things. So when the portfolio for "Hospitality Management" was presented, I gave it the first review, looking for writing clarity, proper use of language and appropriate portfolio narrative writing style. Without being a subject matter expert on the hospitality industry, I read the references to check-in, bed space, food service, personnel and facilities. The generally synonymous terminology made it seem as if the portfolio was going in the right direction, but something was gnawing at me! When I saw the portfolio's last page, the student's resume listed his employment as an assistant director of a hospital! It seems that he had no idea that hospital administration and hospitality management were completely different!

Fortunately, given our PLA model, this was just a matter of finding the right course description for his knowledge and background, and without missing a step we were able to assist him with earning credit; but it still makes me laugh!

Darlene M. Hapka, mentor and residency and recruitment services assistant, Cheektowaga

I learned the most valuable lesson about exceptional mentoring as an undergraduate student. The reason I was successful in my program at Empire is because *my primary mentor, Frieda Mendelsohn, truly heard* me when I expressed my goals. I know she heard me because she was diligent in keeping me from veering off track and because she connected me with mentors such as Carole Southwood, who *created unique learning experiences* that enhanced my education. Now, as a mentor, it is my first priority to be diligent in my listening so I, too, can guide my students along their distinctive path. Always at the forefront of

my mind is the reason I chose Empire State College as a student and (now) as an employee: student access to *mentors who are empowered* to deliver the individualized education not available in other institutions. Congrats on your 50th issue!

Mara Mills, mentor, Hudson Valley Region

I first came to Empire State College when Alan Mandell was acting dean at what was then the Hudson Valley Center. He taught me how to write a leaning contract (LC) that had academic integrity and solid learning goals. Jim Case came in as dean soon after. Jim taught me the importance of teaching to the whole person, who comes not only with a personal history – which as adult learners they brought with them – but with their generational context, as well. This was a good lesson for me, who was younger than almost all of my students. Jim defined ESC for me and he, as dean, pushed me to pursue learning through teaching. Learning together was an axiom to live up to. Like my students, I too was an adult learner.

I've now been at Empire from my 30s to my 60s. Now most of my students are younger than I am in age and in generation. And, while we have gone from TISs [totally individualized studies] for all to more standardized LCs, and the end goal of many students is certification and advancement, I remember it is generational and ESC will reflect that too. Most of all, I need to remember that at the root of our mission and mentoring is the importance of finding ways of teaching that develops the whole person, which crosses all disciplines. And that working with our new adult learners means I get to experience another generation of learning.

Jim Hall, founding president of SUNY Empire State College

All About Mentoring is a remarkable instrument that has stimulated what likely forms the most extensive and rich body of faculty research, observation and practice to be found anywhere. The broad and deep range of related topics is remarkable. The incisive examination and reporting on many aspects of the mentoring experience – for faculty and students, for readers, for international aspects,

in both textual and visual formats – must be unparalleled. And the quality of editing and presentation is of the highest character. My congratulations on this 50th edition occasion to all who have made this distinguished publication a must-read.

Desalyn De-Souza, mentor, East Syracuse

I think of mentoring as a parallel process. Whether with colleagues or students, we wonder, question, challenge and generate ideas together. It is during the act of facilitation as a mentor that I engage in reflection on my own practice that informs growth. In essence, we learn and develop together.

Roy Smith, adjunct instructor, Center for Distance Learning

My professional life involved the field of criminal justice. I had the honor of being appointed by Presidents Carter and Clinton to the post of United States marshal for the Southern District of Ohio. After leaving law enforcement, I taught for nine years on a campus and have been teaching at ESC for three years. During that time frame, I have mentored several students, seated and online.

In a word: honesty. It is my experience that what students want is honesty. Students today, especially millennials, are confused. They have been pampered to death, and by the time they get to their senior year in college, are confused to learn that the world doesn't revolve around them. That is where I step in. I grew up in the U.S. Marines. I enlisted at age 17. Parris Island is not a place where you are tucked in at night. I went through 77 days on hell on earth and finished with a great deal of self-pride.

I have a student who was the company commander of an active tank company in Iraq, under fire. I was told my course contained intelligence the brigade commander had him download and print out for all of the company commanders in the entire brigade! It was a foot thick. He emailed me for several weeks asking questions. I felt honored to be able to provide him with advice. I had another student, whose wife emailed me, that he had to apologize for dropping my course, because his laptop computer was blown up in a mortar attack while he was in the chow hall. He had

just returned from a mission. He was a master sergeant. I was able to get 90 percent of his tuition returned. Having myself been nearly killed on two separate occasions in mortar attacks, I appreciated his predicament!

I had a student who was a good kid, but immature. He made the mistake of going to sleep the first night of class! When he woke up, I was in his face talking to him, like my DI [drill instructor] did on Parris Island. In the ensuing nine years, I never had a student go to sleep in my class again. When that student graduated, he brought his entire family to meet me. His dad told me he had heard a lot of stories about me, shook my hand, and thanked me for teaching his son something about being a man.

I had a female student, who is a great friend now, who listened to me when I told her to ditch her boyfriend; and looked forward to a day when she could use her brains and talents, rather than getting tied into a relationship so young in life. She is now a senior intelligence analyst for a major federal law enforcement agency, and has thanked me several times for that advice.

Mentoring is something that has to transcend the classroom. The student has to know that the information you are providing may be tough to hear, but that is why it is so important they hear it. Good news filled with "I want you to like me" is worthless, in the grand scheme of life. I really didn't care if they "liked" me. I was trying to earn their respect first. I can't "like" someone I don't respect. That is where honesty comes in. Lie to me, and we are through. Tell me the truth, and respect me, and we can develop a long-lasting friendship.

I learned in Vietnam, while serving with the U.S. Marines, that honesty, loyalty, appreciation of sacrifice and respect for one another makes for lifetime friendships. There are a bunch of guys who, if they called me now and said, "Smitty, please come, I need you," I would be packing my bags.

Patricia C. Vener, adjunct instructor, Center for Distance Learning

Before I was an adjunct for ESC, I was a student. Way before, actually. Back when ESC did not issue grades or have classes (with rare

exceptions). My transcript is at least a quarter-inch thick. My mentor, Joe Washington in the Manhattan office, seems to me the exemplar of a mentor. He gave guidance, critique, encouragement. I ended up with a dual degree in math and physics, and apparently I was the first to do so.

Lee Herman, mentor, Auburn

"All about mentoring:

- What do you want to learn?
- Why?
- What do you already know?
- How?"

Antoniette Galotola, adjunct instructor, Center for Distance Learning

To be a mentor is a noble term, particularly in the aesthetics of philosophy. The problem with the term at ESC is that we are not in Socratic circles and, we are instead asked to assign specific letter grades to learners for how well they fulfilled obligations. As such, in my humble opinion, we, as evaluators, should instead be called "instructors." To judge work designates a leadership position. The distinction is not a small one because "mentor" carries with it the perception that we are colleagues on the journey, and not the arbiter of judgment. This may create confusion for the learner, who may for example, resent an unflattering evaluation of their work, because after all, they tried their best and should receive an A for effort. Incidentally, I have heard this precise statement from students. Mentoring should be an adjective as one of our roles, but not as the title used by students and administrators. I would gladly embrace the title of mentor if I was not required to assign grades. Let's give the term a little more thought.

Xenia Coulter, retired mentor, Ithaca and International Programs

Jim Hall wrote the following in his article, "The Faculty and the Future," *Alternative Higher Education*, 1977: "The history of higher education belies the common assumption that educational institutions are static and that faculty oppose change. Many faculty

do resist innovation ... but out of a basic concern that innovators are losing sight of the centrality of the faculty role in education ...” (Abstract, p. 99). “[In response,] at Empire State College, a new faculty role has evolved – that of mentor. These faculty mentors carry out a complex role more characteristic of the undergraduate teacher of 40 years ago before education became compartmentalized into subdisciplinary specialists, counseling specialists, placement specialists, and student activities specialists. In the mentor role these functions are brought back together. The faculty mentors are responsible ... for the design, approval, and implementation of each student’s degree program and for each specific study plan (or contract) undertaken in fulfillment of that degree program. The faculty mentors advise and counsel their students, help them define their educational goals and interests, and encourage them in discovering new areas of inquiry. The overview of the student thus provided enables the mentor to suggest an integrated, coherent plan for the student’s learning” (p. 104).

Here is my current (2016) thought: [John] Dewey’s educational writings focus on the schooling of children. Not only did he not deal with college learning, but he assumed the necessity of a classroom, social interaction among students, and a supervising teacher. Yet, if you read what he argues education in a democratic society should strive for, academic mentoring as envisioned by Jim Hall is revealed as an astonishingly effective way of fulfilling Dewey’s educational ideals. Mentoring allows educational activities to be developed out of the student’s actual experience; it encourages the cultivation of individual strengths; it builds a dialogic relationship between faculty and student that reflects the egalitarian spirit of a democratic society; and it develops habits of tolerance – for both mentor and mentee – that emerge when two people of different backgrounds, interests and beliefs learn to work together as educational partners.

When today, in the name of innovation, online learning is touted as a preferred alternative, when indeed, the faculty role is reduced – that is, mentoring becomes expendable, student experience irrelevant, and individualization merely idiosyncratic – we inadvertently

eliminate the very experiences needed to sustain a well-functioning democracy. Just as Darwin saw diversity as critical to biological evolution, so too Dewey saw diversity as critical to social and economic progress. The more we press for identical quantifiable learning outcomes, glorify the authority of received knowledge, and stress the existence of single right answers, the more we restrict the freedom of thought and range of action our students must acquire to meet the unknown challenges of the future.

George Scott, adjunct instructor, Center for Distance Learning

(Previously printed in AAM #46)

“The exceptional quality of mentoring I received during both of my ESC degree programs is beyond description. There was a balance of compassion, support and motivational cajoling – all rendered just when I needed each. I seek to emulate the mentoring best practices of my professors as I interact with my students and provide them with a ‘single ray of sunshine’ when they need it.”

Jacob Remes, clinical assistant professor, Gallatin School of Individualized Study, New York University (former mentor, Brooklyn)

What I Learned About Mentoring by Watching British Crime Dramas

Cozy and nostalgic, British detective television dramas might not be accurate portrayals of crime or policing, but they are good dramatizations of what it is to be a mentor. At their core are relationships between two men (and they are, usually, both men) in which, working side-by-side, the senior inspector shows his junior sergeant how to be a better detective and a better person. Endeavour Morse and Robbie Lewis, Lewis and James Hathaway, Christopher Foyle and Paul Milner, George Gentley and John Bacchus, and others are depictions of humane education and training, of mentors cultivating their protégés. First, inspectors show their sergeants how to be detectives. Both are on the job, working together; the sergeant learns by doing and the inspector teaches by modeling good practice. Second, the inspector tells his sergeant how

to be a detective: he explicitly directs, corrects, praises, and gives support and encouragement. Third, the inspector cultivates aesthetic and moral virtue in his protégé – there is more to life than the job, they insist, and being a better person will make you a better detective. And importantly, the relationship goes both ways. Sergeants end up teaching their inspectors about human nature, about crime, and about policing. As each series progresses, the sergeant grows as a detective and the inspector comes increasingly to rely on him and his judgment. The relationship is hierarchical – Hathaway only calls his boss “Robbie,” rather than “sir,” when Lewis retires – but reciprocal. Though fictionalized in detective television, these make up the fundamentals of mentoring, and we could pick far worse models than Morse, Lewis, Foyle and Gentley.

Robert Congemi, mentor, Northeast New York Region

A Mentor’s Memory

I recall it was in the late spring of 1973 and I strolled into the cafeteria of SUNY Albany for a cup of coffee. Sitting at one of the tables was my friend, the playwright W.A. Frankonis. When Bill saw me coming to join him, it was as though he was having an epiphany. “Bob Congemi, you could do it,” he said. “You’d be perfect.”

“I could do what?” I asked, sitting in a chair across from him at the table. As always, Bill was scribbling notes for a play on a pad.

“You could be our new literature and writing mentor at our new center?”

“Huh?” I replied. “Center?”

“SUNY is creating a new kind of college. Individualized and affective. The guy who started in the job just quit because he couldn’t stand it. For this job you have to be able to think globally as well as put up with the daily nitty-gritty.”

I must have looked startled.

“It’s absolutely the hottest thing in American education these days,” he offered, attempting to reassure me.

I took a sip of my coffee and lit up a cigarette. It was between semesters and only a few other people were in the cafeteria.

“What else do I have to do?” I asked.

“Individualize everyone’s education. And help them actualize themselves.”

“Individualize everyone’s education? What exactly does that mean? For instance, here I teach a 175-person comp in a lecture hall. I say it once and everyone’s got it. Does individualize mean I have to say it 175 separate times?”

He sort of nodded, downplaying. “Yes.”

“I see. And what exactly does ‘actualize themselves’ mean?”

Frankonis made it sound as if it were as easy as standing up. “Help your students become all they can be. Find their inner meaning. Discover their destiny.”

“Uhh ...” I replied, thoughtfully. “And do you have to ‘publish or perish?’”

Bill was quick. “Oh, no. The administration understands that that would be too much to ask. Empire State will be a teaching college.”

I needed a full-time job. “That makes it a little better.”

“And don’t worry, Bob. It won’t be forever. They figure normal human beings can’t do this job more than three to five years, tops. Apply for it now. Everybody is. Then move on to other things. Don’t you want to write books?”

I also had two little girls.

“What do you say, man? Come on. It’ll be a blast.”

Rents, loans, commitments, etc.

“So, what do you say?”

I sighed, really deep. Then: “... OK,” I told him. “... OK. I’ll do it.”

That was almost 43 years ago.

Bill Frankonis died relatively recently, after an exquisite life as a professor, theatre director and playwright. Knowing he is in a good place, I look up and I say to him, “Thanks, Bill. It *has* been a blast.”

Miriam Russell, mentor, Center for Distance Learning

Bridging the Transactional Distance Gap

Over 14 years ago as I began my encore career as an adjunct teaching for the Center for Distance Learning (CDL), my new colleague, Bill McClary called to welcome me with a few words of advice. He recommended calling all my students prior to the first day of class. This remains my continuing practice throughout all the changes in our course delivery. These short chats established a congenial atmosphere, enabling me to assure new students that I welcome their questions and concerns, while learning a little bit about their lives as well as the circumstances influencing their decision to register for CDL’s course, Introduction to College Reading and Writing.

At that time, Laura Wait, who supported the adjuncts at CDL, sent us stacks of manila envelopes to return mailed student essays with their grade and my comments. We used phone cards for long distance conferencing and kept postage receipts to be reimbursed; in addition, we submitted detailed logs of time spent with each student’s assignments.

As soon as courses were mounted on the SUNY Learning Network, online discussions became a focus in addition to digitally-submitted assignments. Responding in online discussions asynchronously at my convenience enabled me to construct more considered responses than possible in 50-minute face-to-face classes.

While continuing phone student conferencing as needed with students in my writing courses and coaching referrals, I’ve added asynchronous voice comments using a Google add-on as well as synchronous virtual sessions with International Programs students. Using exciting 21st century teleconferencing technology, we can now bridge the worrisome “transactional distance” gap.

Gohar Marikyan, mentor, Manhattan

How Little is Needed to Encourage Our Students

Once I bought a stamp with the word “Perfect!” in red ink from a dollar store. My husband asked what I was going to do with that. My response, “Stamp students’ assignments,” surprised him. “But they are adults,” he said.

My female mentee then was in her 30s. At the end of our meeting, I had to return her Linear Algebra test. She smiled seeing that her grade was 100. I stamped it “Perfect!” and gave her the test. She took it and squeezing it to her chest blushing, thanked me. Her reaction surprised me.

A week later, I returned her next test graded 100. She just smiled. I thought that she got used to getting 100s. Then remembering about the stamp, I said, “I forgot to stamp it.” She put her test on my table with a huge smile. After I stamped it, she again squeezed it to her chest and blushing thanked me. The next week, I received an email from her about her next test, “May I have a two-day extension for my test? I really want to have that stamp on it.”

Another student had to stop by to take his midterm for Differential Equations. “Sorry Dr. Marikyan for being in a rush. I double parked my car, and left my girlfriend in the car, just in case,” he explained. Before giving him his midterm back, I stamped it “Perfect!” He looked at me with shiny eyes, and said, “Oh, thank you. I’ll give this to my girlfriend. I am sure she will post it on her refrigerator.” The stamp significantly improved his performance in the class.

I used my stamp with various students. Their reaction was similar to my friend’s 5-year-old grandson’s reaction. Once showing me a red stamp on his little hand, he proudly said, “My teacher stamped my hand because she liked my project a lot.”

My red stamp “Perfect!” enhances students’ performance in the class. How little is needed to encourage our students. It is just a red stamp, but it does magic.

Rhianna Rogers, mentor, Cheektowaga

The idea of mentoring students is one that can mean quite a few things to quite a few people, especially to those in and out of Empire State College. In my mind, being a good mentor means wearing multiple hats; sometimes a professor, sometimes a listener, sometimes an advisor, sometimes a cheerleader, sometimes an advocate, and sometimes an academic gatekeeper of knowledge. Wearing these hats may be challenging at times, but the process of getting to know students through this model is quite rewarding.

Prior to coming to ESC, I had been at another college that employed the mentoring model, but in a much different way. Students primarily worked with me toward the end of their degrees on their final projects/theses, but I had little interaction with them prior to that time (i.e., unless they took a class with me.) However, at ESC, I have had the opportunity to get to know my mentees from the time they walked in the door to the time they graduated. Because the mentoring relationship exists throughout the education process at ESC, I have felt more connected to a larger variety of students than I ever did before. When my mentees graduate from ESC, I feel that I am more invested in their success, care more about their setbacks in life, and try harder to find ways to help them be successful. Mentoring at ESC feels more like a partnership than just a process. In many cases, I have seen students through ups and downs in school, work and personal lives. I have encouraged them to participate in academic events, present their work in and out of school, engage in dialogue about real-world applications of knowledge, and helped them transition their learning in college to their real work and lives. Upon reflection, the model at ESC creates a unique experience for faculty and student alike. I am happy that I have had the opportunity to experience it!

David Fullard, mentor, Manhattan

Mentoring: It's All About the Relationship

Mentoring is all about *relationships*. As Carl Rogers said more than 50 years ago, a strong mentor-student relationship operates in an atmosphere of unconditional positive regard.

An effective mentor works in a collaborative fashion to build a positive relationship and encourage the student's actualizing tendency (this is how both Rogers and Abraham Maslow described it). As D. W. Winnicott might remind us, this relationship doesn't need to be perfect; it just needs to be a "good enough" working alliance, so the student feels supported, understood and respected.

Many people have described the strategies that can be effective in developing a solid mentoring relationship:

- Be present and available; actively listen.
- Ask questions; support academic efforts; offer referrals as needed.
- Offer accurate, empathic understanding, respect and compassion.
- Try to like students and express that feeling when appropriate.
- Demonstrate tolerance in the face of (sometimes) difficult personality foibles via non-condemning responses to the student.

The impact of having a strong mentor-mentee relationship on students is immeasurable – well, actually, it *is* measurable, in increased retention and graduation rates! Mentor empathy and unconditional positive regard for students foster students' attachment to the college and its programs. This attachment not only leads to better retention and higher graduation rates, but to a decrease in student complaints. As a mentor in multiple areas of study and faculty advisor for the Black Male Initiative (BMI) at ESC, I have seen this time and time again: Even for populations with historically low retention and graduation rates, fostering focused mentoring relationships with our students had a huge positive impact in a very short period of time.

Lorette Pellettiere Calix, mentor, International Programs

How humbling it is to accompany students through the PLA [prior learning assessment] process, admiring their experiences and how much they know. How heart-wrenching it is to learn of a student's grave illness, and feel her distress at the setback to the dream of earning her degree. How helpless one feels

when students have to temporarily – or maybe permanently – abandon their studies because they can't afford the tuition and books. How not to share the struggle of a refugee student trying to settle into a new location and put back together a shattered life? How we share their joy when they reach their goals. How can we not be touched and work as hard as we can to help guide our students? They each take a little piece of our hearts – and give us a piece of theirs.

Ann Folwell Stanford, Vincent dePaul professor, DePaul University, School for New Learning

A student tells me that she's recently had a heart attack, during which time she was also diagnosed with breast cancer and that she wants to continue working on her degree.

A mentee comes to class late and afterward apologizes, telling me that she and her small daughter were evicted from their apartment earlier that day.

Another calls me the day after his son was shot in a drive-by.

How do I as a mentor respond? Initially, I wanted to solve my students' problems, which was an ill-fated and arrogant response. What I've come to understand over many years of mentoring is that my intervention is not necessarily a good or even wanted thing.

What *is* wanted is an openness to listening to a student's story. Sometimes I think fear keeps us from letting students talk about what is going on with them, helping them tell their stories, because we can't *do* anything about what they are telling us. We aren't fixers.

What I can do with confidence is to listen, perhaps make a few suggestions, if they are wanted. I can salute the student's steadfastness and help her or him get the necessary academic space they might need to deal with their lives. I can ask them to look for connections between their reality and what they are learning in school and elsewhere. I can face the vulnerability and fear in myself that some of the stories raise. That's my work. My mentees have their own work and I respect them enough to know they have the resources to do it.

Rick Pilarski, mentor, International Programs

Mentoring as Privilege

Apprehension mingled with recognition of the serious responsibility of a mentor were but two of the sensations when I prepared for my first mentor/mentee meetings two decades ago. While the first was quickly dissolved by the eager appetite for information and assistance of those first mentees, that recompense only added to the appreciation of the serious responsibilities of the mentor's role.

As my mentoring progressed, I found that my sense of responsibility was matched – and often exceeded – by an eagerness to trust myself and my mentoring and to share personal goals, aspirations and life experiences. Because of my prior business experience, I found I could empathize and advise mentees regarding both academic and professional aspirations, and I believe that this integration of my background with their dual paths of inquiry opened opportunities to communicate and collaborate on planning their futures. Our one-on-one personal bonds escalated to connections with mentees' families, as I was invited to share the joy and celebration of their graduations with them.

Yes, mentoring indeed is an awesome responsibility, exceeded poignantly by the privilege of being invited to help our students achieve the academic goals which enable them to pursue their personal and professional aspirations. I hope I've help enrich their lives, but I know that mentoring has enriched mine.

What greater privilege could there be than to know that one has contributed to the life pathways of another? Thus, I shall always remember mentoring not as a position, but as a privilege.

Lear Matthews, mentor, Manhattan

On Mentoring

Reflections:

I view mentoring as a skill, art and science. It is a process that involves opportunities, risks, rewards and disappointments. We take for granted that faculty fully comprehend the characteristics, parameters and expectations of the label “mentor” as they accept this designation at institutions such as Empire State College. Do they? In fact, the role of mentor is generally executed based on individual interpretation of what it is and less by universal guiding principles of mentoring. Mentoring has multifaceted dimensions, i.e., teaching, advising, counseling, directing, facilitating, etc. From a human service perspective, mentoring may be viewed as “educational intervention,” a strategy that involves both an *academic* dimension (e.g., knowledge acquisition and critical thinking) and a *psychological* dimension (e.g., attitude toward learning and emotional preparedness).

Questions to ponder:

As I reflect on the topic, I raise the following questions: Are there trends, similarities or commonalities in mentoring approaches by areas of study? What are the barriers to successful mentoring? Should a student be allowed to “select” his or her primary mentor? What may be the basis for this? What should “best practices” in mentoring look like? What constitutes the most conducive environment for successful mentoring? What are some of the limitations to mentoring? What works and what does not work? Although we cannot predict exactly how or when an individual student mentoring interaction will end, what should the beginning, middle and end phases

of mentoring look like? Who are our mentees and what do we need to know about them beyond what they bring academically? What should they know about us? Is a certain degree of self-disclosure appropriate? What about confidentiality issues? Should a primary mentor limit the number of studies taken with her/him by primary mentees? Is the term “component mentor” still used? As an integral part of the ESC model, how would mentoring be affected by changes in the college's infrastructure? What are the implications (content and process) for face-to-face versus online mentoring approaches?

Some conclusions:

These questions may be useful in “unpacking” the mentoring experience by exploring its various dimensions. The intersectionality between mentoring and individualized learning should be revisited. Perhaps more workshops for new faculty (who generally come from traditional colleges) could help further define the mentoring process/approach at ESC. “Brown bag” events could be one of several sources for collecting data related to the above questions.

Continued on page 61.

On Accepting the Cyril O. Houle Award

Elana Michelson, School for Graduate Studies

On Oct. 17, 2016, it was announced that the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) had selected Elana Michelson's 2015 book, *Gender, Experience, and Knowledge in Adult Learning: Alisoun's Daughters* (Routledge) as the co-recipient of the prestigious 2015 Cyril O. Houle Award for Outstanding Literature in Adult Education. Elana offered these remarks when accepting the award at the AAACE Annual Conference on Nov. 10 in Albuquerque, New Mexico – just two days after the presidential election.

I am deeply honored to be receiving this award, and I want to thank both AAACE and the selection committee. I am especially honored to be given this award along with my co-recipients, Leona English and Catherine Irving [*Feminism in Community: Adult Education for Transformation*: Sense Publishers], whose writings I so admire. The two books are a lovely balance – together, and in very different ways, they ask the question of how and where women learn; how – and whether – that knowledge is recognized; and what the relationship is between experience, knowledge, and the ongoing struggle for a more just and peaceful world.

One of the things I set out to do in my book was to trace the history of “experiential learning.” Or, rather, I wanted to see how the claim that we learn from experience has played out historically in the rise of science and the social sciences, democratic citizenship, industrialization and colonialism, and the other key elements of what came to be called the “modern world.” I wanted to know how claims

to learn from experience have fared across the structures of inequality – class, gender, “race,” culture. I wanted to challenge us to think beyond our own everyday knowledge, and relate the world of adult and continuing education to the intellectual insights and paradigms that have emerged in parallel fields, most importantly feminist and critical race theory, queer studies, and theories of knowledge. And I wanted to join in the celebration of women's experiential learning, the knowledge that feminist adult learning theorists such as Elizabeth Tisdell and Yolanda Nieves refer to as the knowledge we hold in our guts, our hearts, our ribs.

But I have to say that especially this last goal tastes bitter to me this morning. We have been reminded this week, in case we ever forgot it, that experience doesn't provide some kind of pure access to what is true and the good. It arrives in our consciousness already mediated by ideology and expectation. There are all too many people, as we have seen, who know “in their guts” that Mexicans are stealing their jobs and that all Muslims are dangerous, that “truth” is a function of personal resentment, and that their feelings of inchoate rage and hatred are reliable measures of what's wrong with the world. What we know, and why we think we know it, have always been political questions, not only epistemological ones, and they have become newly vital questions for both the world of adult and continuing education and the body politic.

It seems to me that we have two tasks as an academic community. One is to continue to celebrate the knowledge that comes from



Elana Michelson

Photo credit: Penny Coleman

ordinary work and daily life-maintenance activities, and to honor the experiential knowledge of women, of people of color, of working people, of immigrants. But we also need to participate in a broader conversation that needs to happen right now across different sites of knowledge and different cultures of experience, to help parse the difference between the deep wisdom of experience, feeling, and the body and a dangerous and currently triumphant demagogic irrationality.

Thank you for honoring my book. Thank you for helping me, as you did this week, think about how hard it is both to value experiential learning and undertake the task of repairing the world while not pretending that those two things are either easy, or the same.

Man with a Camera

Mel Rosenthal, Metropolitan New York Region



From the *"In the South Bronx of America"* series

Mel Rosenthal is a distinctive photographer, remarkable educator and cherished colleague who, during his time at the college, offered all of us his unique view of the world in both words and images. It seems just right, that in this 50th issue of *All About Mentoring*, we should salute Mel, a mentor who over many decades at SUNY Empire State College, gave so much to his students and to all of us who have been lucky to know him, work with him and be connected to others because of him. Mel's vision of America and of the world is especially important for us to try to take in right now at a time when the deep, careful and sensitive attention to the details of peoples' everyday lives, to which all of his work is committed, are too easily tossed aside. Mel Rosenthal has helped us see the people of the South Bronx, of Cuba, of Nicaragua, of Vietnam, and of refugees in New York City and across the state that we may miss. He is a man of immersion, whose inquisitive desire

to understand the social conditions that shape our lives, and to document the repercussions of power rippling through the thousands of photographs that he has taken and that he has lovingly, and with a style that is his alone, encouraged others to take, too. "I tried to make good pictures of everybody who lived in the neighborhood of our Empire State College office," Mel wrote in *All About Mentoring* in 1998. "Most of the people there didn't have pictures of themselves so I made portraits, gave the people copies and displayed the pictures in little galleries we started in the neighborhood bar, in a grocery store and in the health center [ESC's South Bronx unit] where I worked." This is the Rosenthal spirit: passionate, engaged, critical, humane, improvisatory, unpretentious and dedicated to helping us reach beyond what we claim to know.

– Alan Mandell



From the *"In the South Bronx of America"* series

"I'm not an artist; I'm a messenger."

- Mel Rosenthal to LENS/*The New York Times*, October 11, 2011



From the *"Americans by Choice: The Refugee Project"* series



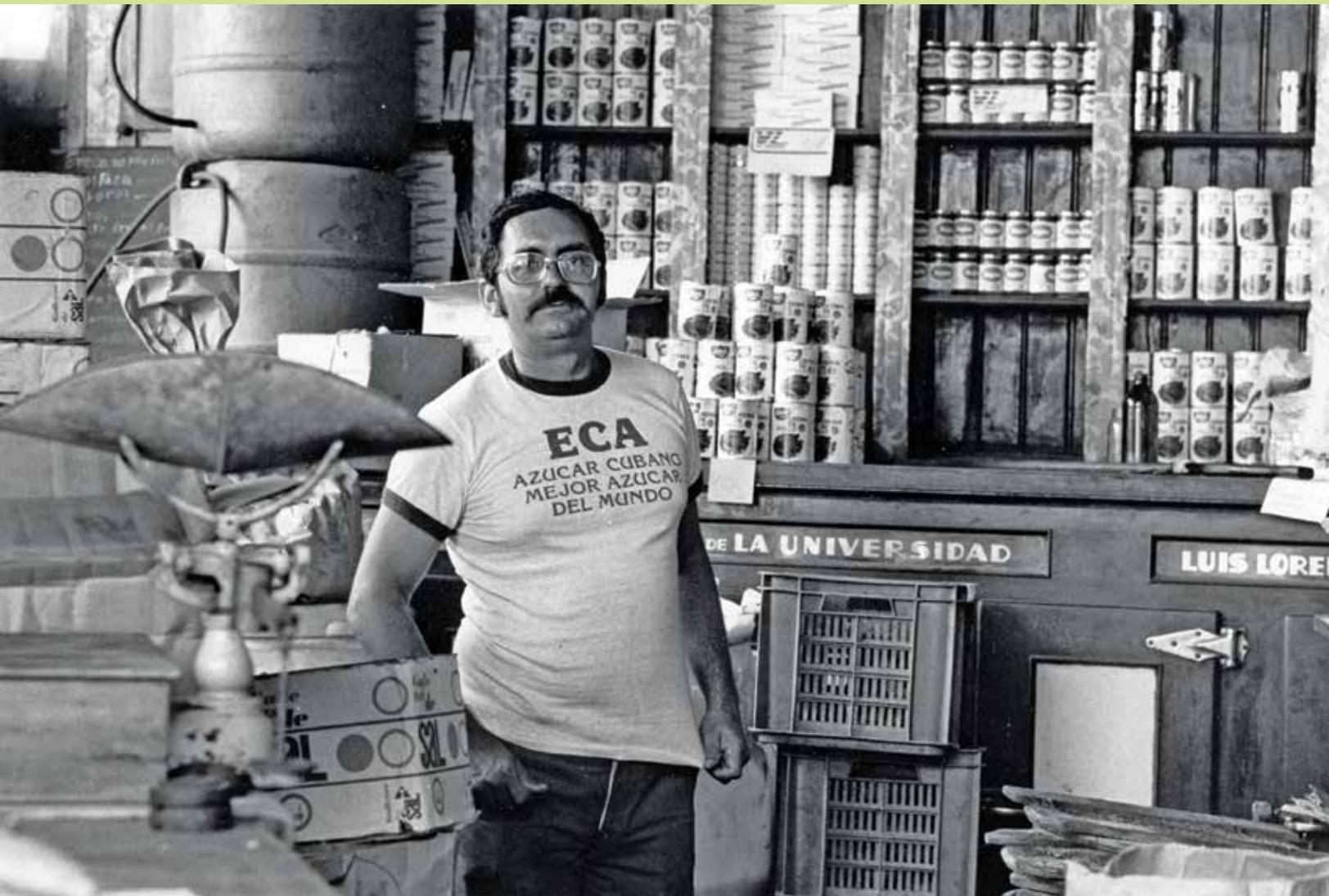
From the *"Americans by Choice: The Refugee Project"* series



This page from the "Cuba: Cultural Renderings" series

"My work always grows out of my immediate experiences. All of my projects are interconnected. They are about people being pushed around, about what happens when people are seen as problems rather than as fellow human beings. Photographs are wonderful because they show particular people, and suddenly the results of political and economic policies are no longer abstract. Photographs document universal human moments, struggles and joys in particular concrete and often familiar situations. I find that many of my students profit from linking photography to issues touching their own lives. For some, this is a real stretch and for others it is irrelevant. Photography is a flexible and democratic art form that is accessible to very different people on different levels. I try to always respect those differences and help my students find what is important to them."

– Mel Rosenthal, "A Philosophy of Education,"
All About Mentoring, 15, Fall 1998, p. 17



This page from the "Americans by Choice: The Refugee Project" series

More information about Mel Rosenthal
and his work can be accessed at
www.melrosenthal.com

*Photos courtesy of
SUNY Empire State College Archives*



Increasing STEM Education Through Marine Mammal Research in an Urban Environment

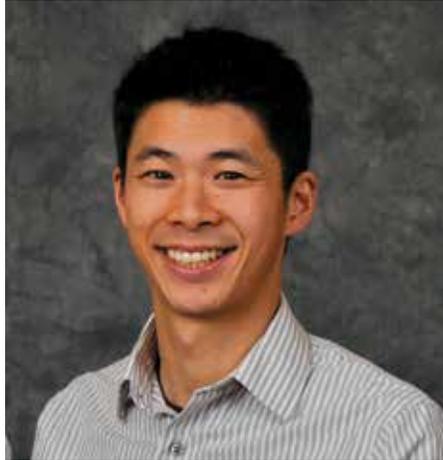
Kevin L. Woo, Metropolitan New York Region; Kristy L. Biolsi, St. Francis College

Introduction

When discussing our careers, we often find that the general public is very interested in our research and, more often than not, appears earnest in this regard. Perhaps they are responding to our passion about our work, or perhaps they feel the topics are genuinely interesting – we do, after all, study seals and sea lions! Conversations with people typically conclude with someone stating in a light-hearted manner something like, “Is it too late to change my career? I never knew that was even a possibility for a job.” These interactions remind us time and again as to how we can be interested in science. But that begs the question: If so many people are interested in science, then why do so few people actually become scientists? And of those who do enter careers in the sciences, why are there so many underrepresented groups, such as women and various minorities? There are clearly discrepancies that can be accounted for by sociocultural and socioeconomic factors, but what is interesting to us is that regardless of the underlying causes of this underrepresentation, there is one solution that can help individuals cultivate their scientific interests across the board: mentoring.

General Research Background

For a number of years, we have researched the wild harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*; Figure 1a) and grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) populations in the greater New York City area. Urbanization, as seen in the growth of NYC, has changed the way in which animals negotiate their habitat. In some cases, generalist fauna are able to adapt to rapid environmental changes. In contrast, survivorship of specialist species is severely hindered by biological constraints, and the inability to cope with a narrow selection of ecological factors, such as access to or the quality of its food. Seals



Kevin L. Woo

(Order Pinnipedia) are one such group of animals that straddle these two ecological strategies. In New York City, pinnipeds were once commonly found hauled out along the foreshores during the winter months. However, rapid industrialization and commercial shipping during the 1900s likely caused significant changes to the marine habitat, such as pollution and increased ambient noise, which further likely created unsuitable living conditions. This interaction is correlated with the sharp decline and local extinction of commonly observed pinnipeds, such as harbor and grey seals, for approximately 100 years. In recent decades, sightings of seals in select locations have signified that pinnipeds are once again using the harbor during the wintering months. Moreover, this population resurgence has provided a unique opportunity to study large marine megafauna in a highly urbanized environment.

During the wintering months, we conduct observations of wild populations of seals in and around the foreshores of New York City (Figure 2). For over seven years we have been documenting the demographics of these species and tracking trends in locations and numbers of animals. We also conduct



Kristy L. Biolsi

laboratory studies on harbor seals and sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*; Figure 1b) at the Long Island Aquarium and Exhibition Center in Riverhead, New York (Figure 3). While we have a number of ongoing studies, the primary goals of the lab work are to better understand the cognitive capabilities of these marine mammals and to bridge the gap between behavioral observations in the field and controlled experiments in a captive setting with trained pinnipeds.

In addition to our basic research, we have continually worked to include undergraduate research assistants and mentor them in the data collection, analysis and written/oral communication of research studies (e.g., papers, presentations and discussion panels at on-campus events).

Center for the Study of Pinniped Ecology and Cognition (C-SPEC):

Based on our two main lines of research (field and lab mentioned earlier), our interest in public outreach and student mentorship has increased over the years. Motivation for involvement culminated in May 2014, when we created the Center for the Study of Pinniped



Figure 1. Photographs of: a) harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*), and b) California sea lion (*Zalophus californianus*).

Photo credit: C-SPEC and Candy Paparo/Long Island Aquarium and Exhibition Center



Image credit: Google Maps

Figure 2. Map of New York City with Orchard Beach (▲), and Swinburne and Hoffman Islands (●) identified as observation sites.



Figure 3. Photograph of simple discrimination trial with sea lion at the Long Island Aquarium and Exhibition Center.

Photo credit: C-SPEC

Ecology and Cognition (C-SPEC), based in the Psychology Department at St. Francis College in Brooklyn Heights. Our objective is to conduct research on wild and captive populations of pinnipeds, and to bridge our knowledge of sensory and cognitive abilities that they use to communicate and make decisions in situ. As mentioned in our mission statement, “C-SPEC seeks to educate, engage, and serve researchers, students, and the local community. ... We are committed to engaging in science education and collaborative projects that foster intellectual growth and providing opportunities for students to participate in rigorous research” (C-SPEC, n.d., Mission Statement section, para. 3). C-SPEC grew out of our research goals and is now in large part why and how we are committed to supporting

undergraduate students in research initiatives and encouraging STEM education in the community.¹

Mentoring Undergraduate Students

Mentorship of undergraduate research is at a critical point as research opportunities in the natural sciences are becoming increasingly scarce and competitive. Due to interacting factors of the growing number of undergraduate students who major in the sciences, the number of students who graduate with science degrees, the general population growth proportioned to graduating students with science degrees, and the annually reduced federal funding opportunities (Eagan Jr., Sharkness, Hurtado, Mosqueda, & Chang, 2011), it has become increasingly more difficult to support both graduate and undergraduate

research. Historically, undergraduate students typically volunteered their personal time to work in a research laboratory to improve upon their technical skills, and to participate in a science discipline that provided them with real-life experiences in their field of choice. The clear benefit was that these students gained direct knowledge of both theoretical and methodological practices. Moreover, associations with research laboratories and scientists could improve their chances of entering graduate programs with desired academic supervisors. Undergraduate students affiliated with research laboratories often engage in active research, which may further provide them with opportunities to disseminate their work at conferences or through peer-review publication.

However, this model has become increasingly challenged because of personal, academic and financial constraints. It is rare that interns or undergraduate research assistants are compensated financially, except as a result of clear funding opportunities such as the National Science Foundation's Research Experiences for Undergraduates (NSF-REU).² Moreover, the number and amount of funds available across all tertiary institutions is limited. Hence, undergraduate students often elect to work one or multiple jobs to pay for tuition, loans and their basic daily needs. Clearly, the time spent engaged in their jobs is a trade-off in the time in which they can be engaged in unpaid scholarly research. The argument for participation in undergraduate research then becomes less compelling.

Perhaps due to the decreasing numbers of students engaged in active research programs, the USA has been both lagging in global comparison, and losing talented individuals to international organizations (Douglass & Edelstein, 2009). Therefore, the goal to increase intellectual output may be one significant reason for a major federal push for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) initiatives by the United States government. The personal desire to enter STEM fields outside of the applied health sciences has waned, as there have been fewer incentives to remain in these fields. Unfortunately, the number of declared science majors at the start of their undergraduate careers is significantly greater than the number of actual graduates (Chen, 2009). There are likely a number of personal issues that dissuade students from completing their degree (as detailed in Rieucan & Woo, 2013), which may also interact with academic issues. However, financial constraints are often an important concern for undergraduate students, as the cost of public and private education continues to increase. As noted earlier, internships and undergraduate research assistantships often do not come with financial compensation. Moreover, financial incentives gained from changing to other disciplines may be more alluring, and consequently entice students to major in other areas of study.

Thus, every researcher who values the importance and impact of undergraduate students must ensure that both the learning

opportunities and mentoring is available concurrently, and that the reward exceeds all other potential avenues of competition (Linn, Palmer, Baranger, Gerard, & Stone, 2015). Far too often, both undergraduate and graduate students who do have the opportunity to participate in research laboratories for little to no financial compensation are asked to work without appreciation. Typically, and more recently, smaller liberal arts institutions with natural and social science programs have made significant strides to engage undergraduate students in research, such that they have the opportunity to present their work at conferences or publish their research in peer-reviewed journals as lead author. However, in comparison, many research-oriented institutions may not always acknowledge the assistance of undergraduate and graduate researchers, particularly if the support was

we neglect to offer an opportunity to even a single student, we may miss the chance to help untapped talent who may become significant scientists in STEM research. In doing this, we would have reserved the opportunity for only select students, clearly hypocritical in light of our regular calls for access to STEM studies.

STEM Education and Outreach

One of the main missions for C-SPEC is to engage in STEM education and community outreach. Prior to our engagement in field studies, we conducted a survey to ask local New Yorkers about their perception of the importance of environmental conservation, and their knowledge of species in peril and the existence of pinnipeds in New York City. To our surprise, 76 percent found that environmental conservation was extremely important (Table 1); however, the most

Table 1. Survey results in response to questions regarding the importance of conservation and native fauna.

Question	Percent "Yes"
Have you received information on conservation in the NYC area?	23%
Are you aware of seals in the NYC area?	23%
Are you aware of seal research in the NYC area?	18%
Do you believe that seals are important to the local environment?	76%

largely in the form of manual labor (e.g., actually conducting experiments), as opposed to intellectual contributions to experimental design and writing. In these instances, science can advance at the expense of ground-level support. In either case, we either begin to deter students from further pursuing careers in science, or selectively identify individuals who wish to emulate a narcissistic process.

Mentoring undergraduate research assistants is not merely an obligation; it also is linked to our desire to see the future of science develop. As mentors, and as we value our students, it is a direct opportunity for us to have an influence on the future of STEM by encouraging those students to overcome mechanical and intellectual obstacles, and by training them to become thoughtful observers of the natural world. To have the capacity for such an impact in the field is a massive responsibility that must be negotiated with care. Unfortunately, not all students who attempt STEM disciplines may end up in its various fields; however, if

common response for "why the environment was important" was recorded in a colloquial answer: "It's cool." The responses to the survey revealed that there was a complete disconnect between citizens of New York City and their knowledge of local fauna in their backyards. Thus, it seemed critically important as research scientists to consider ways to interact with the public, and create avenues to connect with people who inhabit the same environment as many diverse species of fauna.

One significant approach that we wish to take is to educate the public away from general-based knowledge (e.g., responses like "It's cool.") to more content- and context-specific knowledge. To do this, there are two likely questions that we need to consider: 1) What is it about a science model that actually makes it important? and 2) How do we make people care? The former question can actually utilize empirical research, and applied exercises, such as hands-on methodological

applications and staged experiments to demonstrate hypothesis testing. However, answering the latter question has always been significantly difficult to do. In the sciences, there are controversial topics that have clear evidence to support a phenomenon, such as the existence of climate change (Leiserowitz, 2006; Meehl et al., 2007) or the illegitimacy of infant inoculations that cause predetermined genetic states like autism (Taylor et al., 1999; Godlee, Smith, & Marcovitch, 2011). Despite the overwhelmingly supportive research that indicates the existence of climate change as a threat to the biosphere and the falsification of data that suggested that the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccination has a direct causal relationship to autism, people are often more easily swayed to believe something else. These are two clearly important scientific issues that affect everyone, yet they have yielded a diverse range of opinions. For climate change, the effects are slow and gradual, yet cumulative. Regarding the false effects of inoculations, the impacts would have had the potential to be immediate and devastating.

How *do* we make people care? To start, science needs to adapt to society's changing cultural identities – that is, how do we identify what people care about now, and why? Secondly, scientists need to identify a culturally important issue, and make that relational story attractive. For example, mechanisms for mate selection allow us to better understand why certain characteristics in a partner are important. From insects to humans, mate selection and choice operate in concert to consider the most beneficial traits and avoid the costly ones. That said, it may be more captivating to begin talking to the general public via a light discussion about how research on attractiveness can be observed in the cinema where leading males and females are often portrayed in physical positions known to increase perceived attractiveness, thus encouraging us to acknowledge how the individual likely gains more recognition and attraction as a consequence of orientation. If someone is now interested in this relational story, they are more likely to then want to understand the research behind the underlying basis of selection and choice, and to consider evolutionary models for mating systems. For example, Burke and Sulikowski (2010) digitally manipulated the morphology, angle

and position of facial images, and played them back to participants. Incidentally, males found females more attractive who seemed to be shorter, and therefore looking upward toward males. Females found males to be more attractive when they were perceptually placed in a higher position, with their face oriented orthogonally or upward, and looking downward. Therefore, learning about this study and how these three variables influenced the way in which individuals find others attractive would fit into a general schema for the scientist and layman alike.

Similarly, in medical examples, there have been recent epidemiological issues that concern the human population, such as the spread of the Zika virus (Mlakar et al., 2016), SARS (Anderson et al., 2004) and the Ebola virus (Gire et al., 2014). Contrary to the global response to the AIDS pandemic (Stover et al., 2002), we are now more concerned about the impacts of negative microorganisms on the population level that can have devastating effects on demography. Here, when faced with a deadly microorganism, which is spreading globally, and countries are racing to create management strategies or inoculations to combat these diseases, individuals become concerned about contraction.

In addition to the previous two examples, it is also important to consider nondirect impacts. There are many factors that impact nonhuman species and therefore indirectly impact the global human population. These can be more difficult to navigate when asking the question “How do we make people care?” because the direct and more immediate effects are not on humans. For example, over the last two decades, there has been a global threat to honey bee (*Apis* spp.) populations, known as colony collapse disorder (CCD) – which also has now been identified as an interaction between a honey bee parasite (i.e., varroa mites, *Varroa destructor*) and a viral pathogen (*Nosema* spp.) that attacks bee colonies and causes death (Cox-Foster et al., 2007; vanEngelsdorp et al., 2009). It has been argued that bees are a keystone pollinator for the agricultural industry, as they help to fertilize and cross-fertilize a significant number of consumable crop species. As CCD started to affect bee populations around the world, there was the threat of increased price on agricultural

goods. Moreover, the greater threat is that if the spread of CCD cannot be halted, it may eliminate many important agricultural crops in the absence of a reliable pollination. Should this occur, the greatest threat would be a worldwide food shortage, hence demonstrating that the health of one ecosystem may enable other species, such as humans, to continue and to survive.

One can easily argue that working to increase public interest and participation in research on these types of nondirect impacts provides an even more difficult hurdle to overcome when focused in an urban environment. While the urban environment, particularly New York City, is a hotspot for research and science initiatives (Woo, 2012), there are few researchers who study ecology and evolutionary biology in these highly modified habitats. Only a fraction of all research in ecology focuses on urban ecology (Pataki, 2015). Though some work can be found, such as that focused on the microevolution of the white-footed mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus*) populations in New York City (Munshi-South, 2012), there is a bias in the ecological literature that favors the natural environment. Natural processes that continue to occur in artificial environments are an example of the success and survivorship of select species. In our lifetime, it is obvious that urban environments are only going to continue to grow, and it is unlikely that many of these habitats will regress into natural levels of ecological succession. Hence, it becomes even more vitally important that we understand the interactions between flora and fauna in their environment, which may provide us with a bigger picture of the characteristics that enable them to survive or cope with change. We may then be able to comparatively study strategies for success and failure, as we move closer to the expansion of urbanized environments.

In our approach to enhance community engagement, C-SPEC seeks to inform them about local fauna and the ecological importance of their presence and absence. Although we use our pinnipeds to publicize marine mammal research in New York City, the main purpose is to use seals as a model for the likelihood that there are other fauna species that are important, and who are also overcoming the challenges of urbanization to re-establish local populations. Moreover, the

idea is not to specifically educate the public on our own research, but to use our work as a platform to encourage others to engage in all aspects of STEM. Thus, one of our missions as a center for marine mammal research is to provide an opportunity for anyone interested in STEM fields to know that there is the potential for them to continue professionally.

The Importance of Diversity in STEM

Along with the federal initiative to increase student involvement in STEM disciplines, there is also an effort to consider the inclusion of diverse groups of historically underrepresented groups in the sciences, such as women and ethnic minorities. Unfortunately, this issue precedes tertiary degrees. For example, Sadler, Sonnert, Hazari and Tai (2012) surveyed high schools on their interest in STEM fields and found that 39.5 percent of males expressed an interest in STEM careers, as opposed to 15.7 percent of females who expressed the same interest. This disparity only grew upon graduation, as males increased their reported interest to 39.9 percent and females decreased their interest to 12.7 percent. Furthermore, Gayles (2014) showed that there is an additional disparity between the number of male and female graduates with a STEM degree. Males were awarded twice as many undergraduate and graduate (both master's and doctorate levels) degrees as females. The study also suggested that the difference increases, as more males typically engage in STEM occupations, as opposed to females. The same trend is parallel in its comparison to ethnic diversity, particularly in the United States (May & Chubin, 2003).

Both SUNY Empire State College and St. Francis College serve a diverse population of students, both in traditional and nontraditional senses. Our students elected to enroll in their respective institutions because of the kinds of scholarly interests of the faculty and the potential opportunities to gain applied research experiences. The majority of our students live in New York City, and therefore our student body reflects the diverse demographic groups that comprise over 50 percent of NYC's population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). It is in this capacity that we are able to work with a number of undergraduate research

"We are provided the opportunity to know each of our students and therefore have the chance to kindle the spark in students for STEM that may have previously been squelched over the years."

assistants who do not reflect the traditional STEM graduates across institutions in the United States. It is here that we see our largest potential for direct impact on these underrepresented populations as we are on the "front lines" serving at colleges with small class sizes allowing for a small student-to-faculty ratio. We are provided the opportunity to know each of our students and therefore have the chance to kindle the spark in students for STEM that may have previously been squelched over the years. While we may notice individuals who stand out, others may seek us out, as we are considerably more approachable in this environment than in a large university where most direct interactions are between the student and their graduate teaching assistants.

We also can provide mentorship for students with varying levels of abilities. From our experience, we have seen students with great potential who could have easily been overlooked and/or passed over by their professors, as they did not necessarily receive the strongest high school STEM educations. However, with more hands-on and one-on-one mentoring, they can thrive in the classroom and in the research lab; thus, providing a student who otherwise would not have entered into the field with an opportunity for a STEM research experience, and the possibility of a STEM degree at the undergraduate and graduate levels. We believe that devoting time to face-to-face interactions allows us to personally train students in their assistantship responsibilities, to have conversations with them about their own scientific interests, to model how our interests developed over time,

to share what we are passionate about and to ask what they are passionate about. Providing opportunities for student research and personal mentorship through this exciting process is critical and should be a mandate of higher education. Most scientists we know can point to one person who influenced them and turned them onto the track of a career in scientific inquiry – those people were mentors.

Conclusions

STEM education is an important backbone to the success of the next generation of scientists. We need to continue to offer rich opportunities for involvement in undergraduate research so that we can provide students with the training and skills to conduct their own kinds of scientific inquiry. Failure as mentors to facilitate learning at many levels of the undergraduate experience diminishes our ability to help shape prospective scientists, particularly those students who may not have considered science as a profession or those who were never exposed to potential opportunities. Lastly, as we consider the future of STEM, we need to be more inclusive of diverse, underserved and nontraditional populations who can be a significant force in the future of science.

Notes

- ¹ An additional source of information is <https://www.facebook.com/pinnipedcenter>.
- ² See https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5517&from=fund.

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My Confession

Tina Wagle, School for Graduate Studies

The following welcome from the faculty was given by mentor Tina Wagle at the Buffalo Location Commencement on June 4, 2016. We thank Tina for allowing us to print this version of her talk in All About Mentoring.

Good morning graduates, fellow faculty, staff, leaders and friends of the SUNY Empire State College community.

It is my honor to stand before you and represent the faculty at this commencement ceremony. I will be brief, as I recognize I am not the main event this morning. That distinct honor belongs to all of you wearing a cap and gown, waiting to collect the recognition you so well deserve.

As I stand before you today, I have a confession to make. For my college education, I was a traditional learner. I went right on to college from high school, so I followed a different path than many of you have. The world of adult education was something new to me. After college, I went straight on to teach high school. I was very green and very nervous. What helped boost my confidence when standing in a room of high schoolers was that I would keep telling myself, "It's OK, I know more than they do." It may or may not have been true, but not being much older than they were at the time, it helped get me through those first weeks when I was quite unsure of myself.

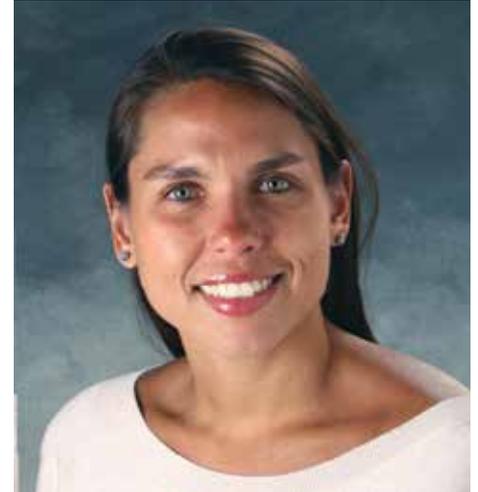
A few years later, I came to Empire State College, and I had to throw that strategy right out the window. There was no chance of convincing myself that I knew more than a room full of adult learners. This forced me to change my approach to teaching, and I realized that was OK; changing my own methodology was positive, in fact. It was important for me to learn that I didn't have to know everything; that I couldn't know everything, and it was quite refreshing to learn with and from my students. We really were creating knowledge

together. You each have a unique history and great experience that inform what you study. And I learned that this creates for a richer education that benefits everyone exposed to these learning opportunities, including, and perhaps especially, me.

I mentioned earlier that I took what many understand as the "traditional" pathway to my college degree. One reason I frame my words as a confession is because at first, it was harder for me to relate to the immense challenges adult learners face. I didn't have the same kinds of responsibilities you all have had during this journey. And while I always respected it, I never quite understood it. Then as time went on, I gained more of my own personal and professional responsibilities. I took on the role of program chair and I became a parent. So I was soon to discover the awesome challenge of finding any kind of balance in my adult life. And while I still cannot fully understand what many of you have faced in getting this degree, I felt I could now relate to what it's like to have someone else's needs be more pressing than your own, whether that be family, work or whatever immediate responsibilities you may have shouldered.

And I now understand what it's like to write a paper with the "Dora the Explorer" theme song running through your head. And I can appreciate you trying to finish that prior learning assessment essay when you're really thinking about what you're going to make for dinner, especially when you forgot to take the chicken out of the freezer. And that you really don't want to be reminded by that dreaded laundry buzzer that there is still more work to do.

I was thinking I would end my remarks with something inspirational, scour the classic quotations rich with motivation, when I realized I don't need to do that. You have already been inspired. That got you here today – that, and a lot of hard work and commitment. Today, you are the inspiration for all of us.



Tina Wagle

Instead, I will end my remarks by asking you a favor. You all now have a SUNY Empire State College education, one that is based on a tradition of being nontraditional, innovative and one grounded in social justice. We live in a precarious world, but one that is also rich in opportunity. So I ask you to take what you have learned and use it to spread a positive message – a message of understanding for others – and a commitment to becoming a mentor yourself. We need this in the world, and I can't think of anyone better than all of you to be those messengers. You all know what it's like to work hard, persevere, ask for help when you need it and lead when you can.

My sincerest congratulations to the graduates of 2016. Enjoy the day and please continue to be both inspired and the inspiration.

Thank you.

It Sounded So Easy ... Replicating My Dissertation Research

Julia Penn Shaw, Center for Distance Learning

As we all know, when given the opportunity for a reassignment, we are asked to write a report on the results. This is the report on my spring 2016 SUNY Empire State College faculty reassignment. My goal was to replicate my dissertation research to prepare it for publishing. Although the process in real time was a vibrant experience, this subsequent report is quite dry, the desiccated remnants of living events. Indeed, this report may appeal only to those of you who find tedious data-gathering processes to be interesting.

Background

In 2002, I completed my dissertation called “A Model for Reflective Processing Using Narrative Symbols: Time and Space Coordinates in Adult Reflection,” culminating in my Ed.D. from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. I went to Harvard with a fire in my belly to learn how people construct meaning from their own perspectives. I wanted to frame the big idea from philosophy – how people construct meaning – so that it could be studied through social science research. Jean Piaget was my model for this. He explored Immanuel Kant’s “categories” as the basis for discovering developmental differences in the understanding of time, space and causality, research both substantive and generative (Kant, 1998; Piaget, 1969, 2002; Piaget & Inhelder, 2013).

For my doctoral work, I sought a program that would meet three requirements: first, the freedom to explore my topic in a new way; second, the constraint to do it in a scientific manner; and third, the privilege of proceeding at the slow pace of an adult part-time student. I had the good fortune to garner interest in my project from Kurt W. Fischer, Ph.D., then chair of the Human Development Department, whose work on the structure of

cognition (Fischer, 1980) was an attractor for my nascent ideas. When he took me on as a student, however, he signed up for a longer time than he had expected. It took me many years as a commuter (from Binghamton, New York to Cambridge, Massachusetts) to systematically develop, administer and analyze the two protocols for gathering data on how adults and adolescents construct personal meaning: The SymbolSort© game, and the Tree of Meaning© game.

Germane to this report is that each protocol takes about an hour to administer. Administration can be done individually or in groups. The process is time-consuming but the results are unique, providing, from my experience, at least three contributions to developmental research:

1. Evidence that there is at least one critical “unit of construction of meaning” across the lifespan for educated adults, the symbol/event.
2. Evidence that there are four patterns that people use to construct meaning, which participants integrate with greater complexity with age.
3. Concrete verification of the measurable increase in complexity in construction of meaning (organizing meaningful information) across the adolescent and adult lifespan using symbols/events as units of construction.

The four patterns for constructing meaning are narrative/sequence, ranking/hierarchy, partition, and form/image (Shaw, 2002). These highly constrained research results (only four patterns, used dimensionally) are particularly surprising because the SymbolSort© process allows participants the maximum freedom to first create their own 10 symbols/events on 10 blank business cards, and then physically arrange them “in a personally meaningful



Julia Penn Shaw

Photo credit: Jim Gupta-Carlson

way” without further guidance from the administrator. That such a maximally free process would lead to only four patterns for construction is notable.

Why have I hesitated so long to publish these results? For a number of reasons. First, the data at that time were new, so although I had discovered patterns for how adults construct meaning, I did not have meaningful contexts within which to describe the results – a challenging irony. It has taken me years of presentations to diverse audiences to learn to describe the results in meaningful ways from multiple perspectives. Second, I needed to mature as a scholar and gain experience in the ways of the academic world. Prior to my work here, I was a teacher for learning-disabled adolescents and then a software developer for an operating system at IBM, neither of which is a direct path to novel developmental research. Third, I feared that I would publish the research too soon, without proper preparation, resulting in criticism that could be avoided. Through many years, however, while experiencing these inhibitions, I remembered the 2004 guidance of Howard

Gardner, professor of cognition and education, “Julie, publish your research in a journal with the strongest peer review, and then write your book.”

In the meantime, I served as academic coordinator for ESC’s Center for Distance Learning program in Human Development, lovingly developing/co-developing and teaching about two dozen online courses, work that provided opportunities for students to learn concepts that would make a difference in their human interactions. This helped me keep abreast of relevant scholarship from multiple perspectives. Additionally, I frequently presented or published aspects of my research in many different contexts (about three a year), convincing myself that my data contributed to multiple academic areas: developmental theory, learning and education, information processing, and even narratology. With time, it became clear that I needed to strengthen my focus on my scholarship, and creating a reassignment was a disciplined way to return to my research and meet my long overdue publication goals.

Getting Started

So in 2014, I decided to again take my scholarly work seriously. My initial thought was to have adult learners at ESC as participants. My reassignment topic of my proposal was: “Pilot: Construction of Meaning of ESC Adult Learners.” The topic had enough merit to gain the reassignment time for me. Very soon, however, I discovered that my proposal to engage ESC learners through my independent studies was not workable, and I did not have a practical way to involve other mentors in this project. So, I needed to reframe the project.

Having read professional journals faithfully for more than a decade, I noted recent articles on the importance of replication of research results (e.g., Pashler & Wagenmakers, 2012; Open Science Collaboration, 2012). Seeing the importance of this to my own work, I decided to replicate my study, preparing an alternative IRB (Institutional Review Board) proposal for the 2015-2016 academic year, generating the following title: “Construction of Meaning in Adult Lifespan: Replication of Primary Research with Two Variations.” The two variations upon my original research were:

1. Administration of the protocol(s) by trained administrators other than me.
2. Administration from a physical distance, audio recording the transactions and photographing the visual data.

The first condition of having other administrators was the critical one for publication of my data, because I had been the only administrator of the construction of meaning protocols for my dissertation. I chose to replicate the results of only one of my two protocols: The SymbolSort©.

In writing the IRB proposal for the replication of my research, I reviewed the process I had used as the only investigator and knew by heart. How hard could it be for others to do what I did? Well, many questions arose. What population would be interviewed? How would the protocol be administered? By whom? How would the administrators and the participants be compensated for their time?

My first thought was to investigate the feasibility of using Mechanical Turk (MT) as a vehicle for finding participants. Mechanical Turk, as you may know, is a service through Amazon.com that connects simple tasks that require human responses with humans of the appropriate demographic group(s) who will respond (Mason & Suri, 2012; Baumeister, Vohs, & Funder, 2007). MT works very well for marketing analysis. If your research fits with the process, it is a slick, quick and fairly inexpensive method for gathering data. I investigated breaking my protocol into sequential units that could be handled through a number of MT tasks individually, but my protocol was too complicated. Attending an expert workshop on MT at an Association for Psychological Science conference confirmed that this process, even in its most sophisticated form, could not work for my project (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). If MT had worked, I would have been addressing both parts of my research proposal at once through a repeatable semi-automated online process. Because this did not work, though, I again separated the process into two parts.

1) Administration of the protocol(s) by trained administrators other than me

I had to find administrators. They did not need to be social science researchers, but they did need to be intelligent, willing to learn and excited about the project. So I asked associates who had expressed an interest in this work and who were socially close enough to me that we could create something of a research community. Each of them would find at least 10 participants from their own social and professional groups, and I would pay them \$10 for each interview. This led to a broader distribution of participants than if I, alone, had sought them out. I could be in contact with each administrator and be aware of problems that arose. Fortunately, five professional friends stepped up to help with this project.

2) Administration from a physical distance, audio recording the transactions and photographing the visual data

Administration from a distance required that I determine how administration materials would be shared online, and how research data would be stored safely. An answer to this was to set up a protected file for each administrator in Google Docs to store their digital data. This structure was relatively easy to set up, but time was needed to train some administrators to use this tool.

It was the next problem that caused the most delays in the research, the most glitches and the most tedium in carrying out the project, though: How to administer the protocol at a distance so that the data could be safe. The ESC IRB Committee indicated that communicating online via Skype would not be secure enough, although my data is not harmful in any way. This meant that I had to search for another method to capture audio and visual/photo data. What would work? At this point, I bought a number of inexpensive phones and experimented with which ones would both capture photos of the 10 symbol-events that participants made, and also the audio recordings of their explanations of the results. Once a phone was found that was the best among the choices, one of my techy administrators (my son, the physicist) created a PowerPoint presentation on how to use the phone. It took a number of iterations to get the instructions to be clear enough for all administrators under all circumstances. We found that it is very hard to provide foolproof

instructions for people who are happy to help with research, but are not particularly interested in dealing with a new piece of technology. This phase of the project took more than a month to complete.

When doing the administration by myself, my verbal protocol was sufficient. The shifting of materials during the course of the interviews flowed smoothly. Others without my background in the work, however, needed much more guidance, so I created a step-by-step PowerPoint explaining the materials and providing the sequence of steps: signing the permission slip; reading the book; creating the cards and explaining them; arranging them on a surface; explaining their construction; visually drawing the construction on the SymbolSort© worksheet; and having closure about their results. This step also took more time than I had anticipated, because things that were obvious to me were not obvious to others. For example, many administrators would say “Make a story meaningful to you” rather than “Make an arrangement meaningful to you.” This is a small but very important difference because it influenced the participant toward constructing a story pattern rather than the other arrangements that she might have selected to be personally meaningful (i.e., partition, ranking or form).

The protocol required a number of materials that were assembled in notebooks – one for each administrator: 1) two copies of *Encounter* (a children’s book by Jane Yolen [1992], the source for interpretation for meaning) – one for the administrator and one for the participant; 2) the SymbolSort© administration instructions; 3) blank business cards to use to create the symbol-events; 4) marker pens; 5) plastic sheets for storing worksheets; 6) a glue stick to glue symbol cards onto sheets; 7) phone and phone instructions; and 8) spare blank paper.

Although the administrators had all been participants in the SymbolSort© protocol at a former time, they needed to take the SymbolSort© protocol again, this time thinking of what it means to administer it to another. So during a test phase, they administered the protocol to each other, while trying to get the technology straight

and entering the results in Google Docs. We caught many slips in understanding during this process.

Gathering the Data

Now it was time for the new administrators to find participants for the study. What I discovered at this point was that even with the SymbolSort© protocol complete, and even with the administrative PowerPoint that both the administrator and the participant watched during the instruction, the administrators were nervous. The process was not comfortable for them. What was second nature to me was awkward for them. So, I offered to be present while they administered the SymbolSort© protocol. This led to moving from individual administrations to administering the SymbolSort© to groups. I made another PowerPoint for the administration of the SymbolSort© protocol with groups, which turned out to be beneficial.

From that point forward, most administrations were done in small groups – the largest being the ESC Student Leadership Institute participants, with colleague Patricia Myers as administrator. This was more efficient and moved the research process on, which had been bogged down by months of getting the technology issues sorted out.

Getting Results

The two goals for this research were:

- 1) Establish a procedure for the SymbolSort© usable by other administrators;
- 2) Administer the SymbolSort© at a distance.

1) Establish a procedure for the SymbolSort© usable by other administrators

This first goal was met: The apparent overall result of my replication study was that the SymbolSort© data were replicable: No new patterns for construction of meaning were obtained from this replication sample. The replication results mimicked those obtained with my original study in 2002 with respect to types of patterns exhibited. There were no noticeable variations using the protocol created for this study across five administrators.

Participants in this replication had similar characteristics to those in my original study, leading to my dissertation in 2002. Both

groups are preponderantly Caucasian. A significant difference between the original and replication studies was the number of females in the replication study (46 F, 21M). My original research had 115 participants, females and males in equal number.

There was a mix of personal one-on-one interviews and group interviews. The groups ranged in size from 30 (the Student Leadership Conference) to four, with most groups being 5-6 participants. There is a greater depth of detail with individual interviews, which were audiotaped, but the data on the worksheets is similar whether individual or group administered. Again, this mimicked results from interviews I conducted both during and after my dissertation research.

2) Administer the SymbolSort© at a distance

This second goal was not met as well as the first. Because of the IRB Committee’s privacy requirements for this type of interview at the time of my IRB request, many public devices could not be used, such as Zoom conferencing or Skype. These would have been useful because they capture audio and video from both the administrator and the participant. Instead, we used photo and audio apps on individual cell phones (which were provided to administrators specifically for this research). The phone applications were not easy to use, and getting the data in a transferable format was awkward. One successful aspect of this part of the research, however, was successful: setting up a platform for data collection in Google Docs.

Privacy requirements for the SymbolSort© interview, which has been shown to be a “benign intervention with human subjects,” may soon become less stringent per anticipated changes from the Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (Kass, Faden, & Tunis, 2012) leading to administration at a distance, using public tools such as Zoom. Eventually, I will work to create a computer application for the protocol.

Conclusions

My primary goal for my replication study was to see if results from this research would be similar to those from my dissertation research from 2000–2002. Three people did a blind

analysis. They looked at a mix of SymbolSort© results (with identities hidden) from both the initial study and the replication study, and no results could be identified with one study or the other. Initial observation shows no new patterns; only variations on the four known patterns of sequence, ranking, partition and image, which are already documented.

I learned that the protocol is not as self-evident as I had thought when administered by five very competent adults – even with careful PowerPoint presentations on procedures. The protocol works, but only with considerable training. Administering the SymbolSort© is a skill that has to be understood and practiced frequently in order to be done smoothly and with confidence. I am reminded of the weeklong Myers-Briggs Type Indicator training that I took many years ago to become a certified MBTI administrator (Myers, 1962). The SymbolSort© process needs that level of focus and practice devoted to it in order for administrators to become comfortable.

Altogether, this study was well worth the incredible effort. Much of the effort was exploring options that were not pursuable, such as Mechanical Turk (to see if data could be obtained by breaking SymbolSort© into small pieces of data); and using cell phones to capture, format and transfer interview data to a common storage area. The success of replicating my study, however, made up for this. Additionally, this study established a base for training for the SymbolSort©, which is needed for the further dissemination of this work.

I thank the college for this reassignment opportunity. It enabled me to satisfy a missing requirement for the future publication of my research, the replication of my original procedures. The initial three months of the reassignment were needed to set up the project, and the remainder of the year was needed to complete the interviews. Reassignment time such as this is priceless for scholarly projects.

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"I'm not suggesting that mentoring and theatrical improvisation are the same tasks. But I am suggesting that perhaps the practice of 'Yes, and ...' or 'No, but ...' can help us to listen deeply to our mentees. Instead of trying to find an answer, these phrases can help us and our mentees bring up new ideas, new paths of inquiry. They open us to a multitude of possibilities."

*– Cindy Bates, "Mentoring as Deep Listening"
All About Mentoring, 44
Winter 2013-2014, p. 5*

Transformative Learning: The Value of the Liminal Space in an Adult Community Education Classroom

Adrienne Pickett, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Each year, I teach an art history course to adult students that is sponsored by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and offered at no cost to those who qualify from the local community. (To “qualify,” students have to live at or below the poverty level.) Prior to working with adults, my primary concern when teaching was to pass along correct information to students. Since teaching adult students, I have revised my pedagogical strategies, from concerning myself with the dissemination of information, to delving into the very nature of experiential learning itself. In my revision, I’ve tried to create a meaningful exchange of dialogue, experiences and ideas that might result in the expansion of participants’ perspectives. In other words, I’ve come to value the transformative quality of education.

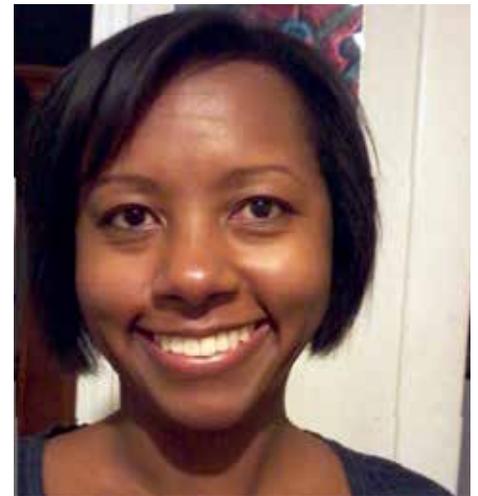
As I began to question the nature of learning and teaching, I asked myself many questions: What does it mean to teach adults, many of whom are far more experienced than I? How can I confidently offer up my own experiences and convey my own subject matter expertise, but still maintain humility in the face of my own students’ rich experiences and expertise? I have learned that my adult students and I need to be brought together through ongoing dialogical exchange and mutual perspective enhancement. It has been through a constructivist and critical approach to learning that this transformative dimension has been most vivid.

To straddle a constructivist and a critical standpoint is to occupy approaches to education that go hand-in-hand intellectually, as well as in practice. My constructivist orientation developed out of my desire to co-construct knowledge with students and to make the subject matter, and ultimately students’ education, meaningful. At the same time, my critical-reflective orientation grew

out of a personal investment in responding to matters of injustice that adults, members of marginalized groups, women and communities of color routinely face. It is my sense that a thoroughly constructivist, critical-reflective orientation produces meaningful dialogue that can result in new understandings, which is what I suggest make up a third space, a liminal space, dedicated to transformation. In essence, as I will describe more fully later, this liminal space is one in which creativity, imagination and the potential for profound change exist. It is in this space where transformative learning can occur.

When I first began teaching adults from the local community four and a half years ago, I received some feedback from students on my teaching a few weeks into the semester that I did not consider to be positive. Essentially, students felt lost and disoriented in my classroom. They wanted less instruction and requested more guidance. They asked for more examples and applications, and fewer interesting though what they perceived as ultimately useless facts. The lack of instructor-led guidance and real-world application led to students’ frustration with the class materials that I had put together. It became clear to me that I needed to change the way I engaged adult students. I needed to talk *with* and not *at* them, and provide activities that would allow them to apply the knowledge they were gaining. I needed to more actively involve my students in their own learning.

True enough, the longer I taught adults, the more I asked myself additional questions about teaching and learning. First, I wondered what aspect of each class stood out to students as most memorable, and why. Second, as an educational philosopher (part of my background), I wondered about the very nature of adult learning and how philosophy can make a contribution to this inquiry. The conclusion I drew, similar to that of adult



Adrienne Pickett

educator Peter Jarvis, was that learning is by nature a transformative activity. Edward Taylor, Patricia Cranton and Associates (2012) posited that transformative learning theory is based on constructivist assumptions that have roots in both the humanist and critical social theory intellectual traditions. This made sense to me. However, other questions regarding the learning encounter remained.

Philip Jackson (2012) observed that there were two dominant strands of educational thought in the late 20th century, split between the “mimetic” and the “transformative” outlooks. These strands are evident in educational practices that map onto particular values and are grounded in philosophical assumptions. Furthermore, such practices are reinforced at the institutional level when cemented in policy, as well as at the pedagogical level when instructors commit to particular forms of teaching that shape educational experiences in the classroom, and that correspond to specific beliefs about education.

In educational practice, the mimetic and transformative outlooks stand in sharp contrast to one another. The mimetic strand of educational thought is grounded in the assumption that knowledge can be transmitted from teacher to students, who can then reproduce it and transmit it to others. Knowledge is taken to be quantifiable, and for this reason, teachers may rely on methods of assessment that assume that knowledge can be judged right or wrong. In contrast, the transformative model begins with the assumption that knowledge is profoundly integrated into a person's life and experiences, the result of which can be a more meaningful learning experience for the student, as the teacher guides him or her through an active learning process. Whereas my teaching used to resemble the mimetic outlook – distant, cold, objective and abstract – I have since worked toward adopting a more transformative outlook. Underlying the transformative model is a commitment to dialogue in which participants strive to reach understanding and create meaning. I learned that such a commitment to dialogue is desirable and especially important in working with adult students in the classroom setting.

And I learned something else that is connected to the philosophy of “hermeneutics.” The term comes from the Greek word “herméneia,” which means an interpretation. Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation in which the interpreter relates the part to the whole in order to ascertain meaning (Gadamer, 2004). The “hermeneutic circle” refers to the circle of interpretation. Whether we seek to understand texts, artworks, history or other people, we are engaged in acts of interpretation, which involve placing my being and individuality in relationship to another's being and individuality. Nowhere did this reality become more apparent than in my work with adult students.

Hermeneutics continues to remind me to maintain perspective on the three parties involved when teaching: the “other,” which is who or what I want to understand; my interpretation of the phenomenon; and myself. I am also reminded that this process is dynamic, and never final or fixed. This is primarily because I am, as the perceiver, not a fixed entity but instead a work in progress

and always evolving, just as the other person involved in the process is also always evolving. With this in mind, I'm also trying to help my students understand that all of our interpretations are never final or fixed, but always fluid. This is the basis of the dialogue I want to foster with my students.

So here is one relatively small thing that I have rethought as a teacher of adults: How can I use the way students introduce themselves as a starting point in such a dialogue? The purpose of introductions is actually two-fold: One is practical, which is that I put a name to a face, and students do the same. That is, after passing around the attendance sheet, I use introductions to match names to faces and make a first attempt at gaining a sense of students' personalities. Second, I use introductions to identify emergent salient qualities about each student, based on what they report about themselves. And as part of these introductions, I've even asked students to name a shape with which they identify. Do they choose a circle or a hexagon? What clues might their choices provide about their inquisitive or creative qualities? Without question, my sense of who my students are, who others think they are, and perhaps even what they value may change and undergo refinement over the course of the semester. At the conclusion of the activity, I take the opportunity to explain the role that personal differences will play as students participate in discussions during class time. My goal is to demonstrate how such differences will affect how they look at and study works of art and sometimes privilege different formal qualities over other ones, and how such differences will affect or inform their interpretations of the works we study. In essence, it's a building block to dialogue.

Here is another example from a unit we do on bell hooks and African-American arts and visual culture. hooks' text, *Art on My Mind*, introduces contemporary artists ranging from Carrie Mae Weems and Lorna Simpson to Jean-Michel Basquiat. As this unit follows modern European art traditions, specifically studies of Gauguin and Picasso, students are already familiar with the concept of the *avant-garde* and primitivism, as well as with the notions of colonization and empire. During this unit, they also acquire new concepts

with which to wrestle, including white supremacy, global capitalism, the art market and Eurocentrism. One important goal I have here is to critically evaluate the intellectual and culturally-rich tradition that Western artists have been handed; another is to engage self-reflexively in traditions of which hooks and other artists of African descent are a part.

In the classroom setting, I view myself as a facilitator who assists students in having transformative learning experiences. Specifically, I create activities that promote dialogue, and encourage reflection and meaning-making, as we hold discussions, do small group work, and write papers. Participating in dialogues and questioning ideas and cultural practices are central to these activities. I begin by posing a question about a reading or an image in order to generate thinking, discussion and more questions. This is why the classroom becomes a space in which the potential for transformation can occur.

In recent years, educational researchers have appropriated the term “liminality” (from the Latin *limen*, meaning boundary or threshold) from cultural anthropology to describe the learning process (Meyer & Land, 2005). Borrowed as a threshold concept to clarify the aspects of transformative learning that are nonlinear, fluid, full of conceptual difficulties and even “stuckness” (Baillie, Bowden, & Meyer, 2013), liminality provides a useful metaphor to illustrate the conceptual transformation that learners undergo as the oscillation between states in which there are two competing ways of seeing a situation – one established as inadequate, and the other as a new, more powerful and comprehensive way of seeing the world (Baillie, Bowden, & Meyer, 2013). Liminality provides one helpful way to better understand and conceptualize the learning process, which is why it has become a threshold concept as it characterizes “in-between” states, while fruitfully relating universal phenomena of ritual and transition to transformative adult learning.

It's within that space that I want to inspire students to see themselves as capable learners and co-constructors of knowledge. I want to offer them opportunities to exercise problem-solving, reflection and critical reasoning skills. I want to find opportunities to coach them during the process, to build upon their own

interpretations, and to encourage us to arrive at different understandings of the text or image as a group, even if it's not fully articulated. This lack of comprehensiveness or complete understanding is also part of the liminal quality of transformation. For example, as I sum up the collection of interpretations that students have voiced, I remind them that they are the authors of the knowledge we have just constructed and the owners of the meanings we have just generated, even as understanding is still "in the works." In the tradition of Paulo Freire (2007), I pose questions, asking students to speculate, assert their ideas, and develop a basis for those ideas and speculations. By doing so, I fulfill one of my other goals as a teacher: to intervene as little as possible, and to play back their thoughts and the ideas they expressed.

Also in the tradition of Freire (2007), I ask students to imagine societal transformation. This is sometimes an emotional and painful activity, as students inevitably discuss the conditions of inequality they routinely endure in their daily lives. They frequently cite incidents from their own lives that have affected their growth and success as people. They also describe the challenges with which they contend in their local communities, from previous negative school experiences most often due to a lack of sufficient resources, to poverty, to violence.

I also ask students about the local resources we might make use of, and how we might organize efforts and shed light on these problems so that more attention can be given to these serious matters. It is clear that institutional racism, widespread poverty, murder, police brutality, high rates of unemployment and mass incarceration are the pressing issues that affect our society, and that disproportionately affect underrepresented communities of color (i.e., African-Americans and Latinos). As the majority of the students in the program come from these backgrounds, it means something to them that we acknowledge these social problems and talk about ways we can make a difference individually, and as members of groups and communities.

As both a constructivist and as someone committed to critical-reflexivity in my own orientation, I have searched for relevant

models in my educational approach. bell hooks, who is constructivist in her approach to education, discusses her love of tradition, but also her willingness to critique it and the very traditions and institutions that perpetuate white supremacist capitalism. Furthermore, although she enjoys making and critiquing art, hooks also analyzes its possibilities. As she engages in the practice of art-making, she also reflects critically on her own practice, and on the practices of other artists, while occupying this third space where transformation occurs. Her example is so important for my students to read and discuss.

As I continue to guide discussions, encourage dialogue and engage in critical, self-reflexivity, I also want to create conditions for transformation. Here again is the third space that I try to occupy in a meaningful way and invite my students to join in, too. This space is mired in uncertainty, as new understandings are always in the process of being generated. Thus, as I engage tradition, I also encourage students' reflection and critique. And, importantly, through dialogue, I welcome resistance when it comes, especially when we critically examine texts and try, together, to ascertain their meanings and significance. Ultimately, we end up promoting a classroom atmosphere that, in our liminal space, fosters greater understanding – of the text, of others and of ourselves. I'd like to think that these practices create conditions for transformative learning to occur.

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"Indigenous mentors begin from a grounded perspective. Preconceived ideas about a mentee are not the norm and may be considered disrespectful. Advice and counsel is individualized, gained through observation, deep listening, and working with the person based on who they are."

– Jeffrey P. Lambe, "So They Will Honor You as a Human Being": Indigenous Knowledge and the Practice of Mentoring"

All About Mentoring, 39

Spring 2011, p. 27

Mentoring From the Frozen North

Anastasia Pratt, Northeast New York Region

Although my SUNY Empire State College office has always been located in Plattsburgh, the northeastern-most corner of the state, my work has been varied. I have stood next to information tables at college and work fairs, meeting potential new students. I have participated in or coordinated in-person and virtual information sessions, met with prospective students one-on-one, and advised on the applicability of a potential student's transcript credits for specific degrees. I have conducted orientation sessions for undergraduate and graduate students. Moreover, I have taught in most of the programs and all of the modes of study offered by the college.

At the center of that work, whether the task at hand is the creation of an individualized study to meet a specific student's particular needs or the development of a residency activity related to the advanced certificates in Public History and Heritage Preservation, is a commitment to helping students achieve academic success. The reality of my geographic location – a very small unit with 1.5 faculty lines and a support staff person and a huge region (more than 7,000 square miles) to cover – is that I need help in order to support my students. And so I have come to rely on colleagues across the college to help me mentor students more effectively.

Last year, as we moved toward a new version of Empire State College, I started to think in a concerted fashion about what it means to mentor students, what it means to be a mentor. I talked with my colleagues, read more articles than I care to count, and generally did all of the things that constitute good scholarship. Yet, when I sat down to write this paper, I found that the best summary of what I learned about mentoring came from a fortune cookie that proclaimed, "Success is a team sport."

Indeed. The promotion of student success requires many people. Through my practice and my research, I have learned that student success is tied integrally to our success as

a team of people – with different job titles and descriptions, with different roles in the college's daily life – concerned with and actively interested in the academic success of our students.

That teamwork does not always seem possible, though, when we're divided by geography, job responsibilities and the whims of technology. In a practical way, though, our ability as educators – for I believe that we are all educators at SUNY Empire State College, regardless of our job title – to overcome those difficulties speaks directly to our ability to help students succeed. For me and for my students, overcoming the barriers to teamwork has made an enormous difference. First, we are part of a community that is larger than three people in an office on SUNY Plattsburgh's campus. More than that, from orientation through educational planning and graduation, students in the Plattsburgh location are truly connected to Empire State College because of this teamwork.

Orientation

One of the things that I most loved about an orientation activity that Josh Martin, the coordinator of student services for the then-Northeast Center, created – beyond the fact that it required students to be active in their quest to learn more about Empire State College and its systems – was that the activity introduced students to the wide range of people available to help them, in offices across the state. No longer was ESC simply the folks in Plattsburgh – it was a vibrant, statewide institution.

Before we started using this activity, orientations at the Plattsburgh location were often one-on-one sessions with a new student. Given the geographic dispersal of our students and their competing schedules, group orientations were rarely feasible. So we met students individually. While those sessions were great, leading naturally into a



Anastasia Pratt

first advising session and often to registration for a first term of study, they reinforced the notion that the mentor and, perhaps, the unit secretary, were the keepers of all of the college's wisdom and answers. Instead of speaking with those who staff the collegewide Student Information Center, people who almost always have better answers than we do, students would call the unit; or, rather than using the resources available at MyESC (www.esc.edu/myesc/) to access resources, students would call our local Plattsburgh number. While we loved the close contact with our students, this reliance on our location for everything was neither practical nor feasible.

Once we started using the activity – designed, at least in part, to help relieve this burden on the Plattsburgh location and to promote student success through an activity with measurable learning outcomes – that reliance on our specific location lessened considerably, allowing us to focus on other aspects of mentoring. Instead of showing a student every portion of MyESC, I was able to begin discussing the student's academic and professional goals, to begin planning a degree; rather than pointing to the academic supports available to a student, I was able to

begin strategizing about when and how to take particular courses in order to meet the student's learning style and registration needs. The students left the orientation with practical information they could access immediately and throughout their time at Empire State College ... and they left with the names of other people, Josh included, who were available to help them on their academic journey.

Educational Planning

Similarly, the process of educational planning – from the initial conceptualization of a degree program to the submission of a portfolio – has been improved enormously by the ability to work with colleagues who are south of the Adirondack mountains. Educational planning and prior learning assessment workshops, created and presented by Northeast professionals and faculty members, offer students scattered in locations across the state additional ways to learn about this fundamental academic process and to put onto paper their academic accomplishments and goals. While educational planning remains, for our students, an individualized study that emphasizes interactions between mentor/advisor and student, these workshops let students know that they are not alone.

The creation of a student cohort, though fleeting, certainly promotes academic success. Through participation in workshops, students can connect with other students. Simple interactions can lead to longer-term partnerships in which student colleagues become part of a student's academic support team.

These workshops also have served to solidify the shared nature of the educational planning and assessment process. I have been very fortunate to work with Joan Johnsen (director of academic review) and Donna Buker (assessment secretary), who are ever available to answer questions, suggest discipline-specific contacts and help me make sense of student transcripts. Through them, I have learned to value educational planning and the assessment of degree programs as a means of helping students to articulate and achieve their academic goals. Shared educational planning activities, a culture of consultation with content-area experts during the planning of degrees, and a basic respect for each student's

learning experiences are among the tools that transcend physical location and let us work together to promote our students' success.

Academic Support

Academic supports are similarly available to our Plattsburgh students and to me, as a mentor. Thanks to the wide array of resources, including the Smarthinking online tutoring service (www.esc.edu/smarthinking) and the Online Library's Subject Guides (<http://subjectguides.esc.edu/>) – not to mention the directors of academic support (DAS), peer tutors, learning coaches, educational technologists and instructional designers – we are connected to the supports we need to create and excel within the varied learning environments of Empire State College.

Lisa D'Adamo-Weinstein, who was the DAS for the Northeast New York Region and is now the dean of academic and instructional services, developed a robust offering of supports that included workshops (available in-person, at a distance and via recording), individual tutoring sessions (available in-person and at a distance), and help from learning coaches and peer tutors. These academic supports, now under the auspices of DAS Dan McCrea, have been further enhanced, for me and for students in Plattsburgh, by other members of the academic support team across the state; Seana Logsdon and Sue Orrell often share resources with

me and with my students, making the lived academic reality of the Plattsburgh location richer and more vibrant.

Similarly, the Office of Collegewide Disability Services team and the Office of Veteran and Military Education work to ensure that local students are served in the most effective way possible. At times, as in the case of one student who was struggling in very specific ways, that meant a face-to-face meeting in Plattsburgh with Kelly Hermann, Andrea Piazza-Victor, Josh Martin and me; at other times, it means a voice at the other end of the phone saying, "How can I help?"

Those connections are essential. Without them, the job of mentoring in a remote location – the nearest college office to Plattsburgh is 106 miles away – can be isolated and isolating and, more importantly, can fail to serve students in the way they deserve to be served. I value these connections, along with the connections to faculty members teaching across the state who adapt to various modes of study to support an individual student's needs, and who offer advice when I am faced with mentoring a student in an area with which I am less familiar. I value them because they help me to serve my students. I value them because they are, truly, mentoring in action.

"What I gain by placing mentoring as the nucleus of my teaching, advising and working with students is the ability to de-center or make space by attempting to create a site that reflects our society, a place that is welcoming, nurturing and fosters successful learners. This is, a setting that I longed for when coming of age in the midst of the Civil Rights struggle."

*– Juanita Johnson-Bailey (The University of Georgia)
"Mentoring as a Means to De-Centering the Academy"*

All About Mentoring, 43

Summer 2013, p. 74

Found Things

From the Editors – Preparing for the 21st Century: Empire State College Style

All About Mentoring, Issue 10, March 1997

Xenia Coulter, Ithaca and International Programs; Chris Rounds, Central New York Region

Those of us who are history buffs know that something weird happens, at least in Western societies, as each century moves toward its close. Millennial movements spring up, seers of every stripe crank out predictions that tend toward the apocalyptic, and as civilizations become increasingly organized and bureaucratized, the future of institutions becomes a primary focus of concern. Thus, we are subjected to dissertations on the end of welfare “as we know it,” the collapse of social security, the transformation of the world economy ... all familiar stuff. If you can achieve a certain detachment, these treatises do have great entertainment value, and sometimes even contain a grain of truth. But in most cases their shelf life is limited as societies and organizations fall back on the familiar pattern of muddling through in lieu of being transformed.

At Empire State College, we seem, at least to date, to have resisted the centenary transformative urge. In its place, we have two conversations afoot which hold the promise of a reasoned evolutionary approach to institutional change. These conversations occur under the banners of “one college” and “distance learning.” In our darker moments we may feel that either of these themes could lead to wrack and ruin, of course. ... But if we assume a thoughtful, community-wide discussion of each theme, anchored in a recognition of what we already do well, then each has the potential to contribute to a “second act” at Empire State College where students remain the focus of our concerns, where mentors continue to exercise some control over the quality of their work lives, and where abundant learning resources and multiple learning modes are available to every student.

One College

All of us recognize that barriers to the sharing of learning resources across the college ought to be eliminated. Each of us would like to be able to call on the expertise of colleagues without regard to their regional center affiliation. And nobody would argue that the regional boundaries that have evolved and solidified over the past quarter century deserve our undying fealty. And while we’re hacking away at bureaucratic undergrowth that impedes student progress, we might also want to reconsider a budgeting process that seems to pit centers against one another, that rewards the currently strong and punishes the occasionally weak ... and that seems to see line reallocation as the appropriate response to all news, whether good or bad.

As we move toward “one college,” we also want to keep in mind that local autonomy, the recognition and celebration of differences, the ability to respond quickly to complex local realities are the hallmarks of success within the college. The question then becomes, how do we become more efficient and more fully integrated while preserving the integrity, creativity and willingness to take risks that characterize our most successful units? How do we become “one college” from the perspective of the student while preserving the local responsibility, autonomy and control that must surely characterize the “slimmed down” Empire State College of the future? These are not new issues, and we do not need to discover the answers from scratch. Organizational theorists know how to analyze institutional purposes to determine which are best carried out centrally and which locally. We need to make sure that this knowledge is used in resolving these thorny but important issues.

Distance Learning

If we can escape equating distance learning with high technology, and if we concede that all independent learners are, in essence, distance learners, then the promise of distance learning may become more apparent to those of us committed to mentoring. Even if we stipulate that there are some students who will only survive in a “face to face” environment, it remains true that others, and perhaps more students in the future, will thrive in a distance learning environment. Most students would likely rely on some combination of study options, as they do now. Surely, it is true that the combination of distance learning and mentoring holds a great deal of promise and must be explored.

Once we agree that distance learning does indeed have a future at Empire State College, many vital questions remain. How ought we to perceive of the role of technology in course delivery? How do we decide whether to develop courses ourselves or “buy” them? How do we balance the appeal of economy and the urge to respond to the particular needs of individual students?

If a quarter century’s mentoring experience is any guide, our goal in pursuing distance learning ought to be to increase the richness and diversity of learning resources available to our students. Distance learning, in the form of a CDL course, a SUNY Learning Network course, a distance tutorial or a cross registration with the University of Wisconsin Extension, ought to enrich the array of learning options available to every student at every center and unit. The availability of these options ought to ease the planning process for mentors and facilitate our ability to respond to the needs

of students whose physical or geographic circumstances have imposed limits on their ability to study in more familiar ways.

Mentoring

The key to Empire State College's future lies neither in an administrative reorganization nor in a technological fix. It lies in the preservation, articulation and celebration of what makes us unique and what has assured

the success of our students: mentoring. Mentors ... the real people students meet and talk to at centers and units, the staff of the college who treat them like whole people, share their stories and visions, and guide them through the intricacies of enrollment, educational planning and assessment, these are the vital resources that concepts like "one college" and "distance learning" may help to liberate and empower. If the move toward "one college" enables a mentor and student to

work more smoothly across institutional and geographic boundaries, it will serve us well. If a focus on distance learning results in a wider array of learning resources being realistically accessible to many students in many locations, it will serve us well. The Empire State College of the 21st century will thrive if we have the wisdom to distinguish between the tools and the trade, between methods of communication and the process of learning, between novelty and innovation.

"As both mentor and adult learner, I have observed that many students feel chronically and/or acutely stupid. I have come to believe that one of the mentor's most important roles is to assist in the student's struggle to undo 'feeling stupid' and thereby reclaim her intelligence. For many students, the 'reclamation of intelligence' is a crucial subtext to virtually every learning activity. Mentors can provide direct assistance in this process by helping students demystify, redefine and enlarge their concept of intelligence ([Elizabeth] Minnich, [Howard] Gardner); by helping them obtain college credit for life experience; by facilitating the design and execution of self-directed learning activities, learning contracts and degree programs ([Malcolm] Knowles); and by assisting in what Jack Mezirow calls 'perspective transformation' – in this case, recognizing the extent to which 'feeling stupid' helps to maintain oppressive control in families, schools and political institutions. The mentor helps the student move from embeddedness in 'feeling stupid' to a relationship with it as a personal, social and political phenomenon. This process may support the learner in her own-and others'-liberation."

*– Mayra Bloom, "Mentoring as Care/Roles of the Mentor"
All About Mentoring, 5
January 1995, p. 7*

50+ for 50: Reflections on Mentoring, Part II

Colleagues From Inside and Outside SUNY Empire State College

Continued from page 37.

Susan McConaughy, mentor, Hartsdale

Redemption Center

We are meeting today to begin degree planning.
Sitting side by side
we turn the pages on dreams deferred
roads not taken
balls dropped
hopes distilled but set aside.

Piecing the parts together
a person emerges.
She wanted something then
and she wants something now.
We both like her.

I think I can do better for her
this time.
In my dream
redemption.

Sarah Hertz, mentor, Center for Distance Learning

The Evolution of a Mentor: Two Analogies

Since my start at ESC, I have developed and refined my mentoring philosophy. I strive to provide students with the autonomy to shape their degree plans while serving as a source of support and guidance to provide direction, when needed. I feel that a student who invests the effort to design his or her own degree plan will take justifiable pride in his/her education and the resulting degree, and gain confidence as he or she begins higher-level education. The same cannot be said for a student who was merely instructed to sign up for a specific list of courses without taking ownership of his or her educational path. I like to think of the latter case by way of a GPS paradigm: the device will get you to your destination, but once you arrive, you are unsure of how you got there.

Another way that I like to think about the mentoring experience is by way of comparing it to learning a foreign language. Just as students need to familiarize themselves with the nontraditional mode of degree planning offered at ESC, so too, new mentors need to acclimate themselves to the novel ESC approach. With time and continued practice in the mentoring role, the mentor becomes fluent in the terminology and acronyms that abound. Moreover, nuances and minutiae, such as discerning an unbalanced degree plan and formulating pointed questions toward a new mentee, become more readily apparent to the well-trained eye.

I look forward to developing into an even better mentor in the newly reorganized college.

Deborah Wood Holton, associate professor and faculty mentor; and Akilah Martin, senior director of mentoring and student supports, DePaul University, School for New Learning

Dismantling Injustice

All learners need nurturance, direction and encouragement from trusted mentors to forge their dreams of achievement into reality. And yet, we live in a society in which intolerance toward and discrimination against protected classes is blatant and subtle. Many successful African-American adult learners today, for example, despite their skills, talents and abilities, still experience the legacy of slavery that banned their ancestors' access to education centuries ago. Additionally, generational communication styles may run counter to privileged norms.

Mentors who cultivate an authentic understanding of a student's life path will encourage a partnership that values agility and flexibility while balancing risks with expectations. Doing so involves strengthening one's mentoring practice with intention, empathy and compassion. When mentors

make transparent their respect for diverse cultural traditions, they mirror those qualities to their learners.

Akilah Martin puts it this way:

To shift the power of agency through motivation and self-awareness in the mentoring partnership, I have coined the term "mentor transmission." When "mentors" infuse their practice with "transmission," they empower their students to develop self-direction and a sustained commitment to their academic journey.

**MOTIVATE
EXPECTATIONS
ALONGSIDE
TRANSMISSION
OPEN DOORS
YOURSELF"**

Adopting a mentoring stance that values multiple ways of knowing and learning, empowering all learners to open themselves to possibilities for growth and self-awareness, can begin to dismantle the hurdles of intolerance and discrimination without lowering the bar in pursuit of their personal best.

Akilah Martin, senior director of mentoring and student supports, DePaul University, School for New Learning

Mentoring has so many meanings that no one definition/explanation/label/identifier can encompass the relationship that naturally develops. Mentoring is of critical importance in the African-American community. The crucial need for collective mentoring of young adults can foster positivity and create transformative leaders. Assisting them in building a network that will support and provide encouragement as they move through their academic journeys is central to maintaining and sustaining their authentic selves.

Mentoring is...
Giving a fair chance
Lighting a fire

Promoting mission-building
 Igniting a new leader
 Encouraging transformation
 Motivating the soul
 Bringing light where darkness has persisted
 Fostering a role that transcends
 Invoking a person to move through
 challenging moments
 Building trust among a network of rising stars
 Inspiring ascension
 Injecting positive energy that flows within and
 transcends outward
 Creating an image of their future self
 Challenging imagined fears
 Advocating
 Spotlighting
 Awarding
 Rewarding. ...

Mary I. Kazmierczak, mentor, Center for Distance Learning

My friend and colleague, John McCann, suggested that I might want to teach for ESC. That was in 1994 and I've been an adjunct instructor (Community and Human Services) for the college since that time, with the exception of a short break when caring for my mom. Sometime later, John suggested I mentor. I'm guessing John thought I would be a good fit because, like many of our students, I experienced the challenges of working, caring for a family and pursuing a degree (in my case, an M.S.). I've been mentoring for some time now; there are days when I feel that I've hit my stride and know that I've had a positive impact, and days when I struggle to find the motivation a student needs. Here's an example of finding the motivation:

A young woman mentee began studying for a degree in BM&E inspired by the 2008 election of President Obama. She's faced a number of obstacles and challenges, yet with support, guidance, and determination found a way to meet and overcome each. She only just completed degree planning and has one course remaining. She hopes now to finish by the time President Obama leaves office.

Mentorship for this student, whose determination and perseverance serve her well, included finding the "right" motivation; in this case, it was some cheerleading to get her to the finish line.

Mentoring requires humility, a good sense of humor, a recognition that students have much to teach us, willingness to keep learning, and an interest in empowering folks to reach goals they've set for themselves.

Mentoring is complicated. My mentoring is about encouraging the use of critical thinking skills, supporting problem-solving and decision-making, and encouraging self-awareness and self-reflection. It involves modeling attitudes, values and behaviors, coaching scholarly practices (communication skills, study techniques, etc.), guiding, empowering students to reflect on progress toward goals, and challenging them to consider the change(s) they might make to improve progress/reach goals.

Lastly, mentoring requires mentoring. I have a terrific mentor, yes, John McCann. His mentoring is centered, and driven by my needs. It's easy to reach out to him because I trust his expertise and he's neither bossy nor judgmental. He's honest and direct with feedback, supportive and strengths-based. Thanks to John, my skills are stronger, my information base enlarged, and my perspective expanded.

Mentoring is hard, but ever so rewarding.

Miriam Tatzel, professor emerita, Nanuet

In the Company of Mentors

All About Mentoring was launched in 1993 as part of the newly-formed Mentoring Institute, co-founded by Lee Herman and me. With its motto "Mentors for Mentors," we saw the purpose of the MI as mentors helping one another with our self-defined needs. *All About Mentoring* was also all about mentors, and we solicited creative work, reflections, whatever, a tradition that has come to fruition under the editorship of Alan Mandell.

Lee and I visited centers around the state and put together workshops based on topics originated by that center. Many topics revolved around interpersonal skills with students, how to engage students, how to deal with problems. I continued the visits with the next co-chair, Jay Gilbert. (In those days, it wasn't unusual

for center meetings to take place at a mentor's home, and one January, we enjoyed what must be an upstate delicacy, Barbecue in the Snow.)

What was personally rewarding for me was that I got to know more of my colleagues. Along with the Mentoring Institute, I cite my service on APC [Academic Personnel Committee] and CPC [Center Personnel Committee] as personally enriching because of what I learned about the individuals – some of whom I never met – such as their creativity and personhood. It mattered to me that I was helping people with their careers and their growth. And the countless meetings I sat in over the years were occasions for a kind of people-watching, as I enjoyed seeing and listening to how we express ourselves. The pleasure of our company.

Julie Shaw, mentor, Center for Distance Learning

I have had wonderful mentoring through the years. I did not have a conscious and articulate way to describe my appreciation for those experiences, however, until I became a mentor at SUNY Empire State College. Mentoring is essential for all levels of education, but the articulation of its meaning is particularly useful for adult learners who can then more greatly appreciate its value in the present; who can more appreciate prior mentoring that impacted past decisions; and who can more appreciate the mentoring role they play for their families and for those they serve in professional capacities. Mentoring provides the opportunity for us to center on our best selves and to take the most effective path (whether straight or circuitous) toward life-fulfilling goals.

Our college is, indeed, "all about mentoring," and through the rich and deep and consistent focus on its essential role in education, I am becoming more "all about mentoring" myself. Mentoring is self-reinforcing. As I become a better mentor, I learn more from my "mentees." It was Chris Rounds who "mentored" me to apply at SUNY Empire State College. Thank you, Chris!

Kim Hewitt, mentor, Manhattan

Skilled mentoring begins with seeing the student in front of me as clearly as possible. Where has this person been in his life? How does she see herself? How does she see her strengths and weaknesses? What are his goals?

Skilled mentoring listens patiently to hear what a student is actually saying, and facilitates the student's process of developing clarity about himself and his goals and how to achieve them. Good mentoring provides information when necessary, in the amount necessary, at the right time, and directs a student toward resources. Good mentoring provides nudges toward a different direction when necessary, and is able to gently point out pitfalls, flaws in logic, gaps in a student's plan, or unrealistic plans or expectations.

A good mentor knows when to be quiet and let the student figure things out, and when to pipe up and offer advice or encouragement. Above all, a good mentor serves as a witness to the student's growth and has faith that each student has some unique potential. A skilled mentor knows she cannot give growth to a student, or force a student to grow before he is ready. Skilled mentoring helps students find their own strengths and become self-sufficient.

Lois J. Zachary, Center for Mentoring Excellence, Leadership Development Services

Our individual and institutional knowledge about mentoring has developed, deepened and expanded since publication of *All About Mentoring* first began. Our community of practice has grown exponentially and mentoring has found its rightful and comfortable place in learning and development. Fifty issues later, we would all agree there is more to know and share – we still don't know (and may never know) all about mentoring. Old questions remain and new ones emerge. Our collective conversation and journey of understanding must continue as we work at learning all we can about mentoring. I am eagerly looking forward to the next 50 issues as *All About Mentoring* continues to contribute to the field and raise the bar on our collective mentoring consciousness by raising probing questions for each of us to ponder.

Tom Rocco, former dean, Niagara Frontier Region

Mentoring: A Brief Memoir

All About Mentoring has kept the art of mentoring in my mind since my retirement. Even before starting as dean at [what was then] the Niagara Frontier Center, I knew that mentors were essential to learning; the fostering of an individual student's competence and the assessment of learning by expert faculty members is what higher education meant to me. I wanted to be part of a community of scholars dedicated to fostering the growth of students through mentoring. The college made it possible for me to realize that dream.

I had a lot of learning to do myself, and veteran mentors helped me understand their role in the college. I adjusted my thinking and feeling to the realities of managing a center and then a region, populated by experienced and some novice mentors. Not everyone agreed about how to mentor or how to assess students' learning, but there was a generally accepted culture of mentoring and I learned to adapt myself to become a member of this community.

And then, there were more revelations to be experienced. After a long time as dean, I spent three months at our evolving program in Cyprus as the only resident mentor. I still had a lot to learn. I remember not so much of my own first day on Cyprus, but the first residency sessions that Ken Abrams, then dean for International Programs, had organized in one big room at Frederick Polytechnic University. All at once, here was ESC in foreign – even strange – territory, with eager students who had never experienced individualized education at any level. And, of course, there were mentors from the college in every corner of the room helping students with degree program planning, coursework, evaluation, assessment of prior learning. I was enlightened about the genius of mentoring at the core of higher education and about the adaptability of our model of mentoring that had seemed to become fixed in place in the units and centers around New York state. There was none of the quiet privacy that seemed to be essential, and yet it worked.

A couple of years later, Victor Montana and I started a new unit located between Buffalo and Rochester. Things happened: Victor left to become a president elsewhere, the college “re-engineered” the centers and I became regional dean. The Batavia Unit actually started around 1993 and students had to be mentored. We came up with the clumsy title “Primary Mentor with CDL Model Unit.” Instead of the seeming conflict between CDL and the primary mentoring model, these could be wedded pretty easily. I remember doing a conference paper with mentor Anne Cobb, “Individualized Mentoring and Distance Learning: An Experiment that Works.” This was followed a couple of years later by a proposal that Dean Chip Johnstone, CDL Director Dan Granger and I composed on that “blended” model that could make the college even more productive as mentoring continued to evolve.

A few years later, I left to try to help other institutions, and what the college taught me about mentoring influenced the culture of some of them. I was very pleased when recently I saw a Facebook posting by a faculty colleague of mine in Athens, Greece announcing that each student immediately after enrollment is assigned an individual mentor.

Thanks to Alan Mandell and the college for keeping *All About Mentoring* going for all this time, and thanks to the ESC family for maintaining a culture of care for students fostered by mentors, that has the evolutionary strength to thrive in many environments.

Wendy Chabon, mentor, Newburgh

Mentoring is the unique relationship that forms between a mentor and her student. As much learning (or more) occurs for the mentor when she is truly engaged. I cherish this part of my job the most; it defines our college and should be respected as we evolve.

Tom Kerr, enrollment specialist, The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies

The Question

At the end of a day in practice, in contemplation and retrospection, there's reason to ask:

“The question is how many questions need to be answered in order to ask the question you want to answer?” (Bob Carey)

I have asked this of student learners, others and myself. Maybe you have, too?

“What does it mean to think forward into a future? To dream? To reach beyond? Few even dare to ponder what is to come.” (Maxine Greene)

Too contemplative?

“What does it mean that I am stuck, that I seem stuck, with memories of the future? Can I even imagine them? What would it be like to imagine the future past? But even if I did I would not *remember* the future, I would imagine, fancy it.” (Kurt H. Wolff)

Stuck between notes in a musical world, life’s “Wicked Gravity” (Jim Carroll) and a “Personality Crisis” (New York Dolls), do persistent students really ask such questions?

“Show me the meaning of the word / ‘Cause I’ve heard so much about it / I don’t want to live without it.” (The Pretenders, “Show Me”)

And there *we* are.

Concerned: “The most, the best, we can do, we believe (wanting to give evidence of love), is to get out of the way, leave space around whomever or whatever it is. But there is no space!” (John Cage, from *Diary: How to Improve the World [You Will Only Make Matters Worse]*)

Without love in our learning, does gravity and crisis remain permanent?

Cathy Davison, mentor, Latham

Thirteen years ago tomorrow [September 1, 2016], I became the recipient of what I now realize is a unique gift: the opportunity to engage adult students in the question, “What do you want to learn, and why is it meaningful for you?” For this gift I am forever grateful. It has transformed me in ways that I could not have imagined at the time.

It took me about two years to transition from a “traditional college” mindset at a medical school, one in which students are told what they need to know, and one in which my expertise in helping students answer that question was viewed as quite limited. What

I found here at Empire State College was a place where my previous perspective was now diametrically different; a place where instead of being *told*, students are *asked* what they need to know, and instead of my expertise being defined as *narrow*, it was now *broad*.

I have had the privilege of working with many outstanding and inspiring students over the past 13 years. My greatest gift from them has been their expressions of gratitude. I received one a few months ago from a student who said, “My goal is to ... become the sort of wonderfully generous individual like you. Without the investment you made in me, I wouldn’t have achieved what I did. ... I truly believe that Empire State College and you were part of my fate. I was weeks away from attending [another institution], but I couldn’t shake the feeling that it wasn’t right. I literally tossed away almost \$15,000 in scholarships before I even attended the orientation session at ESC. The day I met you, I remember thinking you wouldn’t work for me as a mentor because you weren’t (in my area of study). Thank goodness fate doesn’t listen to me! You have turned out to be not only a mentor, but a terrific friend as well. ... Know that I intend to pay it forward, and know that you have made my life incredibly richer by your presence.”

As we reorganize at ESC, I hope that the opportunity to *ask* students rather than *tell* them, and to practice mentoring with an expansive approach rather than a reductionist one, will be not only preserved, but nurtured. These things will enable students and mentors alike to reap benefits that cannot always be quantified, but are rich and rewarding beyond measure. I hope that I will still recognize mentoring – the gift I received when I joined ESC 13 years ago – far into the future of the college.

Anne Bertholf, former associate dean and dean, Niagara Frontier Region

My relationship with Empire State College began when I was hired as a quarter-time tutor/mentor in English. One of my first students provided the best introduction to the joys of working with committed adults that I could have imagined.

He was a mid-level administrator at the local Ford assembly plant, targeted for promotion into a position that would require confident writing skills. I suggested a paper clearly describing a process entirely familiar to him. He chose to write about planting, growing and harvesting cotton: son of a Mississippi sharecropper, he knew those procedures quite well.

His paper convincingly supported his claim of familiarity with cotton production, but it was not an orderly description of the process. The sequence of steps was confusing enough to prompt the reader to do lots of rereading and backtracking: details were all there, but not in clear sequence.

We talked our way through the process step by step, and I asked him to rewrite. His revised version was an astonishing improvement, a clear step-by-step description. In my “traditional academia” career, I’d met with many students, talked through many confusing early efforts, and asked for many revisions, but I had never worked with a student who made such remarkable improvement so quickly. When I said that to him, he was surprised and a bit impatient: “You TOLD me what to do,” he said. But I had told so many students “what to do,” and had never witnessed such prompt improvement!

He completed the contract in the way that he had begun, with focused diligence. Unfortunately, I did not learn whether he received his promotion, but I thought of him many times as I worked with our students, always grateful for the very useful introduction to working with adult learners that he provided.

Donna Gaines, mentor, Old Westbury

After three years, mentoring remains an open-ended relational, deeply moving, even thrilling process where I get to engage with the whole person. We enter into a social contract of mutual respect and collaborative co-creation that can integrate everything the student brings to the mentoring table – lived experience, prior learning, goals and aspirations – with everything we bring to it as advisors. My students keep it fresh, situated at the frontier of community service,

working in autism, addiction, prison reform, chaplaincy, family advocacy, they expand my knowledge of the social world. I hold the lantern as the adult learner navigates the cave of new knowledge and self-discovery. The adult learner initiates the dialogue with the application essay, or in the first conversation about the learning contract – articulating experience, strength and hope, skill sets, wisdom and prior learning. I like to call this organic mentoring.

Mindy Kronenberg, mentor, Hauppauge

As I continue mentoring through the years, I sometimes feel like I'm part of the M.C. Escher drawing of two hands, each creating the other, my students and I embracing the energy of self-discovery, unhindered expression, and the ongoing process toward mutual completion.

Peter Kountz, curate, The Church of the Holy Trinity (Philadelphia) (former ESC tutor)

I have been a teacher all my professional life – 50-plus years – but it was not until the last decade or two that I began to understand (1) what it means to be a mentor and (2) that teaching and mentoring, while not the same thing, must complement each other and be present in every teaching encounter. It seems so obvious now, this synergy, but it is something even the most enlightened teachers forget, miss or lose track of.

What made the difference for me? How did I finally get it? Without question, it was receiving and reading *All About Mentoring*. There was nothing like it in my teaching life and without the regularity of its presence, issue after issue – hooray for 50 – I might never have come to know, experience, and put to use this profound connection. *All About Mentoring* has been and continues to be my companion and I am forever grateful for such a gift.

Menoukha Case, mentor, Center for Distance Learning

I am a third-generation ESC mentee/mentor. That is, I recently found out that my mentor, Catana Tully [now retired from the college], is an ESC graduate. So, I'd like to honor her.

It was 1996; I was a 47-year-old divorcee on unemployment wandering between a satellite ESC office at Columbia Greene Community College and the Northeast Center's hallowed halls in a shopping mall, visiting one office after another, trying to explain what it is I wanted to understand, learn and do. Each person referred me to someone else; eventually that someone was Catana. I had been talking to her for a few minutes when she said, "Excuse me," and picked up the phone. "I'll take this one," she said to someone, and just like that, she was my mentor.

The quality of her listening was such that she perceived integration and direction in a life that had seemed inchoate to family and friends. She conveyed the perfection of my path to me in such a way that it felt like I had always known what my life was about. It felt like it was I, myself, who teased out 32 credits for my prior learning and chose the remaining seven studies that tied everything I had done, and everywhere I wanted to go, together as a degree plan.

Along with this miracle, Catana offered salty advice about graduate school that I followed; it worked like a charm. Two master's degrees and one Ph.D. later, she is still my muse as I strive to do for students what she did for me.

Renee O'Brien, adjunct instructor/mentor, Center for Distance Learning

A mentor, an advisor, a life-changer are words that describe my years working with students at the Center for Distance Learning. It's an odd encounter through phone and email, and now new communication channels ... but not in person. Oh how I miss those mentor-mentee gatherings at graduation!

So where do we fit in a student's educational journey?

Folders arrive, a welcome letter is sent, and a first phone call begins the quest for a college degree. We talk about Empire's program, problems and pleasantries of distance learning, student goals and aspirations. College, like much of our world of organizations, can be a confusing venture, so when I explain my role as "first line of defense," you can feel their relief that this might work!

Adult students needing a degree for career advancement. High school graduates unsure of a direction. Community college grads determined to keep rollin' along. Returning adults sidetracked by family, illness and stuff. Successful professionals in the arts wanting to rewire their brains. And we hear so many other stories.

Throughout their educational studies, our phone calls and emails continue and I listen, suggest, give soft direction, and I'm there to recharge their batteries. With this model, as mentors, we can't help but grow a little too! Their stories become ours, and when they finish their degrees, we share their pride and sense of fulfillment, and best of all; we each marvel at how much they have learned.

Leslie Ellis, director of academic review, Hudson Valley Region

Way back in the 1980s, I lived down the street from Empire State College and I decided to stop in get some information. I lived next door to Ken Abrams [former dean of International Programs] at the time and was intrigued by the college. I taught at Skidmore College, so I only had experience teaching traditional-aged students in traditional classroom settings. I loved what I learned about the college and decided to apply for a part-time BM&E [Business, Management and Economics] position. I happily got the job and began my career working in the Glens Falls unit with Al Serling and Ernie Paola. Al had done much work in assessment and he taught me all about what I thought was a most terrifying study, Degree Program Planning. My first degree program planning student was a nurse who brought in a variety of credits and learning experiences. I was so worried that I would not be able to help her. I told her that I was new and that we would figure this out together. Al was both very patient and a wonderful mentor, and he discussed the intricacies of

putting together a degree program with me. My student was such an interesting woman and I was able to help her develop the degree program she wanted. This first experience did not lessen my fear of degree program planning, but it did make me want to work with students as they developed their plans. I was hooked. To me, each degree program is both a story and a puzzle. I still love working with them, and with the students who bring me their stories.

Linda Biuso, adjunct instructor, Center for Distance Learning

Dear Student

Breathe.

Inspire.

I promise you.

You will learn
this new language
called Biology.

By mid-semester,
these intricate terms
will roll off your
tongue with ease.
You will impress
friends and family
at holiday parties –

As you explain
the importance
of blood typing
for transfusions.
You will inspire them
to learn more.

I promise.

It's our team effort
toward a successful outcome
in this rigorous course.
I am amazed
how you deftly balance
the efferent acts
of your demanding life!

You are not deterred
from the path to
all you aspire.
You are the role model.

Don't you know?

You inspire me
to be more like you.

Karin FitzGerald, mentor, Center for Distance Learning

I have been a part of Empire State College and the Center for Distance Learning as an adjunct and faculty mentor since 2009. While most of my previous experience with teaching and mentoring was with school-aged children, I've come to embrace my work with adult students.

When asking myself what it is to be a mentor, I found myself reflecting on all the mentoring I had been given along the way, by my employers, professors and colleagues that I had known and with whom I had worked throughout my educational and professional journey. I was excited and ready for my turn to be the mentor and guide students through their educational journey.

The key to mentoring is asking the right questions to gain a sense of the student and make them think about where they are academically and professionally, and where they want to be when they complete their degree. The culmination of this information along with the student's motivation, prior experience and knowledge about the online learning environment all play a role in how I assist them in the successful completion of their online degree.

Being a part of these adult learners' success in completing their associate and/or bachelor's degrees is the most rewarding aspects of being a mentor.

Patrice Torcivia, adjunct instructor, School for Graduate Studies

When putting a puzzle together, most people use the image on the box as a guide to what the completed puzzle should look like. They then sort the puzzle pieces into two piles: the edges and the inside pieces. The next step is finding a solid foundation to build the puzzle on. The frame guides how the inside pieces should fit. The frame is what shapes the puzzle and holds the pieces together, just like a support system holds the pieces of our lives together. During their pre-college and college years, the women in a study [I carried out] perceived having little support or guidance. A lack of someone being there to guide them or support them echoed throughout their stories.

I heard from these women such an incredible disappointment in the adults around them. They were screaming out for help as they were drowning, but nobody heard them. The people who were supposed to be their lifeguards – teachers, guidance counselors and parents – either didn't hear their cries for help or didn't care enough to respond.

These women arrived at ESC hoping to solve the puzzle of their lives and figure out how the pieces fit together. The table on which they had been building their puzzle had been knocked over, leaving the pieces scattered and the picture distorted beyond recognition. They desperately needed guidance as to how to put them together again. Their mentor was their solid foundation and enabled them to see how the pieces fit together and finally complete the puzzle.

Kevin L. Woo, mentor, Manhattan

Since joining Empire State College in July 2010, I have participated in a number of conversations that surrounded the idea of "mentoring." In a broad sense, every discussion centered on very simple question: "What is mentoring?" Consequently, and philosophically, this was a complex task. As these conversations continued to search for potential options that were suitable for answering this amorphous question, it became also abundantly clear that there really is no single answer, and perhaps, there is no answer that seems more appropriate or superior than another ideology in mentoring. In the essence of equality, it seems likely that every mentor, whether they are colleagues at ESC or another institution, sought their own version of mentoring.

For me, mentoring has also been synonymous with a single word: evolution. As all mentors move forward into the future of education, we cannot assume that all past approaches and personal philosophies (whether in pedagogy or advising) will necessarily be adaptable for the students who we work with. There is such great diversity in the academic intentions, personalities and histories of our students that mentoring must find a way to adapt to our evolving populations. If we neglect to recognize these differences and select for models that may be more useful to individual students, then the idea of mentoring fails to support those who we intended to serve. Thus,

it is impossible to capture a single descriptive nomenclature for mentoring. Instead, it simply must change over time.

Kymn Rutigliano, mentor, Center for Distance Learning

To Those I Teach and Mentor: What I Know for Sure About You

What do I know about you?

Though I may not yet know your story, your dreams and aspirations, there is much I know about you.

I know you care deeply about your future, your family and the responsibilities you aspire to fulfill.

You are hungry to learn. You want more than credentials – you want to think, discover, become more of who you really are.

Something deep within you is nudging you onward, saying, “Grow!” and you are listening.

You want to serve. You want to leave your mark upon the world, not just for yourself but for the betterment of others.

I know that fear crops up. It does for me, too. You may wonder if you are good enough, smart enough. Like me, you may be dealing with deeper shadows. Life hasn't always been fair. If you're on the verge of listening to negativity, reach out. You never have to go it alone – that's a promise.

You make a difference in ways you don't even realize. I'm sure those who love you can't get enough of you.

You are worthy of your dreams coming true, and being celebrated with those who love and support you.

No matter where you are in your journey, keep your goals in sight. I see them with you. I am here, cheering you on.

What do I know about you? You are blessed. And I am blessed being your mentor.

With gratitude.

Lucy Winner, mentor, Manhattan

After 30 years of mentoring, I am sometimes still stopped in my tracks.

I am sitting with a group of students as they read their prior learning assessment descriptions-in-progress to each other. I care a lot about the arrangement of the room – all of us sit as equals around the tables. I cannot pretend I am not “the mentor,” but the arrangement, I believe, helps me resist the temptation to lead and encourages the students to look to each other first.

One student reads her essay aloud. She writes evocatively about what she learned from her experience of creating theatre with refugees. What she describes is a daring, difficult and moving project that brings to bear much of her learning as a performer and maker of theatre. We listen together and students reflect back and ask questions. I listen too, impressed. Suddenly, I am aware of something that is not there. In the field of applied theatre there is an important conversation about “cultural appropriation.” The student speaks to it – but not quite. Imagine myself as PLA evaluator and note that she fails to place her project in the context of these questions. And I worry that, without referring to them, she will not get the credit she deserves.

I am quite sure the work she describes is sensitive to cultural appropriation. Or, maybe I just want it to be. I listen more closely. By now I have decided this is important for her to write about. And so ... I begin to ask pointed questions that urge her to write in the way I think she should.

The following week, the group meets again. As the same student begins to read her new draft she turns to me, “I think I understood what you wanted me to write here, but I want to be sure.”

This is the moment that stops me.

As a mentor, I am torn. I want to listen to the student and help her articulate her understandings in her own way. I also want to advocate for her. This second desire is clearly a part of mentoring, but perhaps it can lead me to impose my own vision, to usurp her authority over what she knows.

What is the line between advocacy and imposition?

Is it appropriate, for example, in the PLA process, to offer a student a set of readings to help her name and contextualize what she knows in the way that scholars/practitioners have done? Is it not more responsive to recognize the distinctiveness of the student's experiential learning and how she herself names and understands it? Isn't this exactly what ESC can offer?

These “stopped-in-my-tracks” moments shake me out of my complacency. They remind me that I must continually re-imagine myself as a mentor. I can only listen as carefully as I can – both to the student and to my own impulses – I hope I will always be open to learning and to being surprised.

Trees by the Edge of the Lake

Robert Congemi, Northeast New York Region

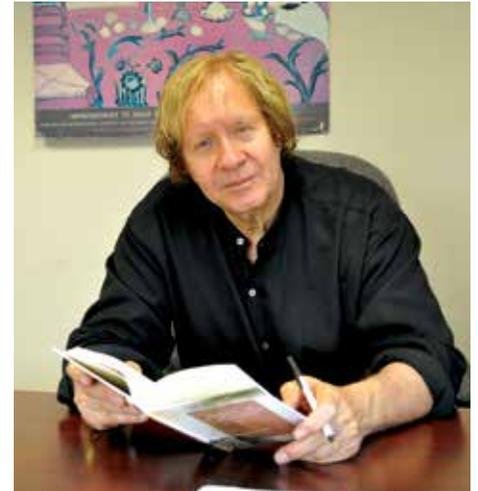
I have always enjoyed this northern city, this capital. As prosaic as it sounds, I suspect one of its principal attractions is that it is neither too big nor too small. Another, it came to me yesterday, is political. The few men who run this city, whose family and friends have for so long been in power, make certain that very little changes here. What is necessary, what is profitable to them without unsettling anything, what keeps the city more or less up-to-date and not behind the times (which also would be unsettling) – these are allowed. Young people, therefore, can come into their own here and at their own pace, a person can write a book here, evolve a philosophy. They have all the time they need. You get the idea, don't you?

But what I like most of all about the city, if I think hard, if the truth be known, is its park. Yes, that's right, its park. Heaven's Gate Park is a masterpiece. I have always felt that way. Other residents may take it for granted or overlook it, or may agree if you ask them whether it is indeed beautiful, splendid. But I, I have never needed anyone to tell me what a jewel it is, situated right in the very center of the city. I have thought so since my first day in this city, which is when I first saw the park, so many years ago.

Let me to try to describe it for you. First, allow me go halfway. To my mind, given my particular experience, Heaven's Gate is simply in miniature a 19th century English landscape. You know. I mean the landscape that Constable or Turner offered to the world, the stunningly placid lake surrounded by trees, the reflections of the trees dark on the lake's surface, sunlight silver on its surface, a few trees, an abundance of green and compatibility by the edge of the lake? Well, add a broad pathway around the lake, a charming bridge at its middle, a handsome boathouse at one end, and an expanse of

flower beds and smaller paths radiating from a giant statue of Moses atop a fountain, and there you have Heaven's Gate Park.

Yesterday, in early evening, I had occasion to visit the park. You see, my wife is dying of brain cancer. She had these headaches, which we thought were brought on only by allergy, so, unsuspecting, she saw her doctor, who to the shock of us all had her take tests. The tests made it clear she had an astrocytoma, like a star, entwined among the still-healthy parts of her brain. A nurse at the hospital where I rushed her for surgery said my wife was doomed the moment the first cell went bad and split. Of course I've done everything I could – I wasn't one to withdraw, physically or emotionally from a stricken woman, as I've heard men sometimes do. I saw her through the operation to cut some of the cancer out of her brain, to lessen the pain, and I listened to her surgeon observe that he thought things went well. I gave her chemotherapy pills, which made me feel I was poisoning her, and watched the medication cause a blistering rash over her entire body except, curiously, for her hands and face, *except particularly for her face*. Simultaneously, I held her in my arms when the first seizure came suddenly upon her, and called for an ambulance, comforting her with cooed words of love. I brought her home again, slept on the floor beside the bed in the event she went into some cataclysmic shock, and then repeated the process once more when she had another great seizure. The first seizure gradually took away her mind. Anyone could see that. I remember one day she could read the newspaper, rather easily, I thought. A few days later she could not understand what she read when I asked her opinion of an editorial I'd recommended. The second seizure – we should have known – took away her sanity, or rather, her reason. After that, I placed her in the best of nursing homes, where she just sits in a wheelchair or lies in her room, and babbles away.



Robert Congemi

"Won't someone please help me?" she asks, endlessly. "We should have a meeting, shouldn't we? I need to make dinner. I'm so scared. Won't someone please help me?"

The doctors have told me, as much as they dare, that more and more she'll sleep away the days, until she never wakes up and her organs shut down. And I, after much anguish will agree to turn off the machines that keep her alive.

"To feed her, intravenously as we are – there's no other way – will only bloat her, until she explodes" as one of her doctors says. "Therefore, she has to die."

All that will remain will be for her heart to beat less often, weaker and weaker, until the moment comes when it never beats again. Then the nurses will lead me from her bedside, gently, and ask if I've arranged for a funeral home to take her body away.

So, yesterday, unable to think of much anything else, having done everything I could, I visited Heaven's Gate Park. That's all. Just visited the park. I suppose, I hope, it was instinct, not proximity. I walked downhill the three blocks from the hospital to the

park and its lake and, reaching the bridge, stopped and looked out upon the lake. It was so peaceful – the sunlight lambent upon the surface, the trees surrounding the lake. Despite my anguish, despite everything that had happened to my wife and me, I felt its ... how may I put it? ... I want to get it exact ... its goodness? Yes, the park's simple ... goodness. The trees by the edge of the lake, particularly those trees, filled, inexplicably, my soul with their poetry. Their leaves trailing in the water, their reflection harmonizing with the silvery reflection of early evening light, the strolling couple I suddenly saw to one side on the path beguiled me, seduced me, hinting of some ageless truth and beauty, something incontrovertible, an intimation of meaning beyond pain, beyond petty decay and death. I sighed. I did not move. Standing there, I told myself this vision was not mere fantasy. It could not be, must not be. I told myself I had found a modicum of comfort.

“When one considers that labor/work is strictly defined as energy used to bring about movement/activity, it should be concerning that emotional labor constitutes a significant part of what mentors at Empire State College do every day to transform students’ lives. Whereas, there are no explicit requirements for a mentor to possess specific emotional competencies to be hired ... the role of the mentor utilizes nuanced emotive skills. Among these skills are: the ability to establish sincere, meaningful connections with students; and to effectively balance cognitive and emotional capacities while facilitating learning.”

*– Nadine V. Wedderburn,
“Toward an Understanding of Mentoring as Emotional Labor”
All About Mentoring, 44
Winter 2013, p. 46*

Mentoring as Positive Practice and Positive Scholarship: Turning Into the Light?

David Starr-Glass, International Programs (Prague)

Recently, I was invited to contribute toward an exciting project considering the impact of positive scholarship, the *Encyclopedia of Positive Scholarship*, which will be released in 2017 (IGI Global). I began reviewing the positive scholarship literature, trying to appreciate its origins and evolutionary trajectory. As the review progressed, I also began to consider the implications that positive scholarship might have on my own mentoring and on communities of mentoring scholarship.

This article, which is essentially a reflection on work in progress, suggests a number of ways in which more appreciative practice and more positive scholarship might find expressions in mentoring. It should be noted that these are reflections and suggestions, not prescriptions for what mentoring should be or for what mentoring ought to be. However, it is hoped that these thoughts will not be seen as simply self-indulgent, or peculiarly idiosyncratic, and that they might stimulate broader discussions within different communities of mentoring. The reader will undoubtedly note a question mark in the title.

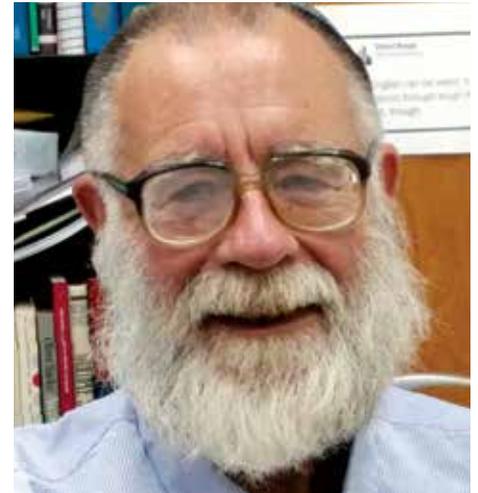
The article is structured as follows. The first section provides background by considering the origins of positive practice, which lie in Appreciative Inquiry and the development of the underpinning heliotropic hypothesis. The second section explores the migration of positive orientations into psychology, organizational behavior and other disciplinary areas. The third section considers the possible meaning of mentoring as a heliotropic process. The fourth section looks at possibilities for turning away from the shadows often inherent in traditional mentoring practice, while the final section considers a positive approach to the scholarship of mentoring and to the scholarship of teaching and learning.

1. Appreciative Inquiry and the Heliotropic Hypothesis

Although the appeal of the positive has a long history in America, where individuality, positivity and a concern for the self all hold privileged and rarely contested cultural positions, it was only the late 1980s that David Cooperrider introduced what he termed “Appreciative Inquiry” (AI) into the practice of organizational change. AI was originally considered a methodological approach, not a fully-fledged theory or scholarly endeavor; however, it enjoyed a growing appeal and interest throughout many different communities of practice and communities of scholarship.

Cooperrider and his associates questioned, and then rejected, the prevailing deficit-perspective in organizational work, which identified and prioritized the perceived deficiencies, problems and negative gaps between existing organizational behavior and anticipated “norms.” Instead, they adopted and promoted an abundance-surplus perspective, which recognized the positive “gaps” – gaps, because they had previously been ignored – through which differing expressions of the individual, the collective and the organizational contributed to results that outperformed what had conventionally been accepted as the norm. Cooperrider and his colleagues recognized the importance of these positive, but generally unnoticed and under-considered, factors and attempted to encourage and promote them in ways that would be regenerative and transformative in the organization (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

AI regarded itself as constituting a series of practitioner-initiated interventions; indeed, in the early years of AI, Cooperrider and his associates appeared reticent to publish any comprehensive consideration of their work, preferring instead to concentrate on



David Starr-Glass

the application of AI in their expansive organizational consulting practice. Significant publications would only emerge later (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2006; Cooperrider, Sorensen Jr., Yaeger, & Whitney, 2001; Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008a, 2008b).

Rather than regard itself as a radically new theory, AI recognized its conceptual richness and its generous borrowings from a wide range of disciplines, including discourse and narrative theory, social constructivism, action research and generative theory (Bushe, 2012). AI recognized the positive, the creative and the flourishing practices in organizations. More specifically it wished to translate these qualities into actions and energies that could transform organizational environments. As Cooperrider and Whitney (2001) noted, “the purpose of inquiry, which is viewed as totally inseparable and intertwined with action, is the creation of ‘generative theory,’ not so much mappings or explanations of yesterday’s world but anticipatory articulations of tomorrow’s possibilities” (p. 20).

Cooperrider and Whitney (2001) have provided a set of principles that underpin and energize AI thinking and practice:

- a. *Constructivism*: This understands that our perceived realities, life-worlds, and interpretations of self are continuously reorganized and reconstructed. The narratives that we relate – and the images that we form and hold about others and about ourselves – are constantly reinvented and revised to incorporate and accommodate our growing individual and social experiences, altered assumptions and cultural interactions.
- b. *Simultaneity*: This recognizes that the present and future are inextricably linked and co-present; that “the seeds of change – that is, the things people think and talk about, the things people discover and learn, and the things that inform dialogue and inspire images of the future – are implicit in the very first questions we ask” (p. 20).
- c. *Poetic Narration*: This appreciates that organizational contexts and life-worlds are represented and articulated through a fluid narration. This narration includes the stories we tell, the words we use and the imagery that we bring to the subject. Our narration is malleable, adaptable and changeable. It is neither linear nor pre-scripted, and it is continuously rearranged in novel, innovative and compelling ways that may strain – or even break – the assumed conventions and limitations of our everyday prose.
- d. *Anticipatory Reality*: This principle acknowledges that “human systems are forever projecting ahead of themselves a horizon of expectation (in their talk in the hallways, in the metaphors and language they use) that brings the future powerfully into the present as a mobilizing agent” (p. 21).
- e. *Positive Affect*: This stresses that change, organizational or otherwise, must be invited through inspirational pathways that restore hope, positive engagement and a new-found personal authenticity – “the more positive the question we ask in our work the more long lasting and successful the change effort. ... The major

thing we do that makes the difference is to craft and seed, in better and more catalytic ways, the unconditional positive question” (p. 22).

At the core of AI was what Cooperrider (1990) identified as a “heliotropic hypothesis.” He speculated that, just like many plants, “human systems are largely heliotropic in character, meaning that they exhibit an observable and largely automatic tendency to evolve in the direction of positive anticipatory images of the future” (pp. 91-92). He explored multiple exemplars of “positive image/positive action” situations in human systems, suggesting that within these systems there is a powerful, intuitive and transformative impulse to turn into the light (*heliotrope* – Greek, moving or turning toward the sun). However it may be described and however it might be identified, “light” is understood metaphorically to be the source of energy, growth and vitality for individuals and for the social systems within which these individuals are situated.

Cooperrider (1990) noted that appreciation is self-reinforcing, self-generative and self-affirming – not only for organizations or communities of practice, but also for the individuals who participate in these systems. He concluded that expressed appreciation, as a method of inquiry and as a vehicle for change, is reciprocated in terms of openness, cooperation and collaboration, which in turn lead toward the “joint creation of a world that corresponds to the jointly imagined projection of human and social possibility” (p. 124).

In time, the values and perspectives of AI seem to have percolated beyond organizational change contexts into the other communities of practice and areas of scholarly endeavor; although, many of these disciplinary areas had their own specific reasons for accentuating the positive.

2. Positive Movements in Psychology and Organizational Behavior

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), in their introduction to a special issue of *American Psychologist* dedicated to positive psychology, summarized the new positive perspective in that discipline as an attempt to “achieve scientific understanding and inspire effective

interventions to build thriving in individuals, families, and communities” (p. 5). At the subjective level, which is the fundamental level of interest and activity, they explained that positive psychology is focused on valued subjective experiences such as well-being, contentment, satisfaction, hope, optimism and the flow of happiness. At the level of the individual, positive psychology explores positive individual traits such as the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skill, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future mindedness and wisdom. At the level of the collective, which includes the group and to some extent the organization, positive psychology addresses issues such as civic virtues, citizenship, responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance and the ethic of work (p. 5).

While not without its critics and detractors (Fineman, 2006; Miller, 2008; and see Roberts, 2006), positive psychology offers new perspectives for the interventions of practitioners and the scholarship of researchers. However, to speak of a new *positive* psychology infers that there is something *negative* in the existing, or traditional, expressions and practices of psychology. Most locate that negative shadow in the historical origins of psychology and in its preoccupation with what it identified as deviant behavior, dysfunctionality and mental pathology. The traditional interest of psychology was almost exclusively in what were seen as deficits, negative gaps and deviations from the “norm,” rather than in abundance-surpluses.

For example, Sinnott (2013), reflecting on the rise of positive psychology, observed that “psychology had long been focused on pathology due, in part, to the historical events attending the founding of the field” and that “it seemed time to study what makes individuals actually *flourish*” (p. vii, emphasis in original).

Some scholars considered that positive psychology is “nothing more than the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues” (Sheldon & King, 2001, p. 216). Others have understood it as “the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions” (Gable & Haidt, 2005, p. 104). Similarly, considering the utility of

positive psychology and perhaps the inevitable refocusing toward a more comprehensive and inclusive human agenda, Jørgensen and Nafstad (2004) believe that “psychology needs the window to the human being as morally and socially good and positive to be reopened, so that this vital perspective is no longer a view ‘left outside the door’” (p. 30).

The opening of a window onto the positive also was taking place in the areas of organizational behavior, organizational psychology, change management and leadership. Cameron, Dutton and Quinn (2003) announced a new perspective that they termed “Positive Organizational Scholarship” (POS), which would focus on the “especially positive outcomes, processes, and attributes of organizations and their members” (p. 4). POS promotes “the study of enablers, motivations, and effects associated with positive phenomena, with the aim of revealing positive states and processes that would otherwise be missed or obscured by traditional, ‘non-POS’ perspectives” (Caza & Cameron, 2008, p. 3). Unlike traditional organizational behavior and organizational psychology, POS emphasizes those positive values, experiences and conditions that enable organizations and their participants to grow healthily. As a scholarly endeavor, POS explores constructs such as excellence, thriving, flourishing, abundance, resilience and virtuousness (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2011; Lucas & Goodman, 2015).

Many regard POS as a much-needed perspective for understanding organizations and for advancing people-related values within them. As with positive psychology, there seems to have been a reaction to perceived negativity and constraints in traditional expressions of organizational studies and scholarship. For example, Wright (2003), in advocating positive organizational behavior and positive leadership, believed that positivity was an idea *whose time had come* and advised that “more than just considering employees as a means to the desired end of higher organizational productivity” positive organizational work “also must include the pursuit of employee happiness, health, and betterment issues as viable goals or ends in themselves ... pursuit of the good or worthwhile life deserves no less” (p. 441).

For Park and Peterson (2003), authentic reiterations of POS must consider the virtues that shape, motivate and permeate organizations and their participants. Stressing the importance of positive organizational behavior, Luthans (2002) believes that “we need a positive search for and understanding of the good in people, not only at work, but also in life” and that positive organizational behavior is “a step in the direction of not only new and exciting things to study and apply, but also the right way to move ... in these unprecedented times in which we live and work” (p. 704). Others have concluded that, “as long as growing is a human developmental ideal” organizational research and those engaged in it “can offer a deeper understanding of how individuals interpret this critical human experience” (Sonenshein, Dutton, Grant, Spreitzer, & Sutcliffe, 2013, p. 567).

Of course, the human development ideal is not restricted to organizational work or to psychology. Indeed, there is a growing interest in positive practice and positive scholarship in many other academic disciplinary areas. For example, a positive perspective has now become a concern in communication research, where Franks (2015) argued that it is required to explore “expressions of gratitude, kindness, compassion, and forgiveness, as well as issues of social support and work-life balance from both theoretical and applied perspectives toward the development of communication theory” (p. 32).

Many questions are raised by these positive movements, but one is particularly pertinent for communities of mentoring practice and scholarship: What might a positive perspective look like in mentoring?

3. Re-Envisaging Mentoring as a Heliotropic Process

At the outset, it is necessary to appreciate that mentoring is a complex and multi-varied activity, which has emerged in many different contexts for different reasons, and which cannot be easily defined. Crisp and Cruz (2009), in their exploration of mentoring in U.S. higher education, found more than 50 different definitions, all of which they considered to be excessively broad, only partial or tantalizingly vague. Likewise, the English sociologist Ray Pawson (2004),

after an extensive and particularly valuable review of the mentoring process in multiple social contexts, concluded with a mixture of mild frustration and good humor that the mentoring construct, process, and relationship was a “never-ending list” of attributes, including:

Helping, coaching, tutoring, counselling, sponsoring, role modelling, befriending, bonding, trusting, mutual learning, direction setting, progress chasing, sharing experience, providing respite, sharing a laugh, widening horizons, building resilience, showing ropes, informal apprenticeships, providing openings, kindness of strangers, sitting by Nellie, treats for bad boys and girls, the Caligula phenomenon, power play, tours of middle class life, etc. etc. (p. 1)

So far as this article is concerned, and indeed so far as much of my own mentoring work is concerned, I find the definition provided by Anne Powell (1997) in her extensive review of literature and policy, *Academic Tutoring and Mentoring*, to be particularly insightful and helpful. She defined mentoring as a relational engagement between individuals, each possessing different experiential backgrounds, which comes into place in order to:

Improve that person’s chances for achieving his or her goals by linking them to resources and support not otherwise available. The role of the mentor is to pass on knowledge, experience and judgment, and/or to provide guidance and support ... [to provide] psychosocial support for changes in behavior, attitudes and ambitions ... with the goals of reassuring innate worth, instilling values, guiding curiosity, and encouraging a positive youthful life. Distinguished from child rearing and friendship, the mentoring relationship is intended to be temporary, with the objective of helping the protégé reach independence and autonomy. (p. 4)

I suggest that Powell’s (1997) definition is inherently a restatement of the positive. It sees mentoring as an engagement to provide mutual guidance and support. It is concerned with reassuring innate worth, values and a guiding curiosity that might encourage the mentee’s

“positive youthful life.” It also is directed to helping the mentee to reach his, or her, own expression of independence and autonomy. All of these, it seems to me, are expressions of a concerned, engaged and positively-directed involvement in the practice of mentoring, in the mentoring relationship, and with the mentee.

So, how might mentoring relationships be reconsidered and restructured to further accentuate – or perhaps to consciously re-accentuate – this inherent positive bias that seems to be embedded in what we recognize as the mentoring endeavor?

First, it might be profitable to reconsider Cooperrider’s (1990) heliotropic hypothesis, which suggested – through metaphor and analogy, rather than through any over-rigorous means – that all human systems, which undoubtedly include mentoring relationships, are largely heliotropic in character and that they “exhibit an observable and largely automatic tendency to evolve in the direction of positive anticipatory images of the future” (p. 91-2).

For whatever it is worth, my own personal life experience tends to validate such heliotropic reorientations. However, I question the degree to which such a tendency is “largely automatic” or innate. It seems to me that, all too often, turning into the light is not automatic, but rather a matter of choice – often a choice forced by the compelling presence of the shadows that surround us – and often precipitated, encouraged and supported by others. Further, the assumption of an innate tendency to turn toward the light also tends to preclude any recognition of the value and learning associated with living or remaining in the shadows.

In his critique of the of positive emphasis, or perhaps we might say growing imperative, Fineman (2006) observed that the exclusive focus on the positive “represents a one-eyed view of the social world, shielded from the frustrations and sufferings that contribute to the contradictions of emotional satisfaction and their contributions to personal and social development” (p. 275). He added that reifying positive experiences alone, and preferentially, “creates a conceptually truncated picture of the way emotional experiences can contribute

... [and fails] to engage with the emotionally ambiguous circumstances” (p. 275). The shadows, or what purport to be shadows, are also an essential part of our developing intellectual and growing emotional lives and cannot be so easily dismissed or eliminated, nor should they be. One thinks of Gerard Manley Hopkins’ (1918) “pied beauty” and “dappled things” that present contrasts, comparisons and the opportunities to explore the complexities that lie beyond a sterile, monochromatic and monotonous (that is, a monotonous) world of being.

4. Turning from the Shadows in Mentoring Practice

Often the shadows that we confront are not independent of us. They are *our own shadows*: the voided places that our very being, and our overly conscious presentation of self, impose on the path of the sunlight that is behind us. Often, it is the shadow that we ourselves generate that obscures the mentoring relationship. Therefore, it seems to me that a positive mentoring practice, which might be termed a “heliotropic mentoring,” would involve a number of elements. The argument is that turning toward the light – however difficult and problematic it may be to define or recognize that light – is essentially a turning away from the shadows that we inevitably, but often unconsciously, create. However, these shadows are perhaps more familiar, more recognizable, more understandable and easier to define.

- *Turning from the Shadow of the Implied Mentee*: We are often habituated to working with implied students, not real ones. Ulriksen (2009) defined “implied student” as projections, generated and held by institutions and their faculty, about the anticipated learner: “the attitudes, interpretations and behaviour of the student, that is presupposed by the way the study is organised, the mode of teaching and assessment, by the teachers and in the relations between the students to actualise the study in a meaningful way” (p. 522). We cannot engage with the shadow of the student, any more than they can engage with the shadows of the mentor. As mentors, we have to turn toward the mentee’s unique and

individual light, recognizing him or her as a real, authentic and complex partner in learning, not as a silhouette or a projected shadow. We have to put away histories, assumptions and stereotypical renderings of what mentees are, or might be, and turn toward *this* individual, in *this* setting, at *this* time.

- *Turning from the Shadow of the Answer*: Many of those whom I mentor seek answers. Often answers are helpful and necessary, but answers also create shadows that obscure and preclude other possibilities – possibilities that might be more productive for the mentee’s own creation of knowledge and understanding. Edgar Schein, the distinguished authority on organizational behavior and culture, advocates what he terms “humble inquiry,” which might “initially be a moment or two of silence. Maybe he [the student] has something more to say. And if silence does not produce anything, you could say: ‘Tell me a little more?’ ‘What is going on?’” (Lambrechts, Bouwen, Grieten, Huybrechts, & Schein, 2011, p. 134). Humble inquiry moves from the dominant shadows of the mentor’s knowledge and refocuses on the knowledge needs of the mentee. Humble inquiry asks before it answers. It asks about what the mentee needs, rather than about what the mentor wishes to share. It engages with the other, not primarily or exclusively with the self. Sometimes the best answer is not a projection of what we believed to be true, but only a proffered reflection that is subsequently re-reflected and reimagined by the other in what T. S. Eliot has called the “wilderness of mirrors.”
- *Turning from the Shadow of Presumed Knowing*: A desire for, and an appreciation of, the positive may well be universal and deeply ingrained in our genetic makeup. However, in my own mentoring practice, I have come to avoid making presumptions about those with whom I engage. The presumption of knowing the other, when one might excusably have difficulties and challenges in knowing oneself, seems to introduce an unnecessary shadowing into the

mentoring relationship. Rather, I accept Georg Simmel's (1950) more positive understanding that "to be a stranger is naturally a *very positive relation* [emphasis added]; it is a specific form of interaction" (p. 402). Through the mentoring engagement, we might try to understand the other; indeed, to do so, and to respond to the uniqueness of the other, is what mentoring seems to be about. The shadow of a presumed knowing obscures the potential of relational discovery. It also can easily lead to what Carol Hess (2003) calls a "pedagogy of narcissism." It is better to turn from the shadows of presumptive knowing to realize the "the ultimate role of the mentor," which she identified as helping "students articulate their particular voices," adding that "when the mentor also is able to receive from the voice she nurtures, conversational education takes place" (p. 136).

- *Turning from the Shadow of Assumed Culture*: One significant concern in positive practice is that it is culturally embedded. It is not incidental that positive movements have originated in America, where national cultural values privilege the positive and reward individualism. Fineman (2006), who is incidentally a British scholar, warned that "expressions of positive and negative emotion are revealed to be finely tuned to personal meanings and social values," however "the grim faced should not be thought of as somehow psychologically and/or morally inferior role models to the ebullient faced" (p. 276). Certainly, we need to recognize "mentoring is always fraught with the concern of how to cross boundaries, how to bridge cultural differences to show yourself, and to accompany another on their journey" (Blake-Beard, 2009, p. 15). This is particularly important in my own mentoring practice, which involves international (that is American) students. Here, positive mentoring means moving out of the shadows of cultural assumption, prescriptive social behavior and what some have insightfully characterized as "sophisticated stereotypes" (Osland & Bird, 2000). These stereotypes might well be concerned with value-

laden understandings of positivity. These shadows, generated by our own opaqueness of self and lack of cultural self-awareness, are only dispersed if we make a deliberate, informed and concerned effort to turn toward the light of our mentee's uniqueness and cultural world.

5. Turning from the Shadows in Mentoring Scholarship

As Boyer (1987) observed, scholarship is not "an esoteric appendage"; rather, it is "at the heart of what the profession is all about. All faculty, throughout their careers, should, themselves, remain students. As scholars, they must continue to learn and be seriously and continuously engaged in the expanding intellectual world" (p. 131). Later, Boyer (1990, 1996) defined teaching in higher education as a legitimate scholarly endeavor; a "scholarship of knowledge sharing," and a "scholarship of engagement."

... "mentoring is always fraught with the concern of how to cross boundaries, how to bridge cultural differences to show yourself, and to accompany another on their journey."

However, defining only provides permission; it does not prescribe form or content. In the last two decades there have been multiple expressions of scholarships of teaching, and the growth of less visible but parallel scholarships of mentoring, with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) emerging as perhaps the most viable and dominant model (Potter & Kustra, 2011).

In this article, I suggest that many of the challenges that presently confront SoTL are similar to those that confront a scholarship

of mentoring and learning. So, what might a positive scholarship bring to SoTL and to any scholarship associated with mentoring?

- *Turning from the Shadow of Generalization*: One of the present challenges in SoTL is that there are inherent tensions in generating a general scholarship derived from the particular. Teaching, learning and mentoring involve an engagement with the particular – the particular individual, in a specific situation, in a transitory context. The orthodox paradigms (including their central epistemologies and ontologies) of many disciplinary scholarships, particularly in the social sciences scholarship, accentuate the generalizability of their discovery. However, an evolving SoTL can only detail the particular and hope that in the specific there might be threads of generalizability; threads that might not be visible to the individual scholar. This tension can inhibit SoTL and the efforts of SoTL practitioners in their elaboration of scholarship. Here, a positive scholarship might encourage us to turn away from the shadows of generalizability and to turn toward the richness and presence of the present.
- *Turning from the Shadow of Methodological Domination*: Another related tension that exists within SoTL, and any scholarship of mentoring, is that of methodology. This is as much a sociological and cultural issue as it is a procedural one. Academic disciplines are shaped by both internal forces that create "disciplinary bounding," which is a means of "defining what it is, of protecting it from unwanted interference and excluding unwanted participants, of telling practitioners how it is proper to behave within it and how that behavior differs from ordinary conduct, and of distributing value across its borders" (Shapin, 1992, p. 335). Scholarship, within separate academic disciplines, also is shaped and impacted by the existence of different "academic tribes," each with its own associated territory and each with its own methodological preference (Becher & Trowler, 2001). For many in SoTL, qualitative and ethnographic methodologies are not only acceptable but

critical; for other SoTL participants, only those approaches of the existing social sciences are acceptable. Indeed, there may be future “methodological wars” in SoTL and in mentoring scholarship. Here, positive scholarship might encourage scholars to turn from the shadows of dominant or prescribed methodologies, coming to a more positive and confident appreciation of what their individual approaches might constructively contribute to a useful scholarship.

- *Turning from the Shadow of the Mentor:* While SoTL expresses a concern for both teaching and learning, teaching has predominated. Some time ago, Trigwell and Shale (2004) noted that students “do not appear as partners in learning. They do not appear as neophyte scholars in the community. They do not appear as critics or connoisseurs of teaching. When they appear it is as objects of concern, objects of analysis, or presumptively passive consumers” (p. 534). More recently, Fielding (2011) called for the more active participation of students as co-creators, co-inquires, co-contributors and active partners in the learning process, suggesting that SoTL embrace a *democratic fellowship* that is explicitly egalitarian and “enables a deep and demonstrable reciprocity, thereby providing both existential and practical testimony of the need and for presence, if not of love, then of care, of kindness of human fellowship and the reciprocal needs of recognition” (pp. 12-13). This seems to resonate with a positive SoTL. It also recognizes the tendency of the empowered teacher (or mentor) to cast his or her own shadow, usually unintentionally, on the whole learning enterprise. Positive scholarship would turn from these long shadows, creating a bridge across the scholarly and practitioner divide, a connection between mentor and the other, and a resolution to the inevitable contradictions that many find inherent in SoTL (Peseta, 2013).

Movements toward positive scholarship have made significant impacts in many disciplinary areas. These trends are often seen as redressing inherent negative perspectives that were

initially present in the origins of the discipline and selectively pursued thereafter. However, to be really valuable, positive scholarships should not simply replicate existing scholarships, albeit in contrasting or more cheerful colors. They should more appropriately focus on the differences that lead to growth, creativity, abundance, and to a flourishing of individuals and institutions.

Rather than being a scholarship of revealing, restating and reaffirming what might be understood as virtue, positive practice and positive scholarship in mentoring might better be directed toward a scholarship of liberation from the shadows that have been cast by prior practice and previous scholarly efforts. In that sense, positive scholarship certainly does explore the heliotropic hypothesis, but its challenge is to define the nature of the light into which it wishes to turn. Perhaps, rather than trying to articulate the problematic and disparate qualities of light, positive mentoring – as a practice and as a scholarship – might find it easier and more productive to recognize the existing shadows and to turn away from them?

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“By nature I am conservative and do not adapt to change easily. I also need to have a sense of being in control. I still walk into the bank, when open, and engage the teller rather than use the ATM machine. I drop mail off at the post office rather than put it in our mailbox to be picked up by the carrier. When working at a distance with students, I did not feel I was in complete control. I did not know what the student looked like; I could not read the student’s body language; I could not put the student’s paper between us and discuss points of content or writing; I could not cajole the student as easily into greater effort; I rarely engaged the student in conversation outside of our academic work; and, most importantly, I rarely created a personal bond with the student. I now wonder if these reservations were the result of a failure to meet my own needs, including ego gratification, rather than the shortcomings of an academic process. . . .

“I think of a hypothetical situation: if I were to return now to mentoring (which I am not), would I engage more wholeheartedly in distance education, given my new perspective? Probably not. What my head now tells me would not be enough to overcome the force of who and what I am, or of my years. I am simply more comfortable living in the real village than the village of cyberspace. My sense is that the best mentors will be those who are flexible, secure and forward-looking, and, therefore, comfortable with living and working in both.”

– Bob MacCameron, “A Need for Control?”

All About Mentoring, 22

Fall 2001, pp. 10-11

Found Things

Excerpt from *The Mentor Role at Empire State College* (February 1994)

The report, *The Mentor Role at Empire State College*, was published in February 1994. It was the result of the work of a "Mentor Role Committee" made up of Reed Coughlan (co-chair), Judy Gerardi and Lois Muzio, mentors, and Jane Altes, then vice president for academic affairs (co-chair). (Reed was then chair of the Academic Personnel Committee; Judy represented the Academic Policies and Learning Programs Committee, now CUSP, and Lois was chosen as the United University Professions representative.) The work was the outgrowth of a December 1992 report of the college's Worklife Committee and the subsequent call from the Program Planning and Budget Committee that the college senate form a group that would focus on the faculty role. The statement of "Good Mentoring" was included (page 9) in the committee's final report. Thanks to Kathy Cole for preparing this document for publication in *All About Mentoring*.

GOOD MENTORING

Good mentoring involves a range of strategies for carrying out teaching and administrative responsibilities within the constraints of the role and the environment. The spectrum of good mentoring practices extends from the extreme of facilitating learning/planning and coordinating resource usage to constructing unique studies and degree program plans in response to individual students' interests and needs and the available resources. A variety of strategies lie between these extremes and most mentors combine these in response to both situational and student demands. Good mentoring practice necessarily involves establishing a balance within the variety of mentoring activities demanded by the workload.

Mentoring is a process; learning is a process; mentoring is a process that enhances learning. The ultimate goal of mentoring is to enable students to become their own teachers. Good mentoring requires the establishment of interpersonal relationships with students. To students, a mentor is much more than teacher and academic advisor. It is through good mentoring practices that students become engaged in their studies and connected to the resources of the college.

Good mentor practice involves communication with students and colleagues in support of the primary goal of the college: to serve student needs. Good mentoring requires good communication systems and access to extensive resources for teaching, evaluating and advising.

"Mentors are learners, too. I think that it's really cool when there's a parallel between something a mentor wants to learn and something a student wants to learn; the two go hand-in-hand really nicely together. But I think it takes a certain amount of bravery and curiosity on the mentor's part."

– Shantih Clemans, "Caring Attention: What is 'Good Enough' Mentoring at ESC?"

All About Mentoring, 49

Fall 2016, p. 48

Letter to the Editor

Dec. 4, 2016

Dear Alan,

The excerpts from the 1974 Middle States accreditation report (All About Mentoring, No. 49, pp. 88-94) brought back vivid memories of the challenges we faced during that process. Because we were granting up to three years of credit from our assessment of prior learning, we had graduates much sooner than most new institutions. Naturally, we wanted to be baptized as soon as possible.

We were fortunate that Ted Mitau, Ernie's [Boyer] counterpart for Minnesota higher education, chaired the Committee [on College Development]. They were friends and he had just initiated University College, similar to ESC in its "learner-centered" individualized orientation for adult learners. They were facing North Central [Association of Colleges and Schools] so he understood our challenges.

Regional accrediting associations were, and still are as far as I know, required to judge an institution according to its own mission and educational principles. It was critical that we framed our self-study and the basis for their visit in ways consistent with our new approach. One of their basic questions, very reasonable for traditional institutions at that time, was, "What are your standards for graduation?" My answer was, "Our mission is to serve the diverse educational needs of adult learners throughout the state of New York. To respond to those needs, we cannot prescribe generalized standards for all those very different students seeking associate and baccalaureate degrees. To make judgments about our educational quality, you need to examine the detailed records for each student and assess the rigor exemplified in their learning contracts and degree programs, and the quality of their varied products and performances."

Remember, the team members were faculty members coming from traditional institutions – there were no others like ESC – with strong disciplinary backgrounds. But once they immersed themselves in the detailed narrative evaluations and work samples, they were appropriately impressed. Our students, after all, were smart, highly motivated adults, pursuing learning pertinent to each person's important purposes. It was no surprise that their performances compared very favorably to team members' experiences with 17- to 22-year-old students pursuing largely prescribed curricula.

They also had to adjust to records that included large chunks of work that varied with contracts running from six weeks to six months. We believed that students' time and effort should fit the desired learning rather than force them all onto the Procrustean bed of 45 class contact hours distributed over 15 weeks, which was typical at the time. This enabled rich mixes of reading, writing and experiential learning substantially beyond that which characterized their mostly 50-minute courses meeting three times a week, dominated by lectures, midterms and final exams.

We also eschewed credits and grades. Our students simply enrolled full or half time, with the expectation that they would devote 20 or 40 hours a week depending on their choice. Some team members appreciated our intellectual honesty in setting aside the seat of the pants, "I know it when I see it" approach to grades and credits, totally devoid of any publically articulated criteria for the numbers or letters given. There was no way we could responsibly articulate the criteria for varied credits or grades given the wide-ranging work our students undertook.

Of course, the absence of criteria is still largely the case throughout higher education. When I left ESC to direct the Center for the Study of Higher Education at Memphis State University, I had a doctoral student who looked at the SAT score distributions and grades given at [the former] Shelby State Community College; Christian Brothers University, a small Catholic college; Rhodes College, highly selective; and Memphis State – all in Tennessee. Average SAT scores across these four institutions spanned two standard deviations. But not surprisingly, "grading on a curve" meant that some Shelby State students were getting A's and B's for work that got D's and F's at Rhodes. (See "Grades: One More Tilt at the Windmill," A. W. Chickering in Stephen H. Barnes (Ed.), Points of View on American Higher Education, Edwin Mellen Press, 1990.) So I appreciated the honest perspectives of those team members.

Well, Alan, I could address some of the other issues raised in the excerpt but this may already be more than you may want to print. I thought it might provide a bit of perspective on our early challenges. I look forward to the next excerpts.

Sincerely,

Art Chickering

Arthur Chickering was SUNY Empire State College's founding vice president for academic affairs. He served the college from 1971 until 1977.

Remembering Deborah Noble

Cynthia Ward, Metropolitan New York Region

The following words were delivered in condensed version at an “appreciation celebration” for our colleague Deborah Ann Noble that was held at The Riverside Church in New York City on Oct. 22, 2016.

The SUNY Empire State College community sincerely mourns Deborah Noble. President Merodie Hancock, and friends and colleagues throughout the state mourn her. Here in New York City, we are devastated, and the community with whom she worked at our Brooklyn location have suffered an incalculable loss.

When I think of Debbie the word “vibrant” comes to mind. She had boundless energy and she was interested in each person she met. She put her entire self into each endeavor. Her light in our lives was incredibly special.

She had a special voice, both beautiful itself and important in what she said. Her yes was yes, and her no was no. She could hold her own without being divisive. We are close-knit as a college community, but that doesn’t mean we always agree. We have missed Debbie’s voice terribly this year since she became ill in January. It is incredibly hard to realize that she will not be back as she planned and we will not hear that voice again.

Listening to the other remembrances from her family and friends, I realized how much she shared with us about them. She was holistic and embraced everyone. She didn’t leave those she cared for outside the door when she came into the office. The theme of all the remembrances, especially from her many nieces, nephews, grandnieces and nephews, was how caring she was and how supportive. Younger colleagues at ESC experienced the same mentoring, support and care. Among her contemporaries – her sisters, her uncle, her friends, her colleagues – she was warm, funny, loved to give dinners and share good food and good fellowship. I was honored to be her dean from the time she joined the college in 2003.

In this next section, I wish to speak about her role as an educator.

Debbie had a true calling to teach. She once wrote, “I have seemingly always known that I would be most happy and self-actualized teaching and sharing knowledge. I reflect back on my time in elementary school when I would be the one who would create tests, administer them to my peers, and teachers would ask me to lead class or monitor.” Remembrances from family and friends filled out this picture of someone always learning and teaching.

At ESC we are a small college with a big footprint around New York state and a challenging mission to help every student who comes in our door achieve a degree. Debbie was a natural for the mentor role – it was simply part of her nature. But at ESC mentoring is also advising about how to set up their curriculum and achieve their degree. Debbie never gave up on thinking of better ways to do this. A student wrote about her as follows:

My mentor’s willingness to support, encourage and motivate me to complete my education was the best thing she did. ... I was confident that I could talk to her about pretty much anything and she would guide me through. When I did not register for classes she called to remind me and overcome the roadblocks. Her calling is a clear indication to me that she remembers me and my specific story. I am not just a number. Dr. Noble is passionate about her work and her students’ success.

Her students adored her and she was devoted to them. She couldn’t walk through the halls or down the street without seeing a student to talk to. She was always making connections with everyone she met. If she didn’t know your life history after talking with you, it was down to you, not Debbie!



Deborah Noble

Photo credit: David Fullard

Her teaching was inspired. Teaching is hard work. I come out of class sessions physically exhausted. But Debbie was even more energetic and impassioned. She gave 150 percent. One of her signature courses was Women in Management. Each year she set a theme and invited a panel to discuss the topic with the students. Last spring, she invited President Merodie Hancock and Metro’s Associate Dean Cathy Leaker to talk about higher education management. Merodie commented afterward that she really enjoyed being asked to participate in an educational experience, because most of her work is meetings interspersed with formal speeches and greetings. Debbie facilitated in a manner that brought out deep thinking. One of the most revealing (and funniest) sessions from spring 2015 was about gender roles in hiring and firing. Cathy said that with the first person she had to fire, she had been so gentle and circuitous that the person didn’t even realize she had been fired and showed up the next day. One year I ended up talking about the intellectual influence of my mother and grandmother. At another time we talked about how challenging it was to move up from junior positions in the 1980s when we didn’t know if

opportunities would emerge – we were wearing the little bow blouses and tailored suits – but there were no career ladders put in place in any field. These were the kind of memorable revelations that Debbie would bring out in a class discussion.

For ESC students, Debbie's experience as a Verizon senior manager and a lifelong nontraditional learner helped her relate to students, but it went deeper than that. She was the only business faculty member for most of the time at both of her locations, Verizon Corporate College Program and Brooklyn. Most students there choose business as their area of study, so she helped other mentors. She researched and wrote a guide to business program advisement that we used for many years (before the AOS guidelines were developed in more detail). She was involved in the collegewide development of guidelines.

She was always seeking to reach out to students no matter what it took to do it. When she was new we had very little technology. I went to each mentor to ask how they were handling contacting their students – it was part pep talk, part survey of what was needed. Debbie said "Well, here's how I do it. Is this OK?" She brought out a notebook handwritten with detailed notes on each student. That was Debbie: no complaints, just a practical way to do something. The somewhat battered notebook was so personal that I am still touched by my recollection.

In her role as a faculty member, Debbie became a tenured faculty mentor and was promoted to associate professor in 2012. She would have been preparing this coming year to apply for full professor. It is a great grief to me that I am speaking at her memorial, not discussing her professional development plans that had been so exciting and promising for a request to promotion to full professor.

She had the overwhelming support of her peers in review actions. The peer committee votes were all unanimous and for promotion the vast majority voted "very highly recommended." The local committee wrote an extensive positive review, as did I. Most importantly, Debbie wrote a beautifully written essay on her journey.

She earned every bit of her success and took every step up her second career ladder. All of her degrees – associate, bachelor's, MBA and DBA – were earned while working full time. She started as a customer service representative at what was then New York Bell at 17 years old and she retired as a senior manager after serving in various technician roles, then very rare for women. As a college professor, she started teaching a few courses as an adjunct, then became a part-time mentor, then was on the full-time tenure track. She was hired at the college's Verizon Corporate College Program. I was the associate dean and director there, and there were six of us with a professional employee and two support staff members. She was a natural fit due to her previous career at Verizon, but she also set standards and helped students know what it meant to be a college student. She helped us have a more nuanced view of what the students did. The program had begun serving customers service representatives in 1991 and eyed serving workers in approximately 50 titles.

In 2008, the VCCP closed and we were disbursed into the college's other New York City locations. Debbie was in Brooklyn from then on. It was a new site and as soon as it opened, it increased vastly in size. Once again, Debbie was the only business mentor. In fact, due to the small size of the old location and later retirements, we were chronically understaffed there well through 2013. Debbie ended up with immense numbers of students; she was up to almost 200 at one point. She kept up her personal attention. She gave out her cell phone number. As dean, I was in charge of giving sensible-sounding advice such as "set reasonable boundaries." I knew in my heart that Debbie was going to stay connected with her students 24/7 no matter what I said, and that, for her, was the definition of a reasonable boundary.

In addition to Brooklyn undergraduates, Debbie taught in the MBA program at 25 percent for several years and added great value there, too.

Debbie was an engaged scholar. Her dissertation on gender and organizational citizenship was chosen for publication by the press that maintains all dissertations, meaning they anticipated it would be consulted more regularly than some. She was active in the

EAM [Eastern Academy of Management] and EAMI [Eastern Academy of Management-International]. She regularly reviewed papers on cutting-edge topics in management and organized at least one panel at EAMI. She gave numerous presentations usually in collaboration with others. She was well respected in the field and at the college. Historically, business was more of an applied field, but it has moved into a scholarly field in recent decades and Debbie moved with it.

Debbie loved to travel and the international trips to EAMI were an adventure. She also was able to go to China for a seminar, although she became ill before she could complete it. She said her colleagues there were so kind and so helpful, but I think that was because she herself was so loving and caring. Intercultural communication was not a challenge for her.

Finally, what she brought to the college was a commitment to community. We are a close community and not divisive among ourselves, but Debbie went above and beyond. She was the first to support colleagues and student events. She volunteered for information sessions, orientation sessions, first-term welcome week and many more student events. Research shows that adult students average six contacts before coming to enroll. Debbie would easily be involved in half of them. She also would take an idea and run with it. For example, one of her Brooklyn colleagues has a regular "get to know Brooklyn" event. One choice was Bedford-Stuyvesant. Debbie, of course, had the community contacts made and the funding lined up before he turned around. She encouraged her students to participate in publications and events. One of her students was chosen to give the student welcome speech at the inauguration of our previous president. Provost Alfred Ntoko asked her to head the first participation of ESC in SURC, the SUNY Undergraduate Research Conference. She ensured that a wonderful group of students went to present their papers. She encouraged us to get together amongst ourselves, although we are New Yorkers and academics so it is like herding cats, but everyone appreciated the effort. She was a crucial presence at Brooklyn, just by bringing people together. Her energy and commitment inspired everyone.

Debbie wrote the following in her personal essay for her 2012 personnel review: “In summary, it has been my pleasure to share with you the successes and challenges I have experienced during my time as a full-time mentor at ESC. It has been an awesome experience. I hope you have gained a deeper sense of my passions, goals and aspirations. I cannot justly express my deep appreciation of the relationships I have developed with my colleagues. It is my sincere hope that my time here is just a first brief period in a long, productive and successful career at ESC.”

It has been our honor and privilege to have been the focus of that passion. It is wonderful that the dream she had worked so hard to achieve at the highest level came true for her.

“Many women were, indeed, not easily able to generalize from their experience, to form abstractions, to theorize about their own life changes, or to find a way of stepping away from the particulars of their own lives. It is fair to suppose that they were not able to do this in large part because the transformations they experienced are, no doubt due to the biases of our own culture, not valued, not written about in an accessible fashion, and certainly not common knowledge. How can one generalize about one’s own experience if it has not been routinely shared with others or even recognized as valuable?”

“Perhaps it’s time for academics to address this interesting developmental phenomenon that seems ‘hidden’ to many of us, even including many of us who have experienced it.”

– Xenia Coulter, “The Hidden Transformation of Women Through Mothering”

All About Mentoring, 22

Fall 2001, p. 48

Remembering John Neumaier

Colleagues From the Metropolitan New York Region of SUNY Empire State College

John J. Neumaier (1921–2016) was one of the first faculty members at SUNY Empire State College’s Manhattan location, where he worked with students in many social-political areas with an emphasis on social philosophy from 1972–1992. Neumaier escaped Nazi Germany as a teenager, and emigrated to the U.S., ultimately earning a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Minnesota. After holding academic and administrative posts, John Neumaier became the president of Minnesota State University Moorhead (1958–1968), and then SUNY New Paltz (1968–1972). He will be remembered for his love of learning, his care for his students, and his unrelenting efforts to think and write about social justice.

Tom Grunfeld

When I arrived at the Metropolitan Center of Empire State College in January 1978, there were only about 12 or so full-time faculty members, and they were rather evenly divided between us younger folks and older members who had already had long and full academic lives before joining ESC. Some, in fact, had come out of retirement. John Neumaier was one of the latter group and a leading advocate of the principle that tenured faculty had to act as mentors and protectors of their younger, and more vulnerable, colleagues.

John welcomed me with open arms. He acted as my mentor as I adapted myself to this radically different environment (no semesters, no grades, no departments, no classes, etc.). I could always go to him for guidance and instruction, which, in the early months, was often. He did a great deal to make me feel comfortable, and competent, in this environment.

These older faculty members at Metro were not all sold on the principles of the college, and they often resisted some of the college’s policies and instructions to the point that the center came to be seen as the “black sheep” of the family, so to speak. But John was very

careful that only tenured faculty’s names were on documents, that votes were only by secret ballot, that resistance came only from those who the college could not retaliate against.

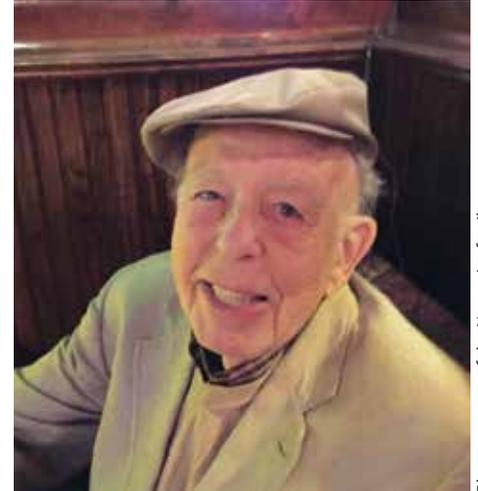
John was a man of principle and a wonderful colleague, and I recall that the center felt much emptier when he retired.

Ruth Goldberg

John Neumaier was a family friend and a colleague of my father when I was growing up. He was a fascinating character to me in my childhood. I knew that he had narrowly escaped from Nazi Germany as a teenager, and that many members of his family and friends of his youth were murdered in the concentration camps. And yet, unlike the other Holocaust survivors I knew who were embittered by a deep pessimism about the world, John was energetic and upbeat, a man who took joy in living.

Emphatic in his speech and movement, John was a tall man with a big smile and a deep, booming “hello!” He had an Old World aesthetic in crisp suits, ties, hats, raincoats and an iconic leather briefcase. He spoke seven languages, and even if you didn’t know that, you might have guessed at his capability from being in his presence. His intelligence seemed palpable. I remember that he would bend down to look me closely in the eye when we spoke, giving his full attention to even the smallest exchange, and I can still hear his strong German accent and the warmth and enthusiasm in his voice.

A number of the founding mentors of ESC were innovators and iconoclasts who had left tenure at other institutions to come and be a part of the exciting new educational experiment at SUNY. John, in particular, had not only already had a distinguished career as an administrator who pioneered the racial integration of college campuses in the 1950s and ’60s, but by the time he signed on to be a



John Neumaier

Photo courtesy of the Neumaier family.

“rank and file” mentor at ESC, he had already been a legendary college president. As the president of SUNY New Paltz in 1970, John had famously halted the National Guard at the gates and turned them away, insisting that they would not enter his campus where 1,000 students had occupied the administration building and called for a university shutdown in protest of the Vietnam War and the shootings of students at Kent State, which had happened only days earlier. Whenever I pass through the campus of SUNY New Paltz, I try to imagine John there that day: a college president bravely protecting the student protesters who had taken over his campus.

I knew something about John’s contribution as an ESC mentor because I knew one of his first mentees, Mary Solazzo, someone who had once dreamed but never believed that she would someday be a college graduate. Mary had grown up in Wales, and had not been able to pass her entry exams to go on for higher education in the U.K. This was a profound disappointment, but she figured she just wasn’t “book-smart” and put aside her dreams of being a social worker. Years later, she came to the newly-founded ESC in New York, and John became her mentor, encouraging her to

pursue her degree and then go straight on for her MSW, which she finished with distinction. She often spoke of John's pivotal role in her life, and I still think of his attributes as the ones that make the biggest difference to students who don't yet believe in their abilities: warmth, kindness, connection and close attention, encouragement, and modeling an example of possibility.

I helped John pack up his office when he retired from teaching at ESC in the 1990s, but retirement was just a way for him to focus more fully on the pursuit of social change. He remained a tireless political activist until his death, writing a regular column for the Kingston *Daily Freeman* and lending his time and energy to numerous causes.

It's only recently that I've begun to consider what that kind of dedication costs a person over a lifetime of political activism – the constant disappointments and lost battles and wear of being the underdog in championing progressive causes against more powerful opponents. It's easy to lose hope, it's tempting to turn inward, and it's easy to become cynical; so the example that John modeled for us in his life is all the more remarkable: in response to hate, he became an unwavering advocate of progress, education and justice.

Bob Carey

A committed intellectual, John really made ideas sing. He was literate and engaging and I seem to recall that Thursday – one of the days he was at the Metro Center (remember that the center at that point in time could have been at 300 Park Ave. South or in the “building from Hell” [666 Broadway and Bond St.]) – was his Xeroxing day. He liked the idea of the thing. I have done a fair amount of moving around the college over the years, but his coming in from Poughkeepsie on a regular basis had a touch of the heroic to it. A valued colleague.

Alan Mandell

It was one of my first All College Meetings. We were at the Gideon Putnam Hotel in Saratoga. I knew only the colleagues from what was then called the Lower Hudson Unit. One of the guest speakers was a SUNY administrator who was introduced by our then-president, Jim Hall. After this man's talk (the contents of which I have no memory), Jim asked for comments. There was silence, which struck me as a bit embarrassing. Then a very elegantly dressed man (yikes, did this guy seem out of place to me) slowly rose and, just as slowly, buttoned his double-breasted suit. He thanked the guest, and told him

that he appreciated his talk. And then, with what seemed to me perfect sincerity, John Neumaier said something like: “I think your plans are well thought out; the logic of your argument is impeccable. I again thank you; and, may I suggest, there is only one detail that you left out. Your vision of the university works beautifully if you were to eliminate one obstacle: get rid of all the students.” I also can't remember how everyone responded to John's stunning performance (did we nervously laugh? Did the silence continue even after John took his seat?). Wow, I thought.

I'll never forget John's style, his humor and his genuine interest in his students, whoever they were. And then, always, there were his decades and decades of writing about justice. In the Kingston *Daily Freeman*, to which he was a regular contributor, John wrote the following (01 November 1998) after his visit to Frankfurt, Germany, where he spoke to high school students in a school he, himself, had attended: “Once more I appreciated how important it is not only to champion freedom but to practice it – not only for one's own welfare but for that of one's fellow human beings, regardless of race, religious belief, social status, or sexual orientation.” Thanks, John.

“Discussion, if conducted critically and effectively, helps to create a democratic classroom in which the teacher is not the dominant voice transmitting knowledge or ideology. Rather, students would have increased chances to collect, consider and debate the diverse viewpoints of their peers, and thus they would gain practice constructing knowledge through peer collaboration. Many online educators also share this perspective and have argued that time for reflection, the complex cognitive activities involved in written communication, and the quick access to multiple resources can all contribute to deeper learning and increased opportunities to learn from diverse sources. ...”

– Alice Lai, “An Inquiry into Adult Students’ Learning through Discussion”

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Spring 2009, p. 5

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 lifelong curiosity and critical inquiry;

- provide students with skills, insights and competencies that support successful college study.

We value learning-mentoring processes that:

- emphasize dialogue and collaborative approaches to 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.

Submissions to *All About Mentoring*

If you have a scholarly paper-in-progress or a talk that you have presented, *All About Mentoring* would welcome it. If you developed materials for your students that may be of good use to others, or have a comment on any part of this issue, or on topics/concerns relevant to our mentoring community, please send them along.

If you have a short story, poem, drawings or photographs, or have reports on your reassignments and sabbaticals, *All About Mentoring* would like to include them in an upcoming issue.

Email submissions to Alan.Mandell@esc.edu.

Submissions to *All About Mentoring* can be of varied length and take many forms. (Typically, materials are no longer than 7,500 words.) It is easiest if materials are sent via email to Mandell as Microsoft Word attachments. In terms of references and style, *All About Mentoring* uses APA rules (please see the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th ed. [Washington, DC: APA, 2010] or http://image.mail.bfwpub.com/lib/feed1c737d6c03/m/1/BSM_APA_update_2010.pdf).

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