

THE ANTIOCHIAN

Leader SUMMER 2020

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over

like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags

like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

LANGSTON HUGHES
1951

A DREAM DEFERRED

Hughes, L. (1995). *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*. (A. Rampersad & D. E. Roessel, Eds.) (First Vintage Classics). Vintage Classics.

ANTIOCH UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE

Provost's Column



I start this Provost's Column with a few words about the cover. For me, it is one of the most powerful poems by Langston Hughes, the great American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, columnist, and one of the leaders of the Harlem Renaissance. It has been decades since I opened up my worn copy of the *Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* but I pulled it off the shelf last week. His poems, written during the 1920-60s provide powerful insight into America then ... *and now!* His writing was never obscure nor out of reach. He spoke the truth about deep-seated and systemic racism, structural inequalities that brutally punished with unrelenting poverty and unequal access to education, jobs and futures. He painted narratives of the lives of so many people of color destroyed by hate and hopelessness. That is why I picked that poem for the cover. What happens to a dream deferred?

I could have drawn from so many of his works. When Hughes wrote, "Let America Be America Again," he holds up for our examination the hypocrisy of this "land of opportunity," where equality is supposed to be in the very air we breathe, and then his powerful refrain, "There's never been equality for me. Nor freedom in this 'homeland of the free.'" These words ring as true in 2020 as they did when they were penned in 1936.

Today, as I write these paragraphs, George Floyd's funeral service took place, two weeks after he was brutally murdered by Minneapolis police, those horrific 8:46 minutes captured on a cellphone, and now shared across this nation and world. That single death is one of hundreds, thousands, over decades of killings of black and brown men and women. It was not a solo act and should not be understood as one. It is part of a much larger context of systemic racism. This time, the groundswell demand for justice, equality, an end to police violence, and for true and profound structural reform has taken to the streets in cities large and small, and the protestors come in all colors and ages and nationalities. Enough is enough. **BLACK LIVES MATTER.**

A NYC-based friend just shared with me the words she heard from a Bronx legislator,

This is not a tagline;

This is not a hashtag;

This is not a statement;

This is a movement that requires action from all of us.

So, what are the right actions of the Graduate School of Leadership and Change? Two Carnegie Mellon University black faculty members wrote in their powerful op-ed, “Higher Ed’s Toothless Response to the Killing of George Floyd (England, J and Purcell, R. June 8, 2020) that so many of the official statements from university leaders fail to name what is going on, racism and police brutality. “We have a chance – indeed a duty,” the authors note “to elevate the discourse on race, class, police

violence and human dignity. We absolutely must force conversations about the spirit and philosophy that demean so many blacks and relegate us to the scrap heap in this society.”

We have a chance and a duty. It is the chance to make profound personal and structural changes. I find myself in alignment with the words of the NYU President who wrote to his campus constituents (May 31, 2020), “This is one of those moments when reason and knowledge and discourse, which university citizens prize so highly, often doesn’t seem like enough of a response. How could

they be, when these deaths keep recurring, and when racism continues to manifest itself, even in our own community?

But reason, discourse, study, evidence, analysis—those are our tools, and events like the killing of George Floyd should not cause us to set them aside, but instead to redouble our exertions to use them in the cause of addressing racism, xenophobia, violence, and hate to underscore social justice, human dignity, inclusion, and peace.”

I am in awe of the work of so many of our students, alumni and faculty in this regard. In our GSLC community, we have neighborhood activists, front-line healthcare workers, educators K-12 through university, mental health professionals, non-profit directors, business executives, consultants, artists

and poets, municipal leaders and so forth. And, they are seizing the chance and taking on the duty.

Many of you are bringing your scholar-practitioner insights, compassion and outrage to your work as leaders, learners and practitioners. I am heartened to know that your involvement in this doctoral program gives you strength to continue the fight for justice. While it is never enough, after seeking input from students, alumni and faculty, I am also pleased to announce the GSLC Scholarship for Justice Initiative (p 11).

The following part of this Provost’s Column was written in early May when I was initially preparing materials for this newsletter.

It is a mid-May grey morning in Los Angeles. These past two months seem unreal. Every day brings more news of COVID’s toll in lives and jobs across the globe. We see health infrastructures pushed beyond their limits. Economic infrastructures collapsing in ways that seemed unimaginable just a few months ago. Our broken system, fully exposed. We see the rise of hate and racism and conspiracy theories running rampant. Vitriolic demands for one’s individual freedom to do what one wants angrily and often violently clashes with our collective responsibility to save lives. And then the pockets of mutuality and care shine through in communities across the country and world. Farm laborers, health care workers, scientists, medical professionals, community drivers, emergency front-liners, teachers ... and neighbors. Each and every one making a difference in one life, in hundreds of lives. Before just launching into my column, I want to raise my thoughts to what all of this is really about – people – to remember all of them – those we’ve lost, those who are brave in the face of risk.

So, what are the right actions of the Graduate School of Leadership and Change?

Of course, it is also a time to witness and reflect on leadership at its finest and its worst. The bad fills me with rage. I thought about psychoanalyst Erich Fromm's diagnosis of "malignant narcissism," personalities that lie on the borderline between sanity and insanity with characteristics of ruthless egocentrism, lack of empathy, aggressive and divisive behavior, a grandiose sense of entitlement, a belief that the ends justify the means as long as they get their way. Fromm wrote about it more than 60 years ago in the period of amazing scholarship that emerged in the post-World War II era of critical reflection. Alas, we witness leadership of this type across the world, be it the United States, Brazil, or India.

This is in stark contrast to what we see in Germany, New Zealand, or Taiwan – what does this pandemic teach us about the ways women are stepping up? What can we learn about leadership in times of crisis, the type of leadership that can hold people in distress, build bridges of care and mutuality, that speaks the truth and helps people understand, that demonstrates high emotional intelligence and the ability to be humble in the face of not knowing, and who are guided by a strong ethical compass. With them we stand.

I want to take some guidance from those I respect right now and first, provide you all with a clear sense of the impact of this pandemic on what we value; second, try to provide some meaning-making out of all of this; and third, hold our community as we pass through this time and look forward.

The pandemic's most immediate impact on GSLC was the need, beginning with the mid-March Seattle residency, to quickly create (within less than two weeks of time) a virtual 4-day intensive. While it wasn't perfect, first- and second-year students were magnanimous in their appreciation of the efforts of faculty and staff to offer quality engagement and protect the health and safety of all involved. The third-year Santa Barbara residency was also entirely virtual. We shortened sessions, redesigned sessions, and added unique opportunities for small group discussion. It is bittersweet, of course, and we can't try to pretend that it is business as usual just doing it by Zoom. It isn't the same but we know it can still be a powerful learning experience.

In addition to the shift of the Spring gatherings, we've added additional formal and informal ways for connecting with individual faculty, staff and with each other. The Weekly Round-Up offerings seem to be growing in popularity across cohorts and that truly makes me feel so good about our little GSLC world. Members of our doctoral community sharing stories, learning they literally live around the corner from each other, making plans, sharing books, helping out. WOW.

We're learning a lot about what's important, what makes us special as we look forward into truly an unknown future. It's important because we don't know when we can be together again physically in residency. We need to think fully about how to ensure what is essential about our program is strengthened. And, as you'll see from my "Words Matter" piece (p 12), it isn't the tools. I've been doing a lot of thinking about who we are and what we must hold on to, even as so much changes.

At our core, I want to posit the **three "Cs,"** that we need to be thinking holistically about strengthening and in some cases

reimagining **Content, Community and Care...from Anywhere!** To me, it is the combination of these three Cs that speaks about the special nature of Antioch.

... what does this pandemic teach us about the ways women are stepping up?

... I am also pleased to announce the **GSLC** **Scholarship for Justice Initiative.**

CONTENT

Obviously, this refers to the high quality, uniquely designed, capabilities-based interdisciplinary curriculum in the scholarship, research and practice of leadership and change for scholar-practitioners who gain the knowledge and skills to rigorously/vigorously inquire into the thorny issues of your fields and produce research that can improve leadership and change practices and further social, economic, environmental and racial justice.

It's powerful content, very Antiochian. We need to keep the curriculum bold and inspiring and current and cutting edge. But that isn't enough.

COMMUNITY

In our case, this refers to our powerfully diverse community of socially engaged learners connected in multiple ways within and across cohorts and with alumni, committed to each other's learning with a collective sense of shared accountability (as opposed to isolation and competition found in more traditional PhD programs). It is about becoming and being a member of a lifelong learning community of socially engaged leaders and change agents for the common good, networked from matriculation to decades after graduation.

It also refers to the intense high-touch connections among faculty and students and between the faculty themselves.

I think this is an area that makes us very special and as we go forward into this unknown future, we must be very explicit about building and sustaining community, despite ... no precisely because of ... the physical distancing. This will be an area that will need all of our attention and our imagination.

CARE

Finally, for me this refers to the personalized attention and high-quality service that supports our learners, from the moment one inquires into the program to the years after commencement. I'm referring to the excellent and abundant library and writing services almost upon demand, to imaginatively designed AT/IT user-friendly services and systems to support doctoral learners from anywhere at anytime, to one-stop shop student services from staff to easily-accessed forms and processes 24/7 anywhere, anytime, with excellent response time, and individualized high-touch attention. I'm also referring to the fundamental nature and approach of our relational advising, teaching and supervision.

So here too, we need to be able to articulate care at every step of the student journey.

Each of these **three C's** are important elements of our distinctive low-residency, high-quality doctoral program model. We need to consider, reinforce and/or redesign for the foreseeable future until we are physically together again. We have a lot going for us. We have 20 years of a successful blended model of learning. We are not location bound. We have three new faculty joining us to build a future and join an already exceptional and creative team of faculty and staff. We have a robust Cohort 20 walking in the door in a few weeks. We have much to build on.

I send a big hug out to all of you, in peace with health and justice.



Laurien

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WELCOME

GSLC Welcomes Two New Faculty Members

IN SUMMER 2020

The Graduate School of Leadership and Change (GSLC) embarked on an extensive search this past fall to welcome a new wave of faculty to join our learning community. Since the initiation of the search, we have diligently worked to vet over 500 applicants and in the midst of so much going so wrong in so many places, we are thrilled to be able to focus on building an amazing future. That said, this Summer 2020, Dr. Beth Mabry will be joining as a full-time Professor of Leadership and Change and Dr. Lemuel Watson will be joining as the GSLC's very first Senior Scholar Fellow. Dr. Harriet Schwartz will be joining as a fulltime Professor of Relational Practice and Higher Education in 2021-22. Her interview will be in the subsequent newsletter. Dr. Laurien Alexandre connected with Beth and Lem for an interview for this issue of the newsletter. **Enjoy!**

DR. BETH MABRY

Beth Mabry has over 20 years of experience in interdisciplinary research and mentoring doctoral students, as well as a decade of applied experience in the nonprofit sector and with a Fortune 500 company. Beth is a sociologist (PhD, Virginia Tech) and spent three years as a postdoctoral fellow in the National Institute of Aging's Interdisciplinary Training in Aging at the University of Southern California. She is the author or co-author of more than 20 scholarly publications and over 25 national and international presentations. Beth most recently served as a Professor of Sociology at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Beth's complete CV and selected writings can be found [here](#).



LAURIEN ALEXANDRE (LA): I remember you shared with us a story during the search process that really stood out for me. You said that you saw the job announcement for the position back in Fall 2019. You put it down, put it away, but then couldn't stop thinking about us. Finally, you applied. What did you read that caught your interest and wouldn't let go?

BETH: I was struck by the innovative, low-residency approach to the program. In the past, I'd noticed how much working professionals need flexibility and time to read, write, and reflect so that they can get the most out of their doctoral program learning experiences. The intentional structure of the Antioch Graduate School program reflects graduate education done right, especially for early and mid-career professionals with busy, full lives. The position's uncanny fit with my own background and experience, coupled with a chance to work with students in such a remarkable program, made it just too good not to pursue.

LA: What do you find most appealing and distinctive about the program?

BETH: The culture and people who make up the learning community—students, staff, and faculty—are simultaneously impressive and down-to-earth. So much is distinctive about the program: the Antioch educational mission, the emphasis within the doctoral program on leading meaningful change, and the carefully integrated curriculum that fosters scholarship and student success. I cannot imagine a more supportive, thriving environment for all of us.

LA: We have designed this program for cross-sector scholar-practitioners who are leading positive change with the skills and knowledge as responsible leaders and ethical researchers to improve the lives of those they serve. Can you identify the top skills/knowledge you bring that you feel could contribute most to this endeavor?

BETH: As a sociologist, my lens focuses on ways that social identities and multiple layered contexts impinge on leadership and the problems leaders face. I bring several decades of experience working on dissertation research with scholar-practitioners from an array of fields, from health and human services, education, public safety, business, nonprofits, and government. My skill set is built around supporting students in applying the tools of theory and research to address questions and issues that matter to them and that impact policy and practice. What I find incredibly engaging and gratifying is working creatively and collaboratively on puzzle-solving. Matching methods to the challenge, from the gamut of quantitative and qualitative approaches, existing and original data, in ways that contribute to effective interventions and the thrill of discovery.

LA: What leadership and/or change scholars or practitioners have most influenced your path in this field?

BETH: There are so many! The richest material for me comes from people working at the intersections of leadership scholarship, practice, and development. W.E.B. DuBois, James MacGregor Burns, Alice Eagley, Ron Heifetz, Joanne Ciulla, William Julius Wilson, Devah Pager, and Edgar Schein, are among the influential figures who come to mind. The reflective practice work of leader-educator scholars Parker Palmer and Judy Sorum Brown are others.

Practitioner and friend James Edwartoski grounds me in everyday realities of leader-learners by sharing his experiences as an executive of large retirement life plan communities and a leadership educator in his field. I perpetually feel I'm only scratching the

surface of learning the accumulated wisdom in this multidisciplinary field, so I am influenced by many people doing all sorts of different kinds of work.

LA: I can't imagine a stranger time to be conducting a faculty search. The entire search process was, in fact, done without us getting together physically. While that was never the expectation, what did you learn about our program and Graduate School during the search process or perhaps, because of it, that stands out for you.

BETH: The sense of community came through so clearly, even without being with one another in the same physical space. In my interactions with everyone, I felt great warmth and welcome. It spoke volumes to me that the focus always remained on serving the students with care and quality. And, the fabric of the Graduate School culture clearly is flexible and strong enough to stretch and to hold the people and processes of the program under the challenging circumstances we are experiencing. People never seemed to be scrambling or worried that things would not work out. Taking things in stride, everyone adapted as needed and carried on. Leadership in action!

LA: If we were doing this interview a few years from now (and I hope we do!), and I asked you to look back on your time in the program, what would you have liked to have learned? Done? In what ways would you like to have seen yourself grow?

BETH: It's humbling to consider. There is such a wealth of knowledge to garner from the program faculty--my new colleagues--who are leaders in their fields. I expect to learn a lot about the well-developed pedagogies and processes that they've pioneered and refined for advanced scholar-practitioners. I know I will learn tremendously, too, from the students who bring their own diversity of expertise to the program. It would be marvelous to look back in a few years and appreciate shared successes in tackling new research challenges with students working on their dissertation projects. Learning and doing these things, practicing new skills, would be enriching my own growth.

LA: I was struck by the excitement you bring to looking forward, learning new things, making the most of every year ahead. I wonder how you've been able to hold that focus forward during this most difficult time in our lives. Where do you find strength and hope?

BETH: On the whole, I'm a positive person, though I admit to a bit of a jaundiced eye and sense of humor. These days, the roller coaster ride of information, emotions, and distractions can get overwhelming for most people, at least from time to time, and sometimes hour to hour. I take encouragement from the long view of humanity's resilience, persistence, and striving—and seeing these in the everyday acts of ordinary people makes me extraordinarily hopeful. There's strength, too, in simple adages, like “be kind,” “reach out,” and “make yourself useful,” that focus our attention on the importance of such simple acts. They keep me mindful of my choices in the present. And, maintaining a sense of humor, always.

LA: Would you please share something about yourself that you would like our community to know that they wouldn't learn from your CV?

BETH: Let's see. Well, I am quite practical. I'm a slow reader and writer, a hard worker, and a responsive collaborator. I like dark beer and light coffee. In the last year or so, I've become fascinated by data visualization as a way of storytelling with research. And, I need to get a hobby or two for a sense of life balance (even if life balance is a myth), a creative outlet, and self-care (you know, practicing what we preach). So, I try to get my kayak in the water now and again, pick up my guitar once in a while, tackle a home improvement project at least seasonally, go for a hike occasionally, or learn the potentials of a new gadget. I'm okay with not getting particularly good at any of these activities; I'm aspirational not ambitious. Mostly, though, I'm a genuine enthusiast of supporting leaders in learning and doing what matters most to them around improving the lives of the people they serve.

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DR. LEMUEL W. WATSON

Dr. Lemuel Watson will be joining us as the GSLC's very first Senior Scholar Fellow beginning this summer. Lem will bring his years of wisdom and experience in higher education, non-profit, and entrepreneurship to GLSC while he continues in his role as University Provost Professor at the School of Education and in the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences, and Dean of the School of Education at Indiana University Bloomington. Lem is a scholar and researcher with dozen of books and monographs on topics as broad and deep as issues of underrepresented groups, innovation in higher education, LGBTQ, talent management, spirituality, and mindful leadership. He has an extensive record as a faculty member and university academic leader, as well as being an executive coach, mindfulness teacher, philanthropist, poet, and minister. Throughout his career, he has emphasized the need to value diversity as a means to understanding our world and to enhance our understanding of ourselves. Lem completed his undergraduate degree in business from the University of South Carolina, a master's degree from Ball State University, and his doctorate from Indiana University in Bloomington. Lem's full CV and selected writings can be found [here](#).

LA: We are so thrilled that you have joined us as the Graduate School's first Senior Scholar Fellow. This is thrilling for us and I hope for you. So, what is it that you find most appealing about the Graduate School that convinced you to join us?

LEM: The quality of faculty, the diversity of students, and the mission of the Graduate School were very exciting to me as a person and professional. The interdisciplinary nature of how GSLC approaches leadership and change across multiple industries as an organization is relevant and contemporary, yet not static.

LA: You have a deep understanding of and broad experience in higher education. What do you see as the most distinctive or unique aspects of the Graduate School as you look across the landscape.

LEM: GSLC has a relevant and contemporary model of learning, teaching, and collaborating with students. Students who are highly skilled professionals and who are naturally curious about how to continue to enhance the world and their professions. GSLC's approach in working with students while mentoring them one-on-one to explore opportunities for problem-solving as they gain reputable credentials like a master's or a doctorate degree.

I sincerely believe given our current world context, GSLC's method and design for learning are at the forefront for the future of graduate programs.

LA: We have designed the programs of the Graduate School for cross-sector scholar-practitioners, to train those who are leading with the skills and knowledge as responsible leaders and socially engaged researchers to improve the lives of those they serve. Can you identify the top skills/knowledge you bring that you feel could contribute most to this endeavor in the Senior Fellows' role?

LEM: I believe my experiences with innovative partnerships, strategic design and planning, leadership, diversity, and self-exploration as leaders would be a good foundation for my contributions to the Graduate School overall, to the programs themselves, and with the students.

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LA: What leadership and/or change scholars or practitioners have most influenced your path in this field?

LEM: Thomas J. Peters, Brene Brown, Daniel Goleman, Warren Bennis, Stephen Covey, Peter Drucker, Ralph Stogdill, Carol Dweck, John Goodlad, Robert Birmbaum, Elton Mayo, Niklas Luchmann and Robert Kaplan.

LA: And, would you be willing to share what you're reading right now – what's sitting on your bookstand or kindle?

LEM: The top books on my shelf that I'm reading now or will read within the next months are:

- *On Managing Yourself*, (HBR's 10 Must Reads)
- *Hiking with Nietzsche: on Becoming Who You Are* by John Kaag, which I just finished.
- *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths* by Bruce Feller, which I just finished.
- *The Mind of the Leader: How to Lead Yourself, Your People, and Your Organization for Extraordinary Results* by Jacqueline Carter and Rasmus Hougaard
- *Begin with Yes: A Short Conversation That Will Change Your Life Forever* by Paul Boynton
- *The Invention of Surgery* by David Schneider
- *Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow* by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
- *Divine Audacity: Dare to be the Light of the World* by Linda Martella-Whitsett
- *This Day: Collected and New Sabbath Poems, 1979-2013* by Wendell Berry, which was a gift

LA: I can't imagine a stranger time to be conducting a faculty search. The entire search process was, in fact, done without us getting together physically. While that was never the expectation, what did you learn about our program and Graduate School during the search process or perhaps, because of it, that stands out for you.

LEM: What I learned from the process is that this is a wonderful opportunity to work with like-minded individuals who are intent on changing the world within their realm of control. The affirmation from the faculty and students for opportunities to help build a program with a team who are committed to the values and mission of the unit and Antioch and who welcome my contribution is exciting.

LA: If we were doing this interview a few years from now (and I hope we do!), and I asked you to look back on your time with us, what would you have liked to have learned? Done? In what ways would you like to have seen yourself grow?

LEM: I would like to have learned all I could about GSLC as a unit in order to assist with strengthening and sharing the uniqueness of the program. In addition, to learn about each student in order to support him or her to be their best in all situations, would be another. I would like to set in motion strong collaborations with faculty, students, and other organizations that would expand the GSLC brand. To assist with helping develop institutes and symposiums around students and faculty expertise would be a simple and honorable contribution that would help all involved develop and grow as individuals and change agents.

LA: I was struck by the excitement you bring to looking forward, learning new things, giving back, making a difference in the world in the years ahead. I wonder how you've been able to hold that focus forward during this most difficult time in our lives. Where do you find strength and hope?

LEM: My personal motto is the best is always yet to come. I believe in a Divine power which surrounds me. I grew up in a spiritual community and was taught the teachings of Jesus Christ. As I have grown and developed over the years, I also embrace ancestral teachings, Buddhist practices (yoga, mindfulness, etc.), and simply believe there are many ways to God. More than anything else in my life now, I attempt to take people as they are revealed without judgement. I wake up each day and believe it is a good day because I get to see it. I believe in treating others as I wish to be treated. Beyond it all, however, when I feel blue and feel my hope slipping, it is my childhood foundations and teachings rooted within the Bible that comforts me more than anything else. I wish that all individuals would find that sacred place within themselves to have peace in the midst of chaos. This has served me tremendously as a leader. ■

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I SINCERELY BELIEVE GIVEN OUR CURRENT WORLD CONTEXT, GSLC'S METHOD AND DESIGN FOR LEARNING ARE AT THE FOREFRONT FOR THE FUTURE OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS.

GSLC announces the Scholarship for Justice Initiative

Two of our graduate school's explicit program goals are to educate our students with "the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be scholar-practitioners and reflective change agents committed to leading change that furthers social, economic and environmental justice" and "to empower members of our learning community to be stewards of the common good by actively contributing to public debate and discourse." These goals couldn't be more urgent than today.

Over these past weeks I have spoken with dozens of students, alumni, and faculty to explore their ideas for GSLC's actions to embody these goals and support our community to stand up as scholar-practitioner-activists for justice, to fight racial inequality, and to further fair and just organizations and communities. As you might imagine, there are dozens of ideas. I want to be careful not to take on too much and then fail. I'd rather start small and strong and let the initiatives build over time.

This is indeed precisely the time for the boldest public voices of our GSLC community. We want to support our students and alumni in their efforts to contribute to the public debate and discourse for justice. In addition to our reaffirmed commitment to ensure that our curriculum continues to address the study, research and analysis of issues related to inclusion, marginalization, dignity, and justice we are going to put in place several efforts – some more internally focused and some externally focused – in the coming months. Initially, these will start small and be perhaps more limited than our aspirations as we see our capacity to build them forward. These will include the following:

This is indeed precisely the time for the boldest public voices of our GSLC community.

WE WILL BE:

- 1]** Increasing the number and frequency of writing workshops to help empower our students and alumni in their public voice as writers of op-eds, letters to the editor, blogs and so forth. Please watch for these to get scheduled in the GSLC calendar soon. My goal is that we will be adding several a month for the foreseeable future.
- 2]** Offering a series of presentations (Zoom talks/ conversations) on topics related to justice, particularly initially around racism, racial inequities, and justice. A number of students, graduates and faculty have volunteered to offer these. Thank you. I will be circling back to set these up.
- 3]** In the program's new learning platform, we are creating a "Justice Resource Room," which will have materials, links to sites, and discussion area. It will be open to all students and alumni.
- 4]** Finally, we will be creating a Scholarship for Justice series for the GSLC YouTube channel which, initially, will feature taped interviews with recent graduates whose dissertations have focused explicitly on issues of race and racial injustice. This is an example where I hope our initial pilot of this series will provide important learning for us and that we will be able to continue forward, interviewing future graduates on their research as well as look back into our tremendous treasure trove of dissertations from years past.

All of these GSLC initiatives, under this umbrella of Scholarship for Justice, are underway in different stages of planning. So please watch the calendar and announcements. If you have ideas, please feel free to email me directly to share. LALEXANDRE@ANTIOCH.EDU ■

WORDS MATTER:

LET'S HAVE A CONVERSATION, REFLECTIONS FROM PROVOST, DR. LAURIEN ALEXANDRE

As a doctoral program, our students and faculty are trained to choose their words carefully. We spend hours illuminating the meaning of words, understanding their implicit biases and their explicit orientations. We know that those who name a phenomenon can assert power over others, and to rename is an act of liberation. Thus, the simple act of naming “distance” education has powerfully framed our imagination or, I would argue, limited it. The teaching and learning process is not distant. At its best, it is deeply personal and highly relational. If we can unpack the words and reframe the naming to capture the most imaginative possibilities of high-quality education then I believe faculty, students and institutions have the opportunity to offer programs that blend and fuse and mash-up in delightfully creative and pedagogical powerful forms.

To say the pandemic’s impact on higher education has been dramatic is a gross understatement. A tsunami-like transition has moved courses online, created virtual classrooms, utilized remote modalities to provide education at a distance across the nation. The efforts underway by faculty and staff to ensure that students from kindergarten through graduate school can continue with their studies uninterrupted has been nothing short of Herculean. Passionate educators, overwhelmed administrators, and committed academic technologists have worked tirelessly to shift what they do and how they do it. It has been an extraordinary moment.

And that’s why it is so important at this very time to question and not simply accept the popular nomenclature. While a crisis offers the opportunity for imagining different worlds, what I’m seeing in our higher education response is a reification of directions that have been underway for decades. I’m not here to do a critique of the market economy. Rather though, I want to illustrate how words matter; they tell us how to frame and be framed. And, I think we can do better.

UNPACKING THE NAMING

Let’s tackle the meaning of the predominant words being used to talk about teaching and learning. Everywhere I look, institutions have gone ‘online’ for Spring term, colleges will be offering distance education through summer or even fall, courses are virtual as are the faculty members who deliver them. You get the picture.

Pause, and take that in. What does it really mean?

Distance, according to Merriam-Webster, is the “space between two things or people,” an “aloofness,” where “one is not connected with someone or something.” Why would we make the singular definer of education *distance*? True education cannot be distant. It holds and envelops as it empowers and transforms.

Similarly, **virtual**, is defined as “not physically existing” or being “inferred from indirect evidence.” To name education “virtual” therefore would mean it to be not real. Yet, anyone involved in deep teaching and learning knows the process holds potential for profound individual growth and transformation. More real it could not be. To make the descriptor *virtual* is a disservice to the power of learning.

Remote means “removed in space, time or relation, distant in manner.” What happened to the days when “a teacher touched my soul,” or a “book moved me profoundly,” or a topic “blew me away.” We used to imagine the moments of deep learning in their physicality, in their power to shake one’s world. So, to make the primary description of education *remote* belies the learning that takes place.

Finally, we hear a lot about **content online**. “Content” refers to something contained as in the omnipresent directive to faculty to “Load your content online, now!” Why accept that teaching and learning is reduced to “content,” packaged in modules and delivered in containers? I question this reductionist naming of one of the most powerful endeavors of being human, learning.

Long before this pandemic hit, these were contested terms that represented unsettling directions in higher education to make it more efficient, more standardized, and digestible, more accountable. It was not COVID-19 that provoked the massive shift but it is an unprecedented moment to question what has become accepted in the world around us.

Words matter and we shouldn’t settle.

REFRAMING: IN SEARCH OF A NEW WORDS AND NEW MODELS

As the founding director of our highly successful and innovative geographically-dispersed doctoral program in leadership and change now entering its 20th year, I recognize the challenge of naming and not having the right words to capture what we do. Dozens of marketing consultants over many years have told me that for “search engine optimization” we should include the descriptor, *online*, as in *online PhD*. I have consistently and emphatically said no. While more viewers might hit us, they would be misled. The program is NOT an online, virtual or remote degree for all the reasons noted above.

The defining characteristic of education is NOT the technology or tool just as it was never about the pencil or pen. In the case of our institution, Antioch University, the paramount definer is our mission-driven, personalized and experiential pedagogy (Antioch’s tripartite model) rooted in the power of education to build democracy and embody Horace Mann’s “pedagogy of love” (building and sustaining nurturant learning environments). The ultimate goal is to educate our students as compassionate citizens and socially engaged professionals committed to “furthering social, economic and environmental justice.” This is the primary descriptor of an Antioch education. Modality is only a means to this end.

University Mission

Antioch University provides learner-centered education to empower students with the knowledge and skills to lead meaningful lives and to advance social, economic, and environmental justice.

To learn more about our multi-campus system visit:

ANTIOCH.EDU



Every institution's definers may differ. For some, remote delivery, virtual learning, and distance education may be precisely who they are and what they do. My point, however, is not to deny the tools but to use them most expansively, to not let the conversation about quality education be reduced to delivering content efficiently as if the act of transmission is the purpose. We should contest frames that misrepresent relational teaching and learning as distant, that call deep engagement remote, or that confuse connectivity solely with physicality. Unless, of course, that is what institutions are doing.



So, I search for words to describe teaching and learning that does not happen in a physical building. What do we call the powerful critical interactions between faculty and students when the face-to-face moment happens on Zoom rather than in the hallway? How do we capture the powerful dynamics of a globally engaged and diverse learning community tackling the world's most complex problems in break-out rooms rather than campus classrooms?

One university colleague suggested we call it a continuum model, which is a "sequence or progression." While promising, the progression from the physical classroom, moving to mixed on-site and on-line to a completely online stage imagines learning as linear, which it is not. It fails to capture an embodied design wherein each and every learning moment holds all possibilities of connectivity at any one time.

Another suggested the term **fusion**. I like it. Fusion is about merging diverse elements into a unified whole, which releases "enormous quantities of energy." I have seen this release of energy as students transform. Fusion imagines boundary-spanning (like fusion cuisine!) that is beyond remote, or distant, or online. It resists narrow descriptors. The power of teaching and learning is greater than a single model, the naming of education must be more than a technology or Learning Management System.

Perhaps this crisis is the time to shift the conversation and in so doing, can we take back power? Remember, words matter. Can we talk about personalized pedagogy instead of content? Can we talk about cohort connectivity instead of customer accountability? Can we emphasize quality teaching and transformational learning instead of delivery models? Can we talk about access from anywhere, anytime, without reducing it to tools? Can we offer up models of energetic fusion and be imaginative rather than reductive?

It may need explaining, but so does life. It may need unpacking, but so does education. It may not be found easily by organic search optimization, but those who find it will know what we stand for. It may help our collective thinking about higher education after this pandemic subsides and we all can look forward. We continue to search for the right words to name what we do. ■

The Graduate School of Leadership and Change program supports the fight against global warming by offsetting the climate impact of all work-related air travel of program faculty and staff through annual donations that support projects involving renewable energy, energy efficiency, and reforestation.



IN MEMORIAM, REFLECTIONS ON DR. PETER VAILL

Renowned scholar Dr. Peter Vaill was a member of GSLC's faculty as Professor of Management from 2003 through 2008 when he was awarded Professor Emeritus status. He impacted our learning community in many ways and we are pleased to share these reflections from friends and colleagues. Dr. Al Guskin, Antioch Chancellor Emeritus and former GSLC faculty member shared his reflections.

I was deeply saddened by Peter Vaill's passing and it led me to reflect on the five years we spent together as faculty members. As most everyone in the Program knows Peter was a giant in the world of organizational leadership and change. In fact, my first memory of Peter was from reading his wonderful book *Managing as a Performing Art* and using it as a reading for an Antioch University Leadership retreat when I was Antioch's President in the early 1990s. But that moment pales in comparison to a phone call I received from Laurien in 2003 saying that Peter was applying for a faculty position in our PhD in Leadership and Change program. I couldn't believe it. My response was, "Let's hire him now."

We were really only a year old at the time, having just secured provisional approval by the Ohio Board of Regents. We had created an innovative highly student learning oriented hybrid program that some viewed as controversial—no buildings, no courses, no "real" library, a few faculty (a couple of whom were seen as administrators!) who lived in different parts of the country and students coming from across the country to meet in intensive residencies four times a year. In 2003 why would that be controversial!!

We had to go before the Ohio Board of Regents for permanent approval. The leadership of the Board of Regents did not believe we could entice the quality of faculty needed for a PhD program—and they said so bluntly back in 2001. Well, we had been able to recruit Elizabeth Holloway, Dick Couto, Jon Wergin and Peter Vaill! It blew their minds! And we had developed an incredible student-oriented digital library way before its time. We received permanent approval soon after the meeting.

Peter joined our program because he truly believed in the student learning focus, in always pushing the edge of educating adult practitioners to be scholar-practitioners, in a focus on whole person education and learning, and in a humanistic approach to organizational leadership.

As I think back to those days as we strove to develop a values-based, innovative, high-quality hybrid PhD program for practicing professionals, there was always the worry that others in higher education and the organizational leadership and change world would not see us as a legitimate alternative to traditional graduate education worthy of Antioch's values and the granting of a PhD. Peter's presence on our faculty created a legitimacy that was invaluable and surprising to many.

In 2008 I wrote the following on Peter's retirement: *While I did not know Peter personally prior to his becoming a faculty member in the program, since the mid-1980s (when I first became acquainted with his writings) his ideas have had a significant impact on my own thinking and work as a university leader; he has been and still is my favorite management/leadership scholar. What a wonderful treat to have him as a colleague. Teaching with him, being with him in faculty discussions and serving on a dissertation committee with him have been high points for me. I never cease to be amazed and impressed by Peter's uncompromising commitment to focusing on the student learner, by his willingness to try out new ways of doing things, by his memory for ideas that he read long ago and how he can apply them to a discussion or student work, by his insistence that leadership always deals with change, by his emphasis on the need to look at the spiritual side of leaders, and by his enormous courage and perseverance in facing life's difficult realities. It has been a privilege and pleasure to work alongside Peter for these last five years.*



As I end these reflections I would like to leave you with some quotes from Peter that reflect some of the key concepts that have influenced my own thinking over these last three decades and informed the PhD in Leadership and Change at a critical time in its formative years.

**ON PERMANENT
WHITE WATER:**

“

In the world of permanent whitewater, one cannot know where the next opportunity or threat is going to come from. Yet when it comes, a great deal depends on possessing or being able rapidly to acquire a useful way of thinking about it so that courses of action one has underway will not be shattered. This job that calls for the whole person is enormously absorbing.

The longer I have reflected on what permanent white water calls for, the more I think the ability to let go and move with the energy of the system is key. We say don't push the river.”

**ON THEORY AND
PRACTICE:**

“

Theory and practice do not integrate; they dance with each other, sometimes lustily, but just as often ploddingly or with one lording over the other or warily and with stony indifference. But it also must be said that in a school of administration, management, leadership, or practice, if theory and practice do not dance with each other somehow, the learner will graduate not knowing much about practice nor having gained any increment in concrete skill nor remembering any of the theories that were intended to be relevant in the future.”

DR. LYNN OLSEN, PHDLC ALUMNI (COHORT 5)

Peter Vaill was enormously influential to me in many ways. He's the one who told me "I belonged back in school" when we happened to meet at the airport one day six years after he was my University of St. Thomas (UST) MBA capstone course professor. He mentored me, unofficially, throughout the PhDLC program, providing me with the triple gifts of healthy skepticism about my Edge Leadership topic, supportive critique during my research, and final academic attribution for my work. We stayed in touch after we both left the program. He appeared as a guest lecturer for a few years when I taught my own UST MBA Leadership classes. We talked a lot about "Managerial Leadership" and "Practice," and I still refer to his lessons and require his writings in my work as a Leadership and Management instructor and mentor to Executive MBA students. I'll miss him a lot, but I have his books, written and video musings, and many good memories to keep. As I wrote at the front of my dissertation, he was right; I did belong back in school.

Student and Alumni Updates

COHORT 2

Dr. Scott J. Allen has launched the new podcast entitled, *Phronesis: Practical Wisdom for Leaders*. This new series offers smart, fast paced, practical wisdom on all things leadership to make a difference in how individuals live and lead.

Dr. Shana Hormann recently presented “Strengths and Shadows: Susceptibility to Trauma and Building Resilience” to members of the Ohio Association of Nonprofit Organizations.



Dr. Lisa Goldstein Graham was a featured speaker at Alabama’s largest leadership event, the Momentum Conference 2020. Learn more about the event [here](#).



Dr. Harriet Schwartz has published, “Authentic Teaching and Connected Learning in the Age of COVID-19” in *The Scholarly Teacher*. The piece shares insight into the power of authenticity and shared humanity during this time of pandemic and virtual connectedness. Access the full piece [here](#).



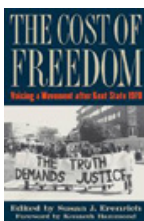
Dr. Iva Vurdelja has authored the chapter entitled, “Dialectical Thinking, Adult Development and Thinking” in *Maturing Leadership: How Adult Development Impacts Leadership* (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2020).

COHORT 4

Dr. Lucy Barbera has launched a new program sponsored by the University of Albany’s School of Social Welfare for Licensed Social Workers and Mental Health Professionals entitled, Trauma-Informed Creative Art Therapy Certificate Program. The program is designed for individuals who want to safely infuse the arts in their practice.

COHORT 5

Dr. Susie Erenrich is editor of the newly released book entitled, *The Cost Of Freedom: Voicing A Movement After Kent State 1970* (The Kent State University Press, 2020). The book is a collection of personal narratives, eyewitness testimony, photographs, songs, and scholarship. The book focuses, not only on the tragic events that ensued on Kent State’s campus a half century ago, but provides instructive insight into the consequential decades-long aftermath that eventually led to designated landmark status in 2018.



Dr. Chip Espinoza, Dean of Strategy and Innovation at Vanguard University recently shared his expertise as a leading authority on the subject of generational diversity in the workplace in the most recent article entitled, “Millennials are Getting Stung by Back-to-Back Global Crisis”, in *Bloomberg Business*. Dr. Espinoza is an acclaimed author, speaker, and consultant.



COHORT 7

Dr. Les Etienne has assumed a joint appointment as Visiting Professor of Urban Teacher Education in the School of Education and the same in Africana Studies in the School of Liberal Arts at Indiana University-Purdue where he is also the Interim Director of Africana Studies.



Dr. Kara Malenfant was appointed as Interim Executive Director of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), the higher education association for academic libraries and library workers. Representing more than 10,000 individuals and libraries, ACRL (a division of the American Library Association) develops programs, products, and services to help those working in academic and research libraries learn, innovate, and lead within the academic community. Founded in 1940, ACRL is committed to advancing learning, transforming scholarship, and creating diverse and inclusive communities. Dr. Malenfant is also co-editor of the recently published book *Library Partnerships in International Liberal Arts Education: Building Relationships Across Cultural and Institutional Lines* (ACRL, 2020) which explores effective practices, collaborations, and ideas for the future being developed by librarians, library staff, and faculty at international, American-modeled institutions.



COHORT 9

Dr. Tera McIntosh was recently appointed the Program Chair of the Masters in Arts Mindful Leadership program at Atlantic University. The online program is based out of Virginia Beach, Virginia and was started by recent GSLC PhD in Leadership and Change alumnus Dr. James Van Auken. Atlantic University is the result of the blooming of the teachings of Edgar Cayce, and as such focuses on the body, mind, spirit union, as well as our connection to the collective consciousness.



COHORT 10

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew presented "Proximity+Presence: Social Capital and Polarization" at TEDxSMU. Additionally, she was nominated by United Way staff for her commitments to the community, youth, and small business in recognition of her dedication to the progression and inclusivity in philanthropy. As a result, she received The United Way Public Service Award which is presented to individuals who exemplify "leading from every chair" by using their influences to instill a commitment to philanthropy and volunteerism in communities.



Dr. Armenta Hinton is Harrisburg Area Community College's new Vice President of Inclusion and Diversity. In this role, she will provide her expertise and executive leadership to guide the institution's commitment to promoting a culture of collegiality, inclusiveness, respect and competence. She will also serve as the Title IX coordinator for the College and oversee Student Access Services.



Dr. Kiko Suarez has published *After Walking through the Fire* (Independently Published, 2020). The piece offers a collection of engaging real-life stories about leading change in a complex world that can be used as a practical everyday leadership guide. Additionally, he facilitated the recent leadership sessions entitled, "Leading Change in Times of Uncertainty" and was a featured guest on IdeagenTV as an expert in leadership in turbulent times.



COHORT 11

Dr. Moudy Elbayadi has been named Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer of Shutterfly, Inc.



COHORT 12

Dr. Mo Raei has co-authored the chapter titled "I'll Only Follow You if I Trust You: Using Adult Development to Accelerate Trust" in *Maturing Leadership: How Adult Development Impacts Leadership* (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2020).



COHORT 13

Dr. Dani Chesson (C13) and Nicole White (C17) recently presented at the Association for Biomolecular Facilities (ABRF) 2020 Conference in Palm Springs, California. Dr. Chesson presented an exercise on using Design Thinking and Nicole presented on Collective Leadership Practices. The ABRF Conference is held annually where both scientists and administrators convene to discuss and share ideas on core facility management practices within academic institutions. Dr. Chesson additionally published "Design Thinker Profile: Capabilities of Overcoming Barriers to Change" in the Summer 2020 issue of the *Organization Development Journal*. Access the full piece [here](#).



COHORT 14

Drs. Atim George, Greer Stanford-Randle (Cohort 13) and PhD in Leadership and Change student Y. Falami Devoe recently reunited in Atlanta, Georgia. In reflection of the visit Dr. George shared, "As is the case with Antiochians, the spirit of generosity was present as Dr. Stanford-Randle and cohort-mate Devoe hosted us to a delicious and nutritious luncheon. We discussed the current state of affairs in the United States and Nigeria."



Dr. Jennifer Hunter is the author of the new book entitled, *Taro the Zen Cat: Seasons of Change* (New Life Clarity Publishing, 2020). Access the publication directly [here](#).

COHORT 15

Dr. Lejla Bilal-Maley is set to present "Working on Global Virtual Teams (GVTs)" to employees of McGraw Hill, a global education publishing company of over 5,000 people. The focus of her presentation, based on her dissertation research, will be the qualitative findings, highlighting the lived experience of working on and leading global virtual teams (GVTs).



Annalisa Holcombe has been appointed President of Western Governors University (WGU) Advancement. In this new role she will lead WGU's focus on building financial support for initiatives that drive the university's commitment to reinvigorating the promise of **higher education for all**.



Paula Lowe has two poems slated for publication in the Summer, 2020 edition of the *Evening Street Review*. The first piece entitled, "And it might not be so mysterious" is a poem for family life in the 18th Century and "the dove dilemma", through the life of a bird, brings immigration home.



Dr. Lindsay Lyons has co-authored "Building the Capacity for Student Leadership in High School: A Review of Organizational Mechanisms from the Field of Student Voice" in the *Journal of Educational Administration*. Additionally, along with GSLC's Clinical Professor of Research Methods Dr. Carol Baron and Marc Brasof, she has co-authored "Measuring Mechanisms of Student Voice: Development and Validation of Student Leadership Capacity Building Scales" in *Sage Journal's American Educational Research Association*.



Dr. Kenny Alexander has been re-elected Mayor of Norfolk, Virginia. This new term will be his second consecutive time in this office.

COHORT 16

Melissa Kimmel is the new Executive in Residence at Ohio University.

COHORT 17

Roz Cohen has assumed a new position as Global Head of Human Resources and Operations for a private equity firm based in the United States.



Greta Creech has accepted a position as a full-time, adjunct faculty member within the Citadel's Department of Intelligence and Security Studies, beginning fall 2020. Leveraging her career as an intelligence officer at the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and her doctoral work, she will be teaching two courses: Introduction to Intelligence Studies and Advanced Analytics.



Kader Gumus provided testimony in front of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in Fairfax County, Virginia as a survivor and Council Member of the Council to End Domestic Violence (CEDV). The purpose of the testimony was to ask the board to fund vital social safety services that help victims and survivors of domestic violence. Her speech was focused on the impact of domestic violence on our communities and to pay attention to this social pandemic that's very complex and takes a lifetime to heal from.



In Memoriam

Jeffrey D. Williams, 53, passed away from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma on May 30, 2020, at Tisch Hospital at NYU Langone Medical Center in Manhattan in the company of his wife and daughter.

Born in Fontana, California, Jeff was the son of Gary and the late Mary Donna Williams. He attended Fontana High School, California State University San Bernardino, received a BA from SDSU (Philosophy, 1992), and holds masters degrees from UCLA (Library and Information Science, 1999) and Antioch University (Leadership and Change for Healthcare, 2018) where he was completing a PhD. Career highlights include work at California Lutheran University, over 10 years at the Biomedical Library at UCSD, and at the time of his death, he was department chair and director of the New York University Health Sciences Library in New York, New York. Mentoring and leadership in professional organizations were of paramount importance to him.

Jeff loved the great outdoors, playing electric guitar, and most of all, spending time with his family.



Kathy Hoffman has authored the new article entitled, “Coffee, Courage, and Cannabis: Leading Change in the Regulated Marijuana Market” which will be featured in the July 2020 issue of the *Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics*. Additionally, she has been invited to be a part of the upcoming panel entitled, “Consumer Protection in a Quasi-Legal Market” at George Mason University’s *Symposium on the Law and Economics of Marijuana Legalization* this coming fall.

Nicole White was recently selected to serve on the Prenatal Diagnosis Subcommittee for the Center for Dignity in Healthcare for People with Disabilities at the University of Cincinnati. Additionally, she is currently serving on the Community Engagement Committee with the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) and LuMind IDSC as a concerted effort to collate ideas and help to inform the NIH 2030 Research agenda for Down Syndrome.



Professor of Leadership, Management, and Service, Dr. Aqeel Tirmizi recently authored “Building a Holistic Well-being Portfolio as a Pathway to Personal Resilience” for *Medium*, an online network of scholars and practitioners. The article offers a framework for preserving well-being especially in light of the current pandemic impacting the world and highlights his academic focus regarding responsible leadership, employee and organizational well-being, social innovation, and social sector leadership.



Professor of Education Studies, Dr. Jon Wergin recently authored “Managing Disorientation in a Pandemic” for *Medium*. The essay touches upon the ways in which, especially now, individuals can positively manage and navigate perceived challenges. The latest episode features the Graduate School of Leadership and Change’s very own Professor of Education Studies, **Dr. Jon Wergin** and his new book **Deep Learning in a Disorienting World** (Cambridge University Press, 2019). ■



COHORT 18

Kelly Bleach has co-authored “Older People with Vision Loss and Transportation: Identifying Gaps in Research to Effect Change” in the *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*.



Chanté Meadows has been awarded Social Worker of the Year from The National Association of Social Work’s Ohio Chapter. Additionally, she recently presented “Changing Views on Mental Health in the Black Community” at TEDxKingLincolnBronzeville.



FACULTY UPDATES

Professor of Organization Learning and Development, Dr. Mitch Kusy recently had the article entitled, “Six Intentional Approaches to Build Teams of Everyday Civility (and Proactively Erode Toxic Behaviors)”, accepted in the renowned *Physician Leadership Journal*.

Professor of Leadership and Ethics, Dr. Donna Ladkin has published the second edition of *Rethinking Leadership* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020). This new edition includes the chapter entitled “What is Different About Leadership in Business Organizations” written by PhD in Leadership and Change alumnus Dr. Tayo Switzer (Cohort 6).



Around Antioch University

Exciting happenings abound throughout Antioch University! Learn more all about the wonderful news from our campuses and program here,

[ANTIOCH.EDU/AU-NEWS/](https://antioch.edu/au-news/)

DISSERTATION

DISSERTATION DEFENSES IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: CROSSING BORDERS AND TIME ZONES WITH SCHOLARSHIP THAT FURTHERS JUSTICE

The dissertation defense is the culminating ritual of a long and winding doctoral journey. Students present their research and findings publicly for the first time, an often anxiety-producing moment years in the making. Even in the best of times the near mythic stories of inquisition-like events fueled by ego-driven feuds between committee members leaving the candidate literally defenseless don't help calm fears. And then comes COVID-19 and all defenses go virtual, adding heightened concerns about connectivity and deep disappointments over lost connections.

In our program's first decade or so the faculty insisted that defenses had to be conducted onsite at one of the quarterly face-to-face residences. It seemed right in terms of both dignifying the significance of the event and providing an opportunity for current students to attend and observe. It meant candidates had to fly themselves and their families across the country and internationally in some cases, and the scheduling windows were constrained to when residencies were calendared. We thought it was well worth it!

Times changed and so did we – a bit! We began to realize – somewhat begrudgingly - the need to permit inter-residency defenses, but only in exceptional cases, with a whole set of criteria for approval of location and date. The committee chair was required to agree to be present physically wherever the defense was to be held. Other attendees could join virtually but the core activity would be held physically on site at one of the Antioch campuses or at another location.

Then it all changed. Since mid-March 2020, we have conducted a dozen dissertation defenses [SEE SIDEBAR ON PAGE 22] entirely virtually. This brief piece

I am so grateful that the accommodation was made for defending virtually.

Postponing it would have underscored the uncertainty of this time rather than opening to possibility.

[MAXINNE]

When thinking about my defense, I was moved to tears of joy and appreciation.

[MIKE]

I was reflecting on how timely the Antioch PhDLC online interactivity has prepared some of us for this moment, without our realizing it. Credit where credit is due!!!!

[LAURA]



focuses on the experiences of those involved and concludes with some takeaways as we go forward into a very unpredictable future. We hope to be able to offer a set of expanded options for defenses in the future, of course – but who knows when or how or where. So, let us learn from what we are doing right ... now.

REFLECTING ON THE EXPERIENCE OF VIRTUAL DEFENSES

First, the given. This was not what anyone wanted or imagined. The disappointment was palpable across the board. Yet all were appreciative that the culmination of their studies was not delayed or interrupted. It is in that context that we sought out to explore the virtual defense experience.

The vast majority of participants who responded to our query for reflections – candidates, chairs, attendees - found the experience to be far more positive than they had thought possible. While not unanimous in that sentiment, the reflections are quite compelling and range from Mike's feeling that it was of the most uplifting moments of his life to Helen's sense of deep disappointment.

For most respondents, the experience was anything but remote or perfunctory. In fact, the **intimacy they experienced** was unexpected and deeply moving. "The interaction with everyone," noted Etta, "seemed far more personal and close-up because they were all right in front of me on the screen and I could see the expressions of everyone directly." Maxinne similarly noted, "The defense was surprisingly intimate. It was an emotionally satisfying and interconnected experience." Ann added, "The virtual environment neither increased nor diminished the sense of proximity between me as a presenter and the participants. I could see who was asking questions and respond directly to them, while being mindful of including the whole audience. When I received my committee's decision that I had successfully defended, I was just as excited as I would have been in person." Mike, actually found the moment so personal, as if those gathered for his defense were actually sitting in his home with him, in that "It was a little strange when I finished, it was just me alone in my living room. But then, 10 minutes later, I was in a Zoom session with most of my cohort to celebrate, which filled me with joy."

Another aspect of the experience that surfaced was a **surprising equalizer effect** since everyone was connected via Zoom as opposed to some sitting together in the centrality of a campus room and others hanging around the edges virtually. Ellen noted as she contemplated the paradox of connection and disconnection that "All attendees were equal to me. Every attendee was a little square on my screen. Being able to see everyone made me feel very supported. Having my family participate in this way was special. Having all of my cohort members there made me feel supported." In essence, because everyone was virtual, spatial distancing of all attendees meant in reality that there were no special distinctions based on location.

Having been a virtual attendee at prior onsite defenses, Mike added, "I've been to a half dozen defenses held during residencies. There were always people participating through Zoom, yes, but those virtual participants always seemed to be on the margins. I can't recall questions being answered from the virtual participants. When everyone is on Zoom, like now, **no one is marginalized.**"

Virtual Dissertation Defenses, March 2020 to May 2020

KIMBERLY WALKER [C16] *The Construction and Impact of Power in Cross-Sector Partnerships: An Interpretive Phenomenological Study*

DENISE TALA DIAZ [C15] *Living Through the Chilean Coup d'Etat: The Second-Generation's Reflection on Their Sense of Agency, Civic Engagement and Democracy*

MICHAEL BILLS [C16] *Turning Around Small, Private, Tuition Dependent Colleges: How Boards of Trustees Impact Decline and Turnaround*

ETTA JACKSON [C17] *The Role of Geospatial Information and Effective Partnerships in the Implementation of the International Agenda for Sustainable Development*

ANN R. FLYNN [C10] *Positionality of Paraeducators: A Phenomenological Study in A Public School District in the Pacific Northwest*

COURTNY DAVIS OLDS [C15] *Perspectives from the Pew: A Phenomenological Exploration of Congregants' Experiences of Change in Their Churches*

HELEN LOWMAN [C15] *Building Renewed Relevance: Portraits of CEOs Rebranding Iconic Nonprofit Organizations*

ELLEN MELIS [C1HC] *Understanding the Context and Social Processes that Shape Person- and Family-Centered Culture in Long-Term Care: The Pivotal Role of Personal Support Workers*

LEJLA BILAL MALEY [C15] *The Work Experience on Global Virtual Teams*

MAXINNE RHEA LEIGHTON [C11] *Arising: Hurricane (Superstorm) Sandy's Impact on Design and Planning Professionals*



David, who attended a number of these virtual defenses in the past months as he readies himself for his own dissertation work ahead, noted, “The experiences were rich, intimate, and proceeded with an easy-to-follow format. Each defense held my attention and the technology provided me with a feeling of connectivity to the presenter. The convenience of attending, camaraderie of the cohort members supporting the presenter, and the subject matter of the dissertations were incredibly salient for me as doctoral candidate.”

It wasn't only candidates and attendees who felt the power of the experience. Dr. Jon Wergin, who chaired or participated in several confessed, “They all went remarkably well. That's high praise from someone who's such an iconoclast about such things.” Dr. Elizabeth Holloway, also the chair and/or and committee member on several added, “I found the defenses to be emotional experiences, perhaps in part, because of the level of connection that I felt with the candidates and my colleagues. Both of my students had large audiences of 25+ and these audiences including faculty from other universities, cohort members, other PhDLC students and alums. Seeing all the familiar students on the screen, I was struck by the poignancy of this moment in the midst of a horrific pandemic; they were there supporting a friend, a fellow Antiochian.”

CROSSING BORDERS IN PURSUIT OF SCHOLARSHIP FOR JUSTICE

One of our program's learning outcomes is that our students demonstrate they can reflect critically and responsibly as learners, leaders, and scholars in a global context in ways that further Antioch's mission of “social, economic and environmental justice.” Never before had it felt so very real as in the context of these virtual defenses. While most averaged 12-24 attendees, several had well over 50 individuals brought together in a two-hour experience of mutual and critical engagement on topics of personal interest and intellectual import. Attendees came

“

The virtual environment neither increased nor diminished the sense of proximity between me as a presenter and the participants. I could see who was asking questions and respond directly to them, while being mindful of including the whole audience.”

ANN

from across the country and around the world, zooming in from Chile to France, England to Canada, Kenya to Germany, and states too numerous to list. Attendees expressed their excitement about the **ease of accessibility and involvement** in ways that they found both satisfying and surprising.

All candidates recognized to one degree or another the meaningfulness of the presence of friends, family, colleagues, cohort members and current students. “I received a lot of positive praise from friends and family,” shared Lejla, “and follow-ups and requests for webinars and information on my research topic. Individuals that attended were interested in my committee members, those who asked questions, and felt grateful to be part of the culminating experience, a defense, albeit virtually.” Maxinne similarly shared that those present “were very impressed with the process and were surprised by how well it worked virtually,” adding, “I had a good mix of people who had never seen a dissertation defense and those who had either been through their own or seen others. They were impressed by the engagement among the committee members as well as how well we all engaged together.”

Ann added that one of her attendees, a MSW candidate “was thrilled to be able to observe the process of culminating work towards a higher degree “ and another, a doctoral candidate himself, expressed “his gratitude for being able to attend as a supporter of my work and his personal interest in the content.” Finally, she noted with pleasure, “My family members now have a better sense of my work over the last 10 years!”

The virtual defenses **crossed time zones and borders with an inclusiveness** that has taken us all by surprise. International attendees were pleased to be able to be present and involved. Ellen noted, “They were very impressed that this was possible. It demystified this process for them. Colleagues who had defended in the UK were surprised that this was a public process.” Etta’s attendees included her daughter in Berlin and her grandson in the UK. Given her topic area, Kenya’s Minister Counselor to the United Nations (UN) and other Kenyan citizens attended, zooming in both from Nairobi and New York, as well as the Permanent Representative and Ambassador of Jamaica to the United Nations. Etta was excited to share that the latter was so impressed he left her a wonderfully encouraging comment that her research holds much promise for “impacting the work of implementing the UN’s 2030 Agenda.”

Denise shared that her virtual defense experience was very special partly because she could share “this long awaited moment” with her family members who zoomed in from Santiago, Chile and her two children who are studying in the US, as well as her committee members in Belgium, California and Texas. She presented her findings from her home in France with her husband and young daughter by her side. She shared, “All of them were able to share with me this very special and emotional moment despite the physical distance that separates us. It felt, she concluded, “like one huge family of all my loved ones together in an unforgettable

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DENISE

global experience.” In reflection, Dr. Aqeel Tirmizi, who chaired one of the dissertations, noted “The virtual defenses are unexpectedly powerful and effective in several ways. They open up possibilities of increased participation that in turn promote diversity and wide access.”

Clearly, the necessity of going virtual did not diminish the meaningfulness of the achievement for many of those involved. As Mike reflected a day later, “It was one of the most special experiences of my life. I had no idea how much it would mean to me. I went out on a backcountry ski tour this morning [the day after] which gave me a few hours to think and reflect. When thinking about my defense, I was moved to tears of joy and appreciation.”

THE PRACTICAL REALITY OF THE TRADE OFFS

There is no question, however, that a number of the students felt deep disappointment and recognized their experience in that context. Each respondent navigated this differently. Courtney was grateful that her defense was not delayed and concluded, “The joy and relief that came at the end of the defense was perhaps no different than it would have been had the defense been held in-person. Yet, I still feel cheated. This is not how I expected or wanted my PhD experience to end, and the virtual defense, while a good option in this time of emergency, feels ‘less than’ an in-person defense.”

Lejla too shared that in the weeks leading up to her defense, she “mourned the loss of the opportunity to defend in person. It was extremely unmotivating.” However, it ended up being so fulfilling that afterward, she was able to hold a more positive attitude and realized that “my experience still achieved the desired outcome of obtaining a PhD.” Similarly, Maxinne initially was disappointed to not be defending in person alongside her committee and dear friends who had promised to be present on site. She was also looking forward fondly to being on the Seattle campus again for one last time. “However,” she admitted, “once acceptance came, gratitude followed. Gratitude for Antioch’s commitment to ensuring that my defense happened amidst this upheaval.”

A few respondents even saw some practical benefits. One student was grateful to be able to save the money that would have been spent on travel noting, “In these times of economic hardship for so many, this option might be a very welcome opportunity to defend while saving some money.”

While ensuring there was no postponement or delay during this period of such painful change, some respondents expressed their dismay, the negatives stood out more starkly. Helen was disappointed and although trying to make the best of a difficult situation shared, “Everyone felt very far away. My colleagues who have also gone through a dissertation defense were surprised and expressed sorrow for me not to have an in-person experience after all the work put into the dissertation.”

The program is aware of some ways to improve what might well be our “new normal” for the foreseeable future based on the experiences of these past two months. Many are simple things. One student, for example, wished that participants’ messages in the Zoom chat would have been captured and saved for



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her, as she hadn't been able to read them during the defense itself. More training on the front-end might have reduced some of the technology-induced anxiety as some expressed concerns about bandwidth stability and being Zoom security, which added to the typical nervousness about performing well and representing the research clearly. It was clear that spending sufficient time working on graphics to enhance the presentation and devoting plenty of rehearsal time helped a number of the presenters. Ensuring that all participants, especially presenters and committee members have stable high-speed internet network is critical as is appropriate background environments and good lighting, enlarged font size for powerpoints on shared screens, and so much more. But that is for another time.

Bottom line, in the face of unexpected change we had to adapt, and we did. More than that, as the reflections of many of those involved illustrate, it wasn't about merely accepting "remote engagement" or "distant strangeness" in a time of spatial distancing. Embracing the core characteristics of our program, as I refer to the three Cs - "Content, Community and Care" (See p. 5) enabled the virtual dissertation defense experience to be personally meaningful and intellectually powerful for many involved. "While virtual defenses can't replace the in-person touch of their traditional counterparts," concluded Aqeel Tirmizi, "their many strengths make them a formidable alternative."

Elizabeth Holloway, one of the program's founding faculty members, added a poignant and insightful observation. "I heard from audience members from other traditional brick-and-mortar universities in the UK and Canada that they marveled at the richness of the experience, despite it being virtual, and their intent to use it as a model for their universities. It was a powerful moment of realization of what we have built in the PhDLC —a truly relational space that honored individuals for their accomplishments and sheer will to complete. If other doctoral programs wanted to emulate this experience, they would need to stand on the shoulders of a closely held, respectful, and relational community." ■

Special thank you to Elizabeth Holloway for her assistance in gathering the reflections.

What are some of the take-aways to take forward?

→ The virtual defenses allowed for increased accessibility and many more attended than at our traditional onsite defenses.

The virtual defenses equalized presence and in some surprising ways, enhanced it as well.

→ Overall, the defense experiences were more meaningful and intimate than most participants expected.

→ The disappointment of not being physically together was profound for some participants.

→ Sufficient time spent in preparations and Zoom training helped mitigate anxieties and facilitate engaging presentations.

**ONCE AGAIN,
RELATIONSHIP MATTERS!**

THE ANTIOCH GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE ANNOUNCES NEW HOME STRETCH FUND

The Graduate School of Leadership and Change is excited to announce the establishment of a new fund to help our PhD in Leadership and Change (PhDLC) students. The Home Stretch Fund (HSF) has been established with a generous gift from Dr. Charlie Nelms to support eligible PhDLC students in the final trimester of candidacy in good academic standing and who are members of under-represented populations. Based on national data, those most under-represented in doctoral programs are ethnic/racial minorities, first-generation students, and those from low-income communities. This criterion, in addition to documented financial need and limited access to other financial resources requires candidates to have completed their dissertation's data-gathering phase and be in the trimester in which they are completing their dissertation and preparing for their defense.

Dr. Charlie Nelms has established the Home Stretch Fund in conjunction with the Antioch Graduate School of Leadership and Change. Dr. Nelms' eminent career includes serving as chancellor at Indiana University East, the University of Michigan-Flint, and North Carolina Central University (NCCU). In addition, he has been widely recognized for tackling issues beyond academia in our communities across the country. Dr. Nelms is involved in many charitable causes, many focused on making college more affordable for students in need. In particular, he and his wife support funds and endowments that assist graduate students from under-represented communities with professional development, mentorship, and faculty development.

Given limitations of the HSF, the funds will typically be in the \$500 to \$2,000 range for the life of the fund.

Please email admissions.gslc@antioch.edu for additional details and in regards to questions. ■



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