**Track for Transformative Curricula**

IAMSR Conference

May 18 – 20, 2017

A growing number of professionals in higher education, business and society recognize the need to engage students as whole people who need more than knowledge and skills to flourish. The evolving needs of our students reflect changes in society that have extended the period of maturing and character formation into the late twenties (Arnett, 2000). In response, academics and practitioners have begun experimenting with transformative curricula and reporting highly positive outcomes for individual students that also indicate pro-social benefits for society.

Definition: At this early stage, there are no widely accepted definitions for transformative curricula, but the works of Mezirow, Piaget and Heifetz are often cited. Merzirow’s concise description serves as a guidepost for the conference:

*Learning becomes transformative when an incomplete, distorted, inauthentic, or otherwise unjustified assumption is replaced with a new or transformed point of view…resulting in a more differentiated, complex, inclusive, reflective meaning structure as a guide to action.* Jack Mezirow, 1995, pp. 222-223

Creating a community of scholars

Exploratory research indicates a rich variety of teacher motivations, approaches and outcomes. Threads that connect these varied and highly innovative courses include stimulating students to reflect on meaning, purpose, values and direction. Discerning the kinds of persons they wish to become and how they will contribute to others are often listed as outcomes. Highly positive student evaluations, anecdotal evidence and studies on specific courses indicate that we are touching lives at a deep level. Students in business, engineering and hard sciences may benefit as much as students in the humanities when approaches are adapted to their needs and mindsets.

Most scholars creating and teaching these transformative courses seem to be operating on their own initiative and frequently in the face of indifference or outright opposition from other faculty. A few administrators have taken notice and provide encouragement. There is a need for more rigorous research into the nature and benefits of transformative curricula, both to improve outcomes and to overcome skepticism in academe. Kindred spirits need a means to remain in touch, to share ideas and to collaborate on research.

The transformative curriculum track invites scholars to share approaches, best practices, student responses, measures of success and obstacles we face. We will host a PDW aimed at creating a community of scholars around mechanisms that promote communication, sharing ideas and data, and collaboration on research. We will also consider how to connect with related communities such as Positive Organizational Scholarship.

Faculty Preparation: A passionate, committed and well-prepared teacher is central to any transformative curriculum. We welcome presentations on the formation and preparation of such teachers. Where do such teachers find their inspiration? How do they stay focused on stimulating growth in their students rather than promoting their own worldviews?

How do teachers go about their own transformation? Anecdotal evidence indicates that some teachers create transformative courses as a result of personal experiences that opened new vistas or enabled them to overcome a personal crisis.

Professor Jody Fry (Texas A&M) will conduct a PDW on personal transformation and how to apply those lessons learn appropriately in the classroom.

Dr. Claudio Senna Venzke of Unisinos University (Brazil) will present his research on using mindfulness and related tools for faculty development. We are putting together a PDW on mindfulness for faculty. Contacts: dharris@walton.uark.edu, senna@portoweb.com.br

Other PDWs and symposia will focus on integration of tools and techniques such as meditation and mindfulness into transformative curricula.

Research to Date

Scholars and practitioners are encouraged to share research lessons learned from their own teaching through paper presentations, symposia, PDWs, or poster sessions. Exploratory research is welcome. Here are examples of some research to date.

* The Tyson Center for Faith and Spirituality in the Workplace (Walton College of Business) conducted a 10-question survey in MSR that yielded 60 respondents, 45 of whom had created or modified a course. The survey results provided insights into motivations and desired outcomes, approaches and best practices. A panel of four scholars examined and commented on the results in MONTH 2016. A summary of the webinar and the data are posted on the Tyson Center website: <http://tfsw.uark.edu/resources.php#videos>

AOM 2016 offered multiple papers and PDWs related to transformative curricula. Among these:

* The Transformational Learning and Teaching PDW at AOM 2016 (Quinn, Kanov, Ciporen, and Lavine) conducted a survey which asked participants to cite experiences as students, successful and unsuccessful teaching experiences and what they most wanted to learn in the PDW. The PDW compared survey results (46 participants) with existing literature and referenced the work of Mezirow, Piaget and Heifetz. The survey results were generally consistent with the literature but often expanded upon it, offering significant insights, and indicating the need for more extensive research. The PDW divided participants into groups to explore tool design. The survey and results of brainstorming on tool design have not been published though may be available from the organizers.
* An AOM 2016 symposium on Teaching about Religion, Spirituality and Leadership in Management and Leadership Courses (Allen, Williams, Delbecq, Fry, and Goldman Schuyler) explored the connection between meaningful work and the religious and spiritual lives of individuals. The symposium was designed to “support educators who aim to explore religious and spiritual themes in their classes, with a focus on preparing students to work in spiritually and religiously diverse contexts, and connect to faith and spiritual practices in management roles. The symposium presented an instructional video which can be used in class and/or for faculty training.
* Professors Susan Case and Edward Chavez (Case Western Reserve) presented a paper entitled: “Integrating Religious Identity into the Classroom: Student Transformation Through Moral Conversation.”

***The Management Teaching Review* will do a special issue, open only to participants in IAMSR**. This will provide an excellent forum for innovative teaching ideas and practices to reach a wider audience. For more on the criteria for selection, go to the MTR Website: <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/management-teaching-review/journal202457#description>