Leadership Through Self Transformation

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In the Spring of 2006 I taught PHIL 3150: Race and Gender issues for the first time. In my preparation for the course I was overwhelmed by my own lack of education. I was humbled by the experience and motivated to inform all of my teaching by what I came to understand through teaching the course.

Years later, in the Spring of 2013, I was again asked to teach the course and felt more prepared. Though I introduced substantial changes to the course, I was again overwhelmed by my own lack of education. I was humbled by the experience and motivated to inform all of my teaching by what I came to understand through teaching the course.

Throughout the 2014-15 academic year I met biweekly with the members of my ECDLC group and we explored issues related to race, privilege and power across campus. We invited the chief of police and members of University Relations to a meeting so we could understand the university’s policies governing the text messages that are distributed to the community when something we could understand the university’s policies governing the text messages that are distributed to the community when something.

I also was asked by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to be a co-facilitator for the Religion, Faith, Ethics, and Belief in Secular Institutions of Higher Learning, Community. This experience led me to being asked to facilitate a cultural humility training for several student groups at Sincereuse Health Center.

The first significant effect of my attending NCORE was to energize my 2014-15 ECDLC group. We decided to work toward sending members of our learning community to a future conference and to do so by presenting a poster at the 2016 conference, sharing with other large public universities the possibilities offered by learning communities.

My students responded very positively to the experience and motivated to inform all of my teaching by what I came to understand through teaching the course.

As soon as I returned from NCORE 2016, those of us who’d been to NCORE decided to advocate for sending a larger cohort and for taking students. Independently, we raised about $30,000 from almost all the Colleges and several other units on campus, and recruited eight undergraduate students to attend NCORE 2017.

I also was a member of the College of Arts and Sciences Diversity and Inclusion Committee throughout the year, and co-facilitated the Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender Inclusion in Higher Education Learning Community.

In the summer sessions in 2017 I implemented some significant changes to my courses. In particular, I began incorporating the facilitation skills I’d been using elsewhere on campus. These changes corresponded with significant improvements in my evaluations. After piloting these changes, I implemented them more fully in my academic year courses.

I participated on WMU’s Diversity Council throughout the year, and facilitated cultural humility workshops for every student group at WMU’s Sincereuse Health Center. In addition, I co-facilitated the Disability, Access, and Holistic Inclusion in Higher Education Learning Community, expanding my awareness of the needs of people across campus and the community.

I also continued to alter the way I deliver class content, including implementing major changes to incorporating inclusivity and equity topics in some of my courses. My students responded very favorably.

My role as mentor and co-facilitator of the Graduate Student Teaching Intensive in the summer of 2018 included a 90-minute inclusion and diversity training modeled on the work of master facilitators Diane Goodman and Lee Mun Wah, and developed from the workshops and trainings I’d conducted previously at WMU. Many participants reported being profoundly affected by the training, suggesting to me that my continued self-work is effective.

I’ve continued to modify my courses; I’ve included authors and contributors from identities and social locations I’d previously neglected to include or incorporate. I’ve continued to advocate for those marginalized or oppressed by others, and to hold myself accountable for my own failures in these regards. I’ve continued to agree to participate as a mentor or facilitator in workshops and elsewhere, even when (perhaps especially when) I feel that I’m being called beyond my level of comfort.

Our poster proposal was accepted (the poster remains available for viewing at the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and Dalee Camp and I presented the poster at the conference in San Francisco.

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Special Thanks
All of my successes and any influence I’ve had on others has been the result of collaborations, usu/with my colleagues, and often spanning years of work. All of these people associated with Western Michigan University (and more) have been mentors, guides, and allies in my journey: Mimi Abdul, Jane Baas, Lisa Batten, Andrea Beach, Dalee Camp, Lauren Carew, Jeff Carr, Adriana Carvall, Ellis DeCamp, Lauren Freeman, Jan Gabel-Goos, Sarah Good, Katrina Goddall, Christine Iademarco, Mariam Konaté, Carla Koretsky, Tom Kustrzewski, Monica Ligon-Abrams, Frederiah Manash, Trevor McLeod, Nate Nguyen, Shirene Obana, Kelly O’Reilly, Lindsay Palar, Staci Penman-Carly, Chris Robinson, Kylie Schultz, Davielle Simons, Sue Staglin, Code Stone, Martha Warfield, Tiffany White, Kevin Worden, and perhaps most importantly, the thousands of students who’ve often unknowingly been some of my most incredible teachers.

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