Remembering What We Were Never Taught: How Unearthing Oppressed and Hidden Knowledge Can Liberate and Heal Students, Communities, Professors, and Academia

By Liliana Gallegos, Assistant Professor, Communications Studies, California State University–San Bernardino

In the aftermath of the 2016 elections, many of my students were emotionally breaking down in class. Students shared feelings of fear of losing all they had to sudden deportation—not always of themselves, but also of beloved friends and family members that they depended on. Many shared their experiences with racism, stereotyping, and the lack of opportunities that ultimately resulted in the dehumanization of their very existence.

Liliana Gallegos and students presented a panel session at the “Whole Student” conference titled “Rainbow Journalism: Community-Based, Indigenist, Divergent, Experimental, and Activist Journalism as a Healing Process of Situated Learning and Participative Action Research.”

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Later in the fall 2016 term, my Latinx media course attended an event with several journalists from the Los Angeles Times that caused some controversy after the audience questioned the way San Bernardino was represented in an article.
Editor’s Note

BTtoP’s “The Whole Student: Intersectionality and Well-Being”

By Jennifer O’Brien, Project Manager and Coordinator of Strategic Planning and Development, Bringing Theory to Practice

It was a pleasure and an honor to organize BTtoP’s first “The Whole Student: Intersectionality and Well-Being” conference on May 24–26, 2017, in Chicago, Illinois. An anticipated audience of 150 increased to approximately 325 faculty, student affairs professionals, administrators, and students. The student population—both graduate and undergraduate—made up approximately 15 percent of the attendees, and about 10 percent of those in attendance reported that they held more than one category of position on campus (e.g., a faculty and an administrative position).

The composition of the conference audience is an indicator of the wealth and diversity of stakeholders on campuses nationwide and internationally that care deeply about the themes and issues that were explored throughout the conference (including intersectionality and student learning, well-being, and civic development). Indeed, many remarks in the postconference survey highlighted that a key value of the conference was being in contact with colleagues interested in similar themes in their work.

The BTtoP project is guided by the principle that one of the fundamental purposes of higher education is the well-being of all its stakeholders, especially students. Through deep engagement in learning, civic experiences, and diverse discourse, higher education provides the unique opportunity for students to realize their full potential and flourish. This conference examined how considering the “whole student” in higher education means considering what intersectionalities students bring to campus, or, how their multiple identities and lived experiences intersect in the design of curricular and cocurricular programs, structures, and spaces. We define how we conceptualized the term “intersectionality,” and other terms, on the conference webpage: http://bttop.org/bttop-national-conference-whole-student-intersectionality-and-well-being.

The conference was designed to encourage dialogue and a collaboration of voices, perspectives, and experiences. The opening remarks were structured as a “keyduet” rather than a keynote, and the closing session was a reflective panel conversation rather than a planned talk. Each presentation was encouraged to engage in audience participation and workshopping and to provide tangible outcomes for attendees to take back to campus. Conference attendees were encouraged to come in teams with a diverse representation of campus stakeholders so that learning and work begun at the conference had a better chance of catching on when back “in reality” on campus.

In the spirit of amplifying voices, sharing experiences, and encouraging conversation and action, we highlight in this special issue a few attendees from the conference who reflect on what they learned, why this work is so important right now, and what else higher education should do in the future to attend to whole student engagement and intersectionality. Some of them have responded to a few open-ended questions, and the special section in the middle of this issue features sessions and presentations that were captured on our Facebook Live feed during the conference, as well as video interviews we conducted over the course of the conference. Our feature article also shares the special journey of a professor and seventeen of her students from California State University–San Bernardino who traveled together to Chicago to present on their course, “Rainbow Journalism,” that spawned a student organization and community movement.

More resources from the conference, including the final program, session presentations and materials, and participants’ takeaways, are available on the conference webpage: http://www.bttop.org/bttop-national-conference-whole-student-intersectionality-and-well-being.

We hope that you find meaning in some of these reflections and explorations and will share your own thoughts on these issues with us on our social media feeds: https://twitter.com/BTtoPractice; https://www.facebook.com/BTtoP.
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titled “San Bernardino: Broken City.”
During the event, the author of the article said that the paper had a difficult time figuring out what was politically correct or what images might be offensive to the public.

Back in our classroom after the event, a student shared that another professor told her that journalism had always been about capital gains and selling out to the highest bidder. It dawned on me—our students were unaware of the real history of journalism in the United States. Being that our student population is majority Latinx students (about 60 percent), it was a shame that they did not know that many early American journalists were Mexicans and Native Americans who were tired of not being represented and who, through journalism, saw a way of organizing communities and covering the events they organized.

A massive pedagogical revamping and intervention was long overdue. We needed an emergency intervention course that would help our students heal through “hidden knowledge” acquisition and sharing. What I refer to as “hidden knowledge” is best articulated by philosopher Enrique Dussel in Philosophy of Liberation. Hidden knowledge can be explained in the simplest way by remembering the destruction of codices and old knowledge and the criminalization of Native American traditions during colonization. The epistemologies used and taught to educators thus far in our history dictate the effects and methodologies of gathering and deciding what is “good enough” to be included within our understanding of knowledge.

This form of hegemony has seeped into the practices of mass media outlets and market journalism. Walter Mignolo, and Franz Fanon before him, refer to this as a perverse logic of coloniality that maintains false supremacies by marginalizing certain information and deeming it unimportant or peripheral to the evolution of mankind. According to Dussel, under this same premise of “evolution, order and progress,” the concept of modernity was used to ideologically maintain coloniality by hierarchically positioning Native American knowledge with the obsolete past and European knowledge as modern, advanced, or current. Thus, some forms of knowledge were—and continue to be—purposefully hidden.


3 Enrique Dussel, Philosophy of Liberation (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books).
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erence and maintained by coloniality, but they are not liberated. Liberation comes with two interrelated struggles: political and economic decolonization and epistemological decolonization.6

I am a professor; I find it difficult to enter the political and economic realms, but what if I attempted to liberate my students by decolonizing the way I teach them? Will I be able to help them liberate themselves? Will they help liberate me? As students learn about their communities, they begin to pull on a string whose end lies hidden in ancestral thought and understanding. At an individual level, several of my students began conducting specialized historical research on topics related to their ancestry.

So, I created an experimental course, “Rainbow Journalism” (a response to “yellow journalism”), to provide an opportunity for students to channel some of the negative energy in their experience into a product-based media course and practicum hybrid. Many media outlets use individuals to push forward a story that predetermines how the individual, or the individual’s identity group, will be represented. In contrast, the students in this course invite people to represent their own struggles and stories of both marginalization and success, of partial inclusion, of simultaneous privilege and invisibility—representing a true complexity of human experiences.

We designed this course in the model of Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed; it is only through praxis, the practice of theoretical teachings turned into action, that students become liberated and thus agents of freedom within their communities. Freire writes, “No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption.”8 In this course, students cover non-newsworthy stories and find ways to create partnerships in their communities that push society forward via social justice-oriented events that have direct and immediate impacts.

Through the design of this Rainbow Journalism course, I recovered the often-overlooked connections between research, service, and teaching. This course runs as a mini media conglomerate, a grassroots free press organization. We have five groups: journalists, camera operators and videographers, public relations specialists, digital and social media designers, and radio show hosts/ producers. The success of the group is interdependent with the success of its individual branches. This is an indigenist approach to teaching by forming separate groups that work together and then go out and cover local news (current hidden history).9 After each story is completed, the groups are opened and

7 Yellow journalism refers to journalism that seeks to capitalize on exaggerations, ill-representations, and the spectacle of the “other.” Stuart Hall used the “other” to identify and deconstruct the way difference is designated to groups rather than individuals through the hypersexualization, dehumanization, exploitation, and abuse of images of people of color that suddenly stand to represent a massified other. Stuart Hall, “The Spectacle of the Other,” in Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices, ed. Stuart Hall (London, United Kingdom: SAGE, 1997).
8 Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 54.
9 This stems from Mexico’s indigenismo movements of the 1920s. There are two definitions of indigenismo. One is to acculturate Native Americans into an inapplicable Eurocentric capitalist system and see their cultures as relics of the past. I refer to the second definition: the set of strategies and knowledge implemented as an act of subversive complicity, knowingly and strategically, so forbidden knowledge has a platform to continue to be passed on. Ramón Grosfoguel, “Hybridity and Mestizaje: Sincretism or Subversive Complicity? Subalternity from the Perspective of the Coloniality of Power” in The Masters and the Slaves: Plantation Relations and Mestizaje in American Imaginaries, ed. Alexandra Isfahani-Hammond (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 115–129. In 1920s Mexico, indigenismo in education sought to (1) protect the rights of indigenous or other marginalized people through alternative formats of education; (2) recognize and compensate for violence and loss suffered; and (3) establish and protect native (or other marginalized) cultural, linguistic, and ideological differences. Mariana Portal and Veronica Valenzuela. “El indigenismo y la educacion indigena: una bibliografia basica” in Neva Antropologia. Revista de Ciencias Sociales, no. 21 (June 1983) 137-146.
students may move to another group to broaden their knowledge and enhance their skills through practice.

Simultaneously, we are recording a documentary on this experimental approach, which is part of my pedagogical research on first-generation university students and situated learning at California State University–San Bernardino (CSUSB). Alumni are involved in its production as volunteer camera operators and editors. This approach takes into consideration the local and immediate community needs, the historical moment, and the identities of the students involved. It is also a project of action research because, through the group, we create community engagement projects that further the healing process and extend it to our community.

Our Rainbow Journalism course sparked the creation of a student organization that I mentor named the Coyote Pack. The Coyote Pack describes themselves as, “A collective of innovators, artists, and educators . . . [that] established a platform to voice and act towards the aftermath following the political circumstances undergone during the recent elections and post-inauguration. We do this using a variety of media including social media outlets, journalism, radio, and video production.”

Juan Delgado, activist, poet, and professor of English at CSUSB, joined our efforts to support the Coyote Pack. He provided invaluable exposure to “The Pack” by sharing their work with his network of artists, members of the community, and senior academics.

Together with Maria Barragán, coordinator of CSUSB’s DREAMers Resource and Success Center and Yadira Ortiz, CSUSB’s coordinator of Services to DREAMers, Educational Opportunity Program, and Admissions Office, we created a series of workshops and community engagement events called The Art of Dreaming in March of 2017. Students in the Rainbow Journalism course oversaw the news releases and advertising campaigns, then covered the event as a media company.

Over 125 people attended the events from more than nine departments at CSUSB. Together with students from both our San Bernardino and Palm Desert campuses, as well as members of our San Bernardino community, we recovered trash generated by the art department and turned it into mixed media pieces centered around the topics of being a DREAMer or ally at CSUSB. The TransCultural Commons Collective and Mass Productions (two student organizations I advise) hosted the event and provided free food, original music produced by CSUSB undergraduate students, and additional art materials. Over forty mixed media collages were donated to the Garcia Center for the Arts in downtown San Bernardino and were exhibited for two weeks in late June and auctioned at a gala event. Thirty additional pieces were donated by local professional artists. Local media personalities, public servants, and politicians were invited, including the Consulate of Guatemala and the Mexican Consulate of San Bernardino.

The benefits of these events were manifold. The Art of Dreaming series served to help heal our community, teach our students practical knowledge about taking their coursework into the real world, provide income to an emergency fund that primarily aids DREAMers and students in dire need, and help students enter the realm of academic research by inviting them to be a part of ours.

When our entire class was invited to participate in the national Bringing Theory to Practice conference, “The Whole Student: Intersectionality and Well-Being,” seventeen of my students were awarded ASI (Associated Students Incorporated) grants from our institution to travel to Chicago in May 2017. For many of these students, this was the first time they ever left their home city. It was a highly emotional moment for all of us, especially when we lost one of our own, Judith Urbina, in a deadly car crash that spring break.

This conference validated the needs of my students and showed what they should be able to expect of academia—that their voice and input are as important and vital as those of their leadership. For me, it was truly inspirational to find other academics engaging in this same endeavor of being healer-mentors. Many times, what we do as faculty members engaged with student well-being is judged as being unnecessary or of lesser importance than research or publishing, but perhaps more of our colleagues in academia will begin to realize that these pedagogies, and caring for our whole students, are truly transformative.

11 https://www.csusb.edu/dreamers-resource-center
12 http://thecoyotepack.weebly.com/aodg
DIGITAL RESOURCES
From “The Whole Student: Intersectionality and Well-Being” Conference

Throughout the conference, Eleven04 Productions (https://www.eleven04.net/production/), a Chicago-based startup production studio founded and operated by students and alumni at Columbia College Chicago and DePaul University, captured the conference offerings via film, photography, and live social media streaming.

STREAMED SESSIONS on Facebook Live

Due to the positive response to the conference and the waitlist that resulted, it was suggested that we try to capture the sessions in ways that could provide access to those who could not attend, either due to schedules or funding. One session per block was chosen to be streamed via Facebook Live throughout the conference. You can visit the final program (http://www.bttop.org/sites/default/files/public/FINAL%20PROGRAM_Int%20+%20WB.pdf) for a brief description of each session listed below, and you can watch them in full by visiting BTtoP’s Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/BTtoP/).

◆ KeyDuet: Educating for Wholeness in the Intersections: A Conversation
Leeva Chung, Professor, Interim Chair, Communication Studies, University of San Diego; Laura Rendón, Professor Emerita, University of Texas at San Antonio

◆ Rainbow Journalism: Community-Based, Indiginest, Divergent, Experimental, and Activist Journalism as a Healing Process of Situated Learning and Participative Action Research

◆ How Institutional Mission Is Crucial for the Whole Student: The Case of Berea College

◆ Provocation 1: Black Public Intellectuals: A Better Model for the Whole Scholar
Provocation 2: Disaggregating Pregnancy from Attrition: How to Dismantle Institutional Assumptions, Challenge Students, and Change the System
Provocation 3: Confessions of an (A)romantic: Challenging Amatonormativity in the Academy to Be More Inclusive of All Romantic Orientations

◆ Change Your Story, Change Your World

◆ Narrative as a Form of Critical Incident Response

◆ Student Development and Social Justice: Critical Learning, Radical Healing, and Community Engagement; Engaging in Strategic Change for LGBTQAI Student Well-Being

◆ Concluding Panel: Reflections from the Intersections
Moderator: Rebecca D. Graham, Instructional Consultant, Research Academy for Integrated Learning, University of the District of Columbia
Panelists: Janie Ward, Professor and Chair of Education and Africana Studies, Simmons College; Maria Ahmad, Assistant Director, Leadership and Involvement, University of Wisconsin–Madison; Frank Golom, Assistant Professor of Psychology, Loyola University Maryland; Karen Kalla, Director, Network for Academic Renewal, Association of American Colleges and Universities
INTERVIEWS

We conducted interviews with several attendees throughout the conference to capture the array of voices that were present, and also the breadth of issues that are important to people on campuses as they related to the conference themes. View the full interviews on our conference web page or YouTube channel.

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE
Audrey Zakriski, Professor of Psychology
Hannah Wing, Student
Judelysse Gomez, Assistant Professor of Psychology

“I’m thinking back to when I was an undergrad...in terms of being a psychology student...and I didn’t have the word ‘intersectionality’ at that time, but I think I was thinking about it in that way because of my own positionality...[about] folks not being or operating in a vacuum. We are all embedded within a specific context.”
—Judelysse Gomez

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
Liliana Gallegos, Assistant Professor
Loydie Burmah, Graduate Student
Luis Esparza, Undergraduate Student

“We, in our generation, have a lot of work to do. There has been a foundation laid before us and it’s up to us to continue constructing a better narrative for everyone, controlling our stories—making sure we’re all prepared for our future, so we can lay the foundation for future generations.”
—Loydie Burmah

TRANS STUDENTS EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
Eli Erlick, Director

“One thing we emphasize [at TSER] is looking beyond the means of equality and inclusion. Looking at how to fundamentally change the institutions we’re working through to make the well-being of trans students with intersecting identities [central so that] they’re not merely participating in the system, but changing [the system] as a whole.”
—Eli Erlick

ADDITIONAL INTERVIEWS
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY
CHICAGO
Joe Saucedo, Director, Student Diversity and Multicultural Affairs

AUGSBURG COLLEGE AND PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY
Anne Baumgartner, Adjunct Professor and Visiting Artist, Augsburg College
Janice Samuels, Doctoral Candidate, Pepperdine University

BRINGING THEORY TO PRACTICE
Don Harward, Cofounder and Director, BTtoP, and President Emeritus, Bates College
Sally Engelhard Pingree, Cofounder, BTtoP, and President, S. Engelhard Center

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
L. Lee Knefelkamp, Professor Emerita, Teacher’s College, Columbia University, and Senior Scholar, BTtoP
Emma Westerhof, Student, University of Virginia, and Summer Intern, BTtoP

THE GRADUATE! NETWORK
David Scobey, Senior Scholar

2 https://www.youtube.com/user/BTtoP01
As a special section in this “Whole Student” conference-focused issue, we asked a few conference attendees to respond to open-ended questions with their reflections on conference themes, as well as their thoughts on where and how our shared work can grow. These reflections have been edited for clarity.

Rabbi Josh Feigelson
Founder and Executive Director, Ask Big Questions

Josh presented a provocatively titled “We’re Asking Lousy Questions and Setting Our Campuses Up to Fail. How Can We Do Better?”

In his essay for BTtoP’s publication, Civic Values, Civic Practices, Adam Seligman asks some crucial questions about a pedagogy of integrity in plural societies. Seligman writes, “The real challenge of any pedagogy that will promote living together while maintaining substantial differences in values and practices in a complex world is just this: can we take individuals from very different, context-rich communities, who have very different interpretive grids and share a pedagogical experience without either turning everything into a form of generalized and context-free knowledge (the type we are so good at developing in the university context), or without reducing everything to the purely individual and relatively atomistic vision of self and society?”

In other words, how do intersectionality and well-being—of both individual students, and the broader university and civic communities with whom individual student lives are braided and intertwined—manifest in a pedagogy and in learning that engages the whole student?

Based on the response to my brief presentation on our work at Ask Big Questions during the “Whole Student” conference, I’m optimistic that we’re contributing to an answer. I received a lot of feedback immediately after my session, and by email in the weeks following the conference, from colleagues and partners interested in question design, public language, and using learning objects for communal reflection.

“We cannot afford to speak only to ourselves in academe—the conversation needs to include a broader set of stakeholders, including people able to invest in our work.”

The biggest challenge? I still feel like...
we're all in the vitamin business: our goals are aspirational, and there is not yet a strong enough statement of “so what” in our failure to reach them—even after the 2016 election. In the coming months and years, this field of committed colleagues needs to find a way to marshal more significant financial and human capital in service of our hopes and dreams. We need to articulate bottom-line benefits to a more holistic and integrated vision of education and living. And that requires a sustained commitment to assessment; storytelling; and, yes, marketing. We cannot afford to speak only to ourselves in academe—the conversation needs to include a broader set of stakeholders, including people able to invest in our work.

Kimberly Lowe-Sawyer
EdD Candidate, Holy Family University

Kimberly presented as a panel member in a conference workshop titled “Traffic Jams, Speed Limits, Pot holes, and Open Roads: The Intersections of Adult Learners.”

As an African-American and first-generation college student, I found integrating into college life difficult. I felt unprepared for the new college culture. Despite resources offered by my university, I needed something more to feel like I belonged. I entered college with experiences of social injustice and inequality. The byproduct of those experiences caused me to have feelings of inferiority and doubts regarding my ability to flourish academically and socially. This sentiment is common for adult learners and minority students from low-income families. Studies support the notion that factors like these may have contributed to my apprehension to integrate [with my new college culture].

I recall a professor questioning my ability to succeed in my program because I was doing poorly in his statistics class. I could handle the defeat of a difficult subject; retakes occur in academia. However, the condescending comments towards struggling students like me became costlier than a decline in a GPA. It was a detriment to my overall well-being. I immediately withdrew from his course and contemplated leaving college altogether. Fortunately, there was another professor and fellow students who encouraged me to dispel my negative thoughts and to persevere. Years later, I am one paper away from completing my doctorate degree.

I know firsthand the impact a college community has on the retention of students. Laura Rendón suggests that students with diverse backgrounds and innate desires to succeed can benefit greatly if they feel validated as competent learners. The workshop I participated in during BTtoP’s “Whole Student” conference gave me a voice and I felt valued. It refueled my enthusiasm to complete my degree because the attendees showed interest in hearing my experiences and research. It was not just a few individuals, but a community of genuine well-wishers.

While attending this academic conference, I dialogued with experts on the topics of intersectionality, well-being, and civic engagement. I heard perspectives different from my own. As a non-traditional student, I strengthened my academic and emotional support system through networking. Research suggests that faculty members are leading influencers of student experiences and facilitators of institutional missions and visions, so it was meaningful to be in direct communication with participants to share the importance of faculty validation and the continuum of engagement with students inside and outside of the classroom.

The findings of my research will hopefully impact the way educators and college administrators engage with diverse student populations and increase college completion. My main takeaway from the conference is that higher education needs to be willing to adequately address issues that impede creating a welcoming campus climate.

Rebecca D. Graham
Instructional Consultant, Research Academy for Integrated Learning, University of the District of Columbia

Rebecca led a workshop titled “Connecting Identity, Well-Being, and Student Success to Campus Sexual Assault Prevention Efforts” and moderated the concluding panel, “Reflections from the Intersections.”

In so many areas of our lives, we are often asked to separate, even pull apart, different aspects of our identity. Normative practices (and current political discourse) prefer uncomplicated categories, but we do not live our lives

(including our campus lives) via separated identities. To do so is to sacrifice our whole selves, which is why the timing of this conference felt so critical. As we return to campus this fall to deeply engage in learning practices that matter to students, we can bring the lessons learned from “The Whole Student” conference to our institutional homes during an increasingly complex cultural and political moment.

The idea of building a “consciousness of caring” throughout campus life, addressed and demonstrated by Leeva Chung and Laura Rendón at the outset of the conference, stayed with me as I moved through different sessions. Sitting in Shiva Subbaraman’s session, “Uneasy Homes,” I was reminded that this “consciousness” often starts with educators’ own identities (i.e., how we feel about our identities in our campus work and whether we can meaningfully engage with our identities on campus). Once we experience this greater sense of connectedness between ourselves and our work, we can connect more openly with students—to understand how their personal and scholarly identities intersect and affect their success. The leaders from Trans Student Educational Resources (TSER), for example, spent time distinguishing gender identity from gender expression, sex assigned at birth, sexual attraction, and emotional attraction. Patrick Arsenault additionally unpacked asexual identities, and associated terms, for conference participants. These are much more nuanced discussions of identity than the categories of gender and sexuality tend to offer, and they help us understand the kinds of intersecting identities students bring to their learning.

Campus practices would benefit greatly from the conference’s impulse to interconnect student identity, well-being, and learning. These nuanced understandings of identity would also resonate deeply throughout our campus work—via course design, cocurricular activities, student success assessments, cross-campus partnerships, and so on. When we bring these nuanced understandings (e.g., this “consciousness of caring”) to our campus work, students additionally benefit through profound connections to their learning, their identities, their peers, and us.

Hannah Altman
Student and Community Engagement Advocate, Tulane University

Hannah led a workshop titled “Entering the Community.”

As a student, it was incredibly meaningful to attend, “The Whole Student: Intersectionality and Well-Being,” a conference that focused on two extremely relevant topics (intersectionality and well-being). These terms are buzzwords on my campus; students involved in community engagement use them daily to discuss campus climate and explain complex ideas to our peers.

Yet, it’s rare that members of administrative staff—outside of admissions and public service offices—use these terms to describe the college experience. So, it was incredibly refreshing to step into a room where faculty, experts, administrative staff, and students alike could discuss intersectionality and well-being without even needing to define the terms. So often, students involved in civic engagement worry that the administration is unaware and unreceptive. Being at this conference with members from different universities across the continent gave me hope. It demonstrated the sheer number of people who care about these issues and are willing to devote themselves to creating change.

At this conference, I presented Tulane’s Community Engagement Advocates program, one of our campus’s ways of creating more educated public servants. I started my presentation by asking everybody in the audi-
ence to “shake it out” with me. Speaking in front of experts, faculty, and administrative staff was incredibly nerve-wracking to an undergraduate student like myself, and I needed to feel a certain level of comfort. As my presentation went on, I found myself opening up to conference attendees as they opened up to me.

What surprised me most was the amount of work going on at the administrative level. I’ve never been invited into the rooms where decisions are made, and usually only find out what’s going on with the administration after it’s happened (or sometimes, hasn’t happened). Hearing about the work that universities have done to create safe environments for their students, educate their freshman population, and change institutional rules was both amazing and astonishing. But, these practices were happening behind closed doors. While it makes sense to not share news until it’s official, it can leave students feeling alone in their battles.

“The Whole Student: Intersectionality and Well-Being” conference taught me that there are just as many administrative staff struggling to create change as there are students concerned with the same issues. But I wish I knew what administrators were trying to accomplish; open communication would make it so much easier to coordinate our goals and change our campus for the better.

Lott Hill
Director, Center for Teaching and Learning, University of the Pacific

Soo La Kim
Assistant Dean, Graduate Programs
School of Professional Studies, Northwestern University

Lott and Soo La presented as part of a group-led workshop titled “Ain’t Just Breaking Ice: Community Building as Pedagogical Practice.”

During the opening keyduet (keynote duet), Leeva Chung and Laura Rendón discussed the concept of intersectionality in relation to grappling with identities that may be in resistance to each other and the idea that we have learned to struggle with ourselves and against ourselves. In her brilliant introduction to that conversation, L. Lee Knefelkamp asked, “What are the intellectual capacities we need to deal with an increasingly recognized complex society . . . to stay in the intersection, . . . to stay in dialogue with one another?” These concepts and questions were clearly echoed throughout the national conference and, at least in part, were demonstrated and answered through the interactions that took place during the gathering.

On college campuses, which Knefelkamp referred to as “the most diverse intersections in the US,” faculty and staff are striving to create inclusive environments that provide support for students as they make sense of the world and engage with others even while many feel their own identities colliding. How can we better support our students, our colleagues, and ourselves in the current culture of division and divisiveness? How can we stay in the intersection—in dialogue—with individuals and identities that appear, at least on the surface, to avoid meaningful engagement?

Many of the conversations we had at the B’TtoP conference came back to the concept of well-being, and though many of us came to Chicago expecting to explore what we can do to empower our students to be or become whole, we were continuously reminded that to support intersectionality and well-being, we had to first allow ourselves to be whole. In Teaching to Transgress, bell hooks writes, “Teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students.” Both in the sessions and in the informal conversations at lunch and elsewhere, we sensed a real hunger for dialogue and connection where participants could express their whole selves and acknowledge the discomfort of having to recognize one’s privilege, one’s marginalization, or the messiness of such intersections in an institutional context.

In our own work in faculty and professional development, we have found that opportunities for authentic conversations are few and far between, even when campus priorities such as curriculum revisions, student success and retention initiatives, diversity and inclusion efforts, etc. would benefit from key stakeholders having time and space to practice before they preach. The experience of the conference thus drove

5 bell hooks, Teaching to Trangress: Education as the Practice of Freedom (New York, Routledge, 1994).
home for us the necessity of creating and advocating for spaces where faculty and staff can reflect, connect with each other, and feel motivated to try something new, whether that means trying a community-building activity in class for the first time or reconsidering hiring practices to be more equitable. Trust is essential for collaboration. Collaboration is essential for meaningful change. The BTtoP conference inspired us to continue working to build academic communities rooted in trust where authentic dialogues can happen.

SaCora Williams
Undergraduate Student,
Loyola University Chicago

SaCora presented as part of a team panel titled “Reaching Student Success Through Cross-Cultural Mentorship.”

The first knowledge I had of the Bringing Theory to Practice “Whole Student” conference came when my mentor informed me that I would be presenting with her and others on a panel on the topic of cross-cultural mentorship. My first response was a perplexed, “…What?”

However, with a little more information, I was on board with her decision. As I did more research, the conference truly sparked my interest. As a social work and sociology major with an interest in student affairs, student well-being and intersectionality are at the center of my future work. And as a student organizer and active Loyola community member, they are even more important. I believe centering “the whole student” in practice is vital to the work of faculty, staff, and administration within higher education.

The conference challenged me to think in broader terms, and to critique whether institutions can truly advocate for student well-being without intentionally paying attention to intersectionality. When it comes to providing marginalized students with the support they need to succeed, universities tend to fall short due to a lack of focus on the “whole student.” We are more than whitewashed student leadership theories and more than academia’s diversity quotas. It is important to recognize that we are more than our experiences within institutions of higher education, and that our personal journeys and narratives cannot be left at the door.

From presentations by Trans Student Educational Resources on the flaws of policy and statistics about higher education, to the experiences of the student panellists from Berea College, it became evident that the challenges of under-served populations within institutions of higher education are universal. I recalled the many challenges I’ve faced as a queer, low income, and black woman navigating a predominately white and upper-class Catholic institution. We are often boxed out of our own narratives and into preset bubbles created by institutions that stifle our ability to succeed.

The various presentations and themes brought me to one conclusion: higher education stakeholders must “put their money where their mouth is.” Administrators, staff, and faculty members must use these theories as tangible practices to truly begin engaging the whole student. Engaging the whole student means acknowledging lived experiences as pedagogical tools alongside scholarly knowledge. It means intentionally providing resources for students of trans experience to simply exist within institutions of higher education. Educating and nurturing the WHOLE student requires more than theories and rhetoric, but creating substantial change.

Sivagami (Shiva) Subbaraman
Special Assistant to the Vice President and Director of the LGBTQ Resource Center, Georgetown University

Shiva presented a workshop titled “Uneasy Homes: Rethinking the Diversity Paradigm.”

I must confess that when I was first asked to serve on the planning committee for the conference, and later invited to do a workshop, my first thought was, “Here was yet another iteration on a well-worn theme with the appropriate buzzwords: intersectionality and well-being.” I could not have been worse prepared for my own growth and experience through the process of planning and being part of the conference. The conference was a multi-layered experience, and I would like to focus on a couple of major takeaways and what could gesture towards the future.

What made the conference particularly valuable and rich was that it brought together all the constituents of a campus community: faculty, students, staff, and administrators; most higher education conferences are focused predominantly on one or two of them. This allowed for a true 360-degree understanding of many of the challenges facing our campuses. Our conversations as educators tend to be “other focused,” usually “student-focused,” and my main takeaway was the importance of recognizing that we (faculty, staff, and administrators) are part of the fabric, and we cannot fun-
damently ensure well-being without also a critical excavation of our own praxes, biases, and learning processes. Many of the sessions brought this nexus to the fore in a clear and imaginative fashion and allowed for a more nuanced understanding of what “well-being” and “intersectionality” look like.

Working as I do at a Catholic institution, particularly around LGBTQ and diversity-related issues, I am always mindful of the balances and disjunctures between Catholic teachings of social justice, inclusion, and doing right, and the civil rights approach to the very same concepts. Coming to a more clear-sighted understanding of these disjunctures will help us frame the conversation differently on our campus, and to help create connections where there are fissures.

The greatest take away is also a challenge for our future: how well-being is not an individual matter, but should really apply to institutional structures at the micro and macro levels. Well-being is not simply a passive acquisition by an individual student, nor something created by us to be consumed by students. Well-being, correctly understood, is in fact an act of creation by all those who are participants in the community. Being so other-focused, we often elide our own role and responsibility as faculty and staff in such a creation.

In many ways, Walter J. Burghardt’s definition of prayer and contemplation as “a long and loving look at the real,”6 can serve as a useful mantra for us as we try to take a long, loving look at the well-being of the institutions we are all a part of—whether it is at the level of our own centers, our departments, and of course the institution as a whole. Our ability to make sustainable and sustained change is going to depend on our willingness to look at well-being not simply as an individual state of being to be achieved, but as a collective and shared responsibility.

Leigh-Anne Royster
Director of Inclusive Community Well-Being, Elon University

Leigh-Anne led two workshops at the conference: “Microaggressions and Marginalization: Implications for Professionals and Campus Climate” and “First Do No Harm: Creating a Comprehensive Bias, Harassment, and Violence Prevention and Response Model.”

When I reflect on the “Whole Student” conference, it is my reflection on the terms “whole student,” “intersectionality,” and “well-being” that causes me to understand how critical it is to bring together these topics in a shared space.

If I think about the “whole student,” or any “whole” individual for that matter, I understand a complex being—one that exists with its own constellation of identity markers, but also a complex interaction or set of interactions with the world, space, and society around them. This requires a complex analysis of our place in history, our identities, our environment (built or otherwise), and a plethora of other factors that must be deliberated when creating the changes that would produce a more equitable world—one that allows the “whole self” to show up in a safe, supported, and celebrated way.

Finally, my understanding of promoting “well-being” is two-fold and rests on the complexity of the analysis I just described. If “well-being” is being well with and in the world, we must support and celebrate people from a vast variety of identities, perspectives, and backgrounds doing just that, and recognize that we all participate in systems that undermine this work by upholding oppressions and perpetuating disparities. So, the two arms of this work, for me, become: (1) redressing instances of injustice/ violence, while (2) providing spaces for education and growth around understanding and engaging across difference and appreciating the vital value of doing so—work that seems well suited for institutions of 7 Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” University of Chicago Legal Forum (1989): 139–167.


higher education.

So, it is critical for leaders in higher education to more intentionally think about their campus community’s approaches to these concepts. Campuses often use words like “well-being” or “intersectionality,” but you often find that various departments have different understandings of what those words mean. Further, implementation of policies that seek to address these concepts differs widely across the field of higher education and even within individual campuses.

Many campuses have likely learned how difficult it is to put the values and priorities behind such nebulous or loaded terms and concepts into practice. Let’s learn from our previous challenges with terms like “diversity” and “inclusion” and try to face the potential disconnects head-on, so we can avoid finding ourselves in situations where the touted values and matching efforts of an institution are not consonant with climate surveys and other tools that report actual student, staff, and faculty lived experiences.

Ultimately, if campus communities are to be successful with efforts related to well-being or holistic student support, campus leaders must be clear about what they understand about the concepts and the language being used, and what and how they intend to address the concepts through curricula, programming, or other campus priorities. This requires deep exploration of these concepts through responsible engagement with affected communities. This also typically requires additional training (for leaders and policy implementers) to more fully develop multifaceted, multidisciplinary, and complex engagements with the meaning around the efforts they intend to engage.

In Brief: BTtoP News and Notes

NEWS

BTtoP’s Sessions at AAC&U’s Annual Meeting, January 24–27, 2018, in Washington, DC

BTtoP is thrilled to be presenting four sessions at the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Annual Meeting in Washington, DC, January 24–27. For more information, visit the meeting web page at http://www.bttop.org/news-events/events/2018-aacu-annual-meeting-bttop-sessions.

BTtoP’s featured sessions will be:

1. “Whole Students, Whole Institutions, and Whole Learning,” moderated by L. Lee Knefelkamp, Senior Scholar, BTtoP and AAC&U, Senior Scholar and Director of Civic Learning and Democracy, AAC&U

2. “Educating for Global Civic Consciousness and Agency: The Whole World and the Whole Student,” moderated by Caryn McTighe Musil, Senior Scholar, BTtoP, and Senior Scholar and Director of Civic Learning and Democracy, AAC&U

3. “Moving from Talk to Action: How Structured Dialogues Can Achieve ‘Greater Purposes,’” moderated by Ashley Finley, National Evaluator, BTtoP, and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Dominican Experience, Dominican University of California


We will also host our annual Thursday evening reception on January 25, where we enjoy catching up with old friends and welcoming new colleagues! Look for our invitation this fall. We hope to see you there!

BTtoP Welcomes New Team Members Mercedes Yanora and Caryn McTighe Musil

BTtoP is pleased to welcome Mercedes Yanora, project associate, and Caryn McTighe Musil, senior scholar, to the small but mighty BTtoP team! Mercedes comes to BTtoP with a Master’s in South Asia Studies from the University of Pennsylvania and was previously working as the US universities advisor at Wycombe Abbey School in England. Caryn McTighe Musil is a longtime friend and colleague of BTtoP and currently serves as senior scholar and director of civic learning and democracy at AAC&U. To see the full BTtoP team, visit http://www.bttop.org/about/our-team.

Upcoming BTtoP-Sponsored Gathering: Building Faculty Capacity to Support New Majority and Underserved Students

BTtoP looks forward to cosponsoring two working group seminars of scholars (continued on page 15)
In Brief: BTtoP News and Notes

(continued from page 14)

and colleagues—the first will take place at Berea College this November, and the second at the University of Michigan in spring 2018. Scholars and colleagues will come together to explore how to better shape higher education for the flourishing of new majority students (including first-generation students, adult learners, and students of color), particularly in examining strategies to better prepare faculty through culturally responsive pedagogies, identity mindfulness, empathy enrichment, new curricula, and reward structures.

Project Manager Jennifer O’Brien Leaving BTtoP After Eleven Years

It is with mixed feelings that we share news that Jennifer O’Brien, our project manager who has been with BTtoP for just over eleven years, has made the happy decision of joining the Middle East Children’s Institute (www.mecinstitute.org) as their director of development. Jennifer joined BTtoP after earning her bachelor’s degree from George Washington University in psychology and women’s studies, and has evolved in her roles at BTtoP from an associate, to project coordinator, and finally to project manager. Jennifer went on to earn a certificate in nonprofit executive management from Georgetown University, and a master’s degree in philosophy and social policy from George Washington University, both while working full-time with BTtoP. We will miss Jennifer in the office, but she will stay close to BTtoP as a consultant through June 30, 2018, and maintain her formal connection to the S. Engelhard Center as its Executive Manager. We wish Jennifer the best!

Travels

BTtoP Director Don Harward Presents with AAC&U President Lynn Pasquerella at AAC&U’s 2017 Global Engagement Conference

BTtoP Director Don Harward traveled to New Orleans to join AAC&U President Lynn Pasquerella in presenting at AAC&U’s 2017 Network for Academic Renewal Conference: “Global Engagement and Social Responsibility: Higher Education’s Role in Addressing Global Crises.” Their session—“Are Higher Education’s Efforts to Advance Global Engagement and Global Citizenship UnAmerican?”—took place on October 13. It was designed to be a provocative, facilitated discussion examining how threads of current perspectives regarding globalization, and the needs and challenges of global engagement, may weave together to strengthen or diminish the civic purpose and responsibilities of higher education.

What We’re Reading

Student Development and Social Justice: Critical Learning, Radical Healing, and Community Engagement

By Tessa Hicks Peterson

“This book weaves together critical components of student development and community building for social justice to prepare students to engage effectively in community-campus partnerships for social change. The author combines diverse theoretical models such as critical pedagogy, asset-based community development, and healing justice with lessons from programs promoting indigenous knowledge, decolonization, and mindfulness. Most importantly, this book links theory to practice, offering service-learning classroom activities, course and community partnership criteria, learning outcomes, and assessment rubrics. It speaks to students, faculty, administrators, and community members who are interested in utilizing community engagement as a vehicle for the development of students and communities towards well-being and social justice.”


Educating for an Ecological Civilization: Interdisciplinary, Experiential, and Relational Learning

Edited by Marcus Ford and Stephen Rowe

“The new form of civilization we so urgently need will require new ways of thinking and relating—ones that are more socially responsible, ecological, “mindful,” and coherent—and new ways of educating ourselves. The essays in this volume describe features of an emerging, relational vision of civilization and some of the educational practices it suggests.”

http://processcenturypress.com/educating-for-an-ecological-civilization/
The Bringing Theory to Practice Project (BTtoP) is an independent national effort. It is funded by the Charles Engelhard Foundation of New York and functions in partnership with the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) in Washington, DC.

The Charles Engelhard Foundation is a New York-based foundation whose mission focuses on projects in higher and secondary education, cultural, medical, religious, wildlife, and conservation organizations.

The S. Engelhard Center is a nonprofit public charitable foundation; its mission is to support projects and initiatives that affect greater and sustained commitments by educational institutions at all levels to provide effective means of addressing the intellectual, emotional, and civic development of today’s students in preparation for claiming their positive future.

Now Available from Bringing Theory to Practice

Well-Being and Higher Education: A Strategy for Change and the Realization of Education’s Greater Purposes

Well-Being and Higher Education is a book about well-being and its multiple connections to higher education—and why those connections matter. The thirty-five-piece volume of essays and provocations responds to the current landscape of challenges higher education faces today and the need to preserve and revive the institution’s role of looking beyond itself to a greater good.

For more information: www.bttop.org/resources/publications