

## **Editors' Introduction: (Re)Setting Precedents**

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**Welcome to this issue of *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching and Learning Journal*, our last for 2020.**

### **News and Notes from the Editorial Office**

- We wish all of our readers, reviewers, and authors a merry (and safe) holiday season, if you choose to celebrate. Our editorial office will remain closed for individual inquiries during the regular schedule for our university, which includes an extended hiatus between December 21<sup>st</sup> and January 4<sup>th</sup>. You are welcome to submit reviews or manuscripts at any time through our online system.
- “Historia Reimagined: Storytelling and Identity in Crosscultural Educational Development” (Cruz, L, Manginelli, A., Parker, M., & Strahlman, H.), from the 2018 issue of *Transformative Dialogues*, was recently featured prominently at the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network Conference. We are grateful to keynote speakers Este Jordan and Linda Stewart for highlighting the work of these authors and the journal. [Authors, if your work with *Transformative Dialogues* has been recognized elsewhere, we would be pleased to provide a similar “shout out” in a future editors’ introduction.]

## **Editors' Introduction**

This has been an unprecedented year in higher education, a statement that seems simultaneously understated in emphasis and overstated in practice. From the perspective of research on teaching and learning, the use of the term “unprecedented” is telling, as the switch to remote teaching was sufficiently rapid that it was done without the benefit of consulting the increasingly robust evidence base for effective on-line teaching (Cruz & Grodziak, 2020). That said, our prior research was conducted in very different conditions that we are currently facing, suggesting that instead of relying on those precedents, we might find light in these dark times by rethinking teaching and learning, engaging in deep reflection on why we do this work, and connecting to others who are doing the same. While not all of the articles in this issue were written under the conditions of our global pandemic, they are prescient in how they model conversation (i.e. dialogue), collaboration, and compassion.

Several of the articles in this issue focus on rethinking teaching and learning via a course design project. Serslev, Binkin and Hadjipieris, for example, describe a partnership between faculty members and educational developers who developed an intensive honors course focused on public health. In their newly redesigned course, students work in inter-professional teams that are charged with developing and implementing engaged research projects, all in consultation with a wide range of faculty mentors and community partners. Janzen and Ford, two faculty members, present the results of their redesign of a significant civic engagement project, which could be modified to fit into a wide range of introductory courses. Among other lessons learned, they emphasize how transformation, whether on the individual, course, or institutional level, happens one step at a time.

Both of the projects described above emphasize changes that give students a stronger voice in their own learning experiences, a theme that is echoed in several other contributions to this issue. Christian, Kennette, Bosomworth, and Hawkins provide a framework for thinking about student ownership of learning that includes curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular dimensions. Rosenhan, Akbar, and Numajiri describe the challenges and opportunities inherent in bringing graduate and post-doctoral students into the work of assessment. Vandegrift, Barber, Vitale, and Ward describe the redesign of a training course for teaching assistants (both undergraduate and graduate) that provides the students with opportunities not only to practice teaching but also to collaborate with faculty on the design and implementation of the curriculum that they will be teaching.

Every article in this issue underscores the value of collaboration, whether with students or colleagues, staff members, community partners, or other stakeholders. Simmons and Simmons, for example, discuss how a faculty member and the head of a community theater co-created a workshop that uses dramatic theory to strengthen the connections between the teacher/actor and students/audience. Sparks and Selig also emphasize the importance of connecting with an audience, in this case students in on-line courses, as a means for improving both the quality and quantity of formal student feedback, including student evaluations of teaching (SETs). Kelley, Arce-Trigatti, and Garner, a graduate student and two faculty members, respectively, reflect on their shared experience of a community of practice focused on inclusive teaching in which they went through the often challenging work of confronting individual and institutional biases, each taking their own distinctive path but working through the process together.

As part of their conclusion, Kelley and his co-authors acknowledge the ongoing nature of equity work in higher education, as they invite others to follow in their footsteps. They are not the only contributors to project their work into an unknowable but hopeful, future. Vandegrift and her colleagues, for example, ground the work of training teaching and learning assistants into a wider vision, noting “they can continue the cycle of systemic change in STEM education by mentoring their own students to become excellent, inclusive educators.” Finally, Min, Cruz, and Serrano-Martinez, who write about a disrupted short-term study abroad program in Puerto Rico, note “the global quarantine has served as a catalyst for educators to envision ways in which students ‘abroad’ are not just tourists, or even learners, but rather co-creators of the brave, new, post-pandemic world which we are all preparing to inhabit.”