CHAPTER TWELVE

EMBRACING A CREATIVE PRAXIS: THE CREATIVITY FELLOWS PROGRAM AT BRYANT UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The Creativity Fellows Program (CF) at Bryant University is a one-year seminar devoted to nurturing faculty members' creative practices with the long-term purpose of fundamentally transforming both teaching modalities and educational philosophies. The program draws faculty from all parts of the institution. With pressure to be more "creative," faculty are often at a loss; many feel that they themselves are not creative. Furthermore, assignments meant to encourage creativity are frequently reliant on extrinsic motivation, which generally diminishes students' creativity and disappoints the teacher. The premise of the seminar is that we start with the mindset: If faculty do not have an active creative practice, it is impossible to model and to speak to creativity in authentic ways. The seminar focuses on providing spaces to help Fellows develop a creative practice through activities (in visual, 3D, written, technical art forms), visiting artists, one-on-one creative mentoring, sketching, and a final installation of work. In the process, faculty become reacquainted with their own intrinsic motivation, which contributes to fostering student engagement.

Embracing a Creative Praxis:
The Creativity Fellows Program at Bryant University

The Creativity Fellows Program (CF) at Bryant University is a one-year seminar devoted to nurturing faculty members' creative practices with the long-term purpose of fundamentally transforming both teaching modalities and educational philosophies. Drawing faculty from Business and the Arts & Sciences, the seminar's premise is that we start with the mindset: If faculty

do not have an active creative practice, it is impossible to model and to speak to creativity with authenticity.

Most faculty, trained in their discipline, understand themselves as critical thinkers and content providers. When teaching, they may be most comfortable using familiar methods—lectures, note taking, and memorization with high stakes examinations. But the increasing pressures to be "creative," even in professions not typically understood as creative, challenge professors to reimagine learning experiences. Faculty, however, often have few skills and less support to take on this challenge. Teaching disciplinary knowledge within a context that allows for choice, exploration, experimentation, formative feedback, and reflection (all elements of the creative process) is daunting to many. And even if convinced of the pedagogical value of these learning experiences, reinventing courses and assignments can be overwhelming. Faculty need training and support, but training and support cannot come in cookbook form. Rather, faculty need time, space, and a supportive collegial environment in which to explore their own creative process. The hoped-for result of a fellows program designed to address these challenges would be that participants develop the courage to reimagine the learning environment they create for their students.

The CF Seminar started with an emphasis on creating and making, providing spaces to help Fellows develop a creative practice through exposure to activities (in visual, 3D, written, technical art forms), visiting artists, one-on-one creative mentoring, and a final installation of work. "Embracing a creative praxis" took the CF one step beyond a creative practice into the ethics that guide any action faculty might take as "makers" in the world. Mark Smith (1999, 2011) defines "praxis" as "informed, committed action" (para. 9): The processes of thought and theory interact with the world of action and making, but are guided by ethics and wisdom. He argues, "It is not simply action based on reflection. It is action which embodies certain qualities. These include a commitment to human well being and the search for truth, and respect for others" (para. 9). Integrating the work of W. Carr and S. Kemmis (1986), Smith observes that, "*praxis* is always risky. It requires that a person 'makes a wise and prudent practical judgment about how to act in *this* situation'" (as cited in Smith, 1999, 2011, para. 9). Thinking and making are in and of themselves not enough, he states. Creativity, in its most complex form, emerges in *praxis* because it is "other-seeking and dialogic" (para. 11). Applying the concept of "design mindfulness," John Thackara (2006) argues similarly, stating that, "ethics and responsibility can inform design decisions without constraining the social and technical innovation we all need to do" (7). Thackara argues that designers and creators must, "think about the consequences of design actions before we take them . . . give priority to human agency and not treat humans as a 'factor' in some bigger picture" (8). An emphasis on praxis also shifts the definition of efficiency from cost-related streamlining to the reality that creating and learning human beings are

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highly inefficient (Thackara, 2006, p. 3). Systems of education, which currently overvalue efficiency, leave behind praxis.

The faculty member's development of a fuller, creative teaching self follows the progression of practice to praxis: a long history of active engagement with the world of thought and theory contributes to the faculty member's position as a thinker; for many, this is first and foremost. Thinking exists in an engagement with making and doing—sometimes in the act of academic research, building companies, consulting, etc. As faculty, however, it is generally the encounter with the student that brings their work from thought/practice to praxis. A circuitous and evolving journey is often necessary to the search for praxis. The example of the CF demonstrates one such route.

Context of the Creativity Fellows Seminar

With a history of more than 150 years, Bryant University has its origin in business education. Eighty percent of its 3800 undergraduates major in business. The College of Arts & Sciences, established ten years ago, offers programs in liberal arts education. Although studio courses have existed since 2003, until 2012, the college had no degree program in the creative arts. In the College of Business, programs in entrepreneurship have been only recently established. In this context, building a creative culture faces several obstacles. Students don't see themselves as creative. In career orientation, students imagine themselves as managers, not creators of businesses or non-profits. Faculty, similarly, do not see themselves as creative, and some still suggest that creativity is innate, not learned.

When Terri A. Hasseler, Professor of Literary and Cultural Studies, and Robert Shea, Director of the Center on Teaching and Learning, established the CF in 2012, the goal was to develop a University-funded faculty program that was rather heterodox: The emphasis would not be on the final products of research and publications but on process; the purpose of being a Fellow would be just that, to "be" a member of the seminar; and pedagogy would *not* be placed at the forefront of discussion, rather the faculty members' developing creative practice would be the focus. The Seminar was invested in basic science (the development of the creative teaching self), not in applied research (the passing down of a how-to manual on creativity pedagogy). Delaying the focus on pedagogy was decidedly out of the ordinary, but was necessary to provide the physical and critical space that would allow teaching and learning to emerge in more complex ways as the seminar proceeded. Maura Ann Dowling, Finance Lecturer, and Sandra Enos, Associate Professor of Sociology, were participants in the first CF community and served as consultants and mentors for the most recent community.

Despite the deferred emphasis on pedagogy, student learning was an impetus for the program. Bryant University has been increasingly interested in

encouraging innovation in its students. The word, "innovation," is tossed around a lot, but there is limited discussion of what it means. Moreover, while administrators and faculty devote significant time and resources to a first-year program aimed at teaching design thinking, they have not widely explored the possibilities for multiple forms of innovation instituted across the curriculum. Ideally, the goal is to encourage students to explore their creative practice. However, the continued focus on content knowledge mastery as the measure of student achievement is too rigid to allow for choice, exploration, formative feedback, experimentation, reconceptualization, and reflection. The course, the credit hour, the fifteen-week semester, all measure inputs and achievement. None is designed to optimize the exploration of creative practice. This is not to say that fostering creative practice is impossible within these constraints of higher education. Certainly, learning outcomes can be amended, courses can be redesigned, and assessments, both formative and summative, can be reimagined. For the CF, the focus was on both creating in the middle (Maisel, 2010), as well as conceptualizing an educational paradigm shift.

With these challenges in mind, initial discussions for the seminar participants centered around issues of trusting the process—that if a space were made for reflection, creativity and community, the teaching methodologies and the professional products would naturally emerge, because, after all, it is hard to get people deeply committed to their teaching and research to stay away from either for too long. This emphasis was called "purposelessness," a willingness to do something without a goal or a final intention in order to play with possibilities. The syllabus (Hasseler, 2012, 2014) encouraged faculty to view the seminar more as a "what if," rather than a "how to":

> What if you were given a space to play, time to think about it, and a cohort of colleagues to encourage you? What if you were able to participate in activities within which your very presence was the purpose? What if you could play with the distractions to see what they yield, rather than immediately aiming for some objective? (p. 3)

As noted, pedagogy would eventually emerge: "As faculty tackle their own anxieties about creativity, they will gain a stronger sense of their students' anxieties about creating" (p. 3). What was most important for the program, however, was the re-invigoration of a faculty member's personal commitment to creativity as a central tenet of her own learning and growth.

Room and space to play, as well as playmates to play with, were essential. A key element of enabling a creative process is providing multiple opportunities for "play" and experimentation when trying new things. Because faculty may be intimidated or anxious about an expectation that they should be "creative," replacing high stakes projects with lower stakes activities was a good strategy for encouraging flexibility. Modeling creativity and innovation in front of each other was another important learning and teaching tool, so

that faculty experienced the multiple steps required for creativity (developing a creative insight or vision) and innovation (putting the idea into practice). Process was key, as was place. In these safe creative spaces, ideas could be launched and built, and faculty could learn how to recognize each other's good work. A communal physical space, initially separate from outside questions or comments, was essential to building familiarity, comfort, and trust.

Trust was central to building the community of playmates. The initial application process drew dozens of applicants, but the communities were kept small (averaging 10 people) in order to allow for full participation and individual mentoring. The group was also quite diverse, crossing numerous demographic and institutional boundaries: age, gender, profession (scholars and practitioners), rank (adjunct, lecturer, tenure-track), and fields of expertise. Because the goal was to build a collaborative community, activities that revealed different strengths, skills, and enthusiasms were necessary to dismantle pre-existing hierarchies, expectations, and authority. In these sessions, participants recognized that what one member found easy (making a pot) might be more of a challenge to another. The point was not mastery or pecking order but exploration and collaboration.

This purposelessness and play evoked a third concern—fear and its relationship with failure and risk-taking. Writing about the first CF community, Suhong Li, an Associate Professor in Computer Information Systems and CF participant, and Hasseler state, "To make space for our students to fail and try again is perhaps less disconcerting than making such a space for ourselves-as-instructors. To encourage a 'proficiency' in creativity, we, as educators, must also be willing to take risks, make leaps of faith, and plan on a large number of Mulligans" (p. 3). The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) lists "risk-taking" as a primary skill needed for creative thinking. However, faculty are rarely pulled completely out of their comfort zones. Most faculty teach and research in fields to which they have devoted a lifetime of study. Because of the academic structure, faculty frequently move farther and farther away from meaningful risk-taking, at least the risk-taking that is on the level of the student's experience—confronting a whole new way of thinking or making with little to no context. Thus, faculty making a potted bowl might seem "purposeless" for some, but it is "purposelessness" in the best meaning of that process as we define it. Amongst a group of peers, faculty leapt into the unknown, where they felt the same sense of uncertainty, incompetence, and fear that students often feel. However, the Fellows provided a space to catch the "failure" and encourage the risks. The Seminar would also teach the intrinsic value in creating, physically manipulating materials, and displaying one's results for discussion and reflection.

As a part of the practice of creating, Fellows were introduced to several visual media (including collage work and photography), 3-D sculptural experiences (paper-making, bookbinding, ceramics), and physical activity (meditation, Improv). Artists from the local community were brought in to work with faculty on several activities, including coil pottery, Improv per-

formance, and mind-mapping. In complement with the "practice" part of praxis, the Seminar offered opportunities for faculty to read theoretical essays on creativity, thereby bringing thinking directly into the experience: the first community reading the work of cultural anthropologist Tim Ingold (2007), and the second community reading theoretical observations on the creative process from choreographer and dancer Twyla Tharp (2006), psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997), composer and film-maker Robert Fritz, and artist Betty Edwards (2012); videos of Ken Robinson (2012) on the definition of creativity and Jill Bolte Taylor (2008) on the processing of right and left brain hemispheres; and other readings addressing neuroplasticity and bio-evolutionary origins of art and storytelling.

The first activity that both communities completed was constructing a clay animal that reflected their understanding of inspiration and creativity. When the misshapen little figures emerged, lacking in proportion, bent, but much loved, Fellows embraced this experience to talk about their fears and personal familial connections with creativity. The second part of the activity asked Fellows to put their animals in a shared habitat. In the quiet uncertainty that results from this task, participants start to reflect on several concerns—they don't get to keep their figure, they need to think in terms of a habitat that would house all these diverse creatures (some real animals, others magical), and they have to do this in a very short period of time. The first community constructed an amusement park, which seemed to reflect some of the be-mused uncertainty of their time together: I have an advanced degree and you want me to make what? But it also provided a metaphor for their approach to creativity—amusement, play, and irony. The second constructed a garden, choosing an organic, agricultural metaphor.

Constructing the habitat was central to building a community of practice. Over the past four years, Bryant University has taken major steps toward becoming a learning outcomes-based institution. With a conscious eye toward what students should know and do, faculty have re-tooled a significant portion of the curriculum to align with a set of foundational outcomes, including effective communication, critical thinking, information literacy, diversity awareness, and ethical reasoning. While most colleges and universities share these broad learning outcomes, Bryant has made significant strides toward operationalizing a curriculum that fosters and measures student development on each. Students maintain e-portfolios, containing selected artifacts, as well as reflections aimed at demonstrating metacognitive awareness of growth on foundational outcomes. A sample of representative artifacts and reflections is assessed annually as a measure of institutional performance. Results inform the creation of targeted professional development activities for faculty and staff.

Much of Bryant's success results from developing a community of practice model (Wenger, 1998) that is focused on student learning. Communities of practice (COP) are groups that share a common passion, and individual members and the community improve through interactions. Participants in

COPs share practices, give voice to concerns and challenges, and benefit from the experiences of colleagues and from the collective wisdom of the group. The successful COP requires the establishment of trust among members. All learning requires a measure of humility and vulnerability, and COPs provide a context rich in social capital that enables members to push perceived limitations, explore boundaries, and celebrate individual and collective achievements.

Bryant University's COP model is not limited to curriculum redesign; rather, it has characterized much of the professional development opportunities sponsored by the institution's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). The CTL has sponsored a number of Faculty Fellows programs over the past several years. Though distinct in approach or content, all Fellows programs share characteristics of successful COPs. All ask colleagues to make a commitment to come together regularly to study, explore, and apply new knowledge and skills in practice. All are purposeful about the establishment of social capital and include opportunities for celebrating achievements. Indeed, members are encouraged to share results of their work with the broader Bryant community, as well as with professional audiences in conference presentations and published manuscripts. The CF was built upon this model of a COP.

This paper will address the implications and results of the CF more fully in later sections, but it is important to highlight, at this point, the most important results of the seminar. A first was in taking a faculty, many of whom did not consider themselves creatively-inclined, and helping them to find these possibilities within themselves. It also built a critical mass of faculty, who know there are others in the institution invested in "informed, committed action," insuring that students experience creativity across the curriculum, not just in isolated instances in particular classrooms. The Fellows also functioned as a form of creativity consciousness building across the University-structure. Although larger and more heavily funded "creativity" exercises exist at the institution, the quiet and introspective nature of the Fellows seeped into the bones of the place, manifesting itself in different activities, affiliations, programs, events, courses, and new degrees. The collaborative-nature of the program made participants a member of a *shared* experience, and yet each participant could also claim what was practiced and learned in the seminar as her *own*.

Narratives of a Creative Practice

Because the CF was both a group and an individual encounter, this paper will look at several narratives that speak to the particular experience of participants. These stories highlight what gets "stirred" in participants when the mindset is allowed to shift and change because of embracing a fundamentally different approach to the self-as-learner and the self-as-teacher.

Maura Dowling's Story

Dowling is a lecturer in the Finance Department and maintains a financial planning consulting practice. She teaches undergraduate finance full-time and consults part-time. Fear and financial decision-making are of particular interest to Dowling, as well as work-life integration. A creativity practice in music and yoga has allowed her to explore deeper conceptual understandings for both students and clients alike.

"Creativity recovered." The phrase "*my creative practice*" is profoundly empowering to me. My upbringing was overshadowed by the idea that creativity was an unimportant talent. Yes, creativity was a talent, but it was not deemed useful to my clan. Creativity was thought to be "artsy-craftsy" and quaint, at best. Important talents were related to mathematics, science, or business. Of course, this is a limited view of creativity—and mathematics, science and business, too. From the 1970's forward, as manufacturing lumbered to off-shore locales for tactical cost-savings, the air around the New York City metropolitan area where I grew up was filled with talk of cost-savings in public education. Educational cost savings were extracted from early foreign language, music, and art programs. The first layoffs I ever experienced up-close were arts and language teachers in elementary school. Surprisingly, over forty years later, I can still sing a French Canadian song I learned from the gutted music program. The irony is that U.S. and likely all manufacturing would have been helped by creativity, and this is now understood in some quarters. What makes me smile is that I am now teaching in a College of Business that is concerned with innovation and creativity. How full of purpose and meaning that is for me—like visiting old ideas and experiencing them in a new way, as if for the first time.

When Terri led the second group of CF, I was a co-facilitator. And the new Fellows would tell me how tortured they were with guilt that they couldn't always find the time to finish projects. They loved what they were experiencing and yet couldn't serve that experience's demands as a personal priority. And I would just smile, almost laughing, and say, "that is part of the process!" The first level of this reply relates to a class I was teaching when I was first in the Fellows. This class was meant to have elements of creativity. However, some institutional rigidity about how the course was taught in the past felt like a vacuum-sealed bell jar environment. And I didn't see the glass. I was moving around with creative ideas and enthusiasm and conking against the glass. My projects in the Fellows began to become very challenging to complete. Terri caught me, at times, shut down, scared, or on the verge of tears. The bell jar ideas of creativity from childhood were dissolving.

Then I worked on a small clay bowl with my fingers in terra cotta clay. We were to snake the bowl, and I snaked the symbols of reptile, mammal, and a heart representing the triune brain and the levels of fear from each level. A small snaked heart came up one side of the bowl, representing fear's

resolution in the neo cortex. Once the bowl was complete, I was empty. Or perhaps, I was empty because the fear was fully experienced and was complete in the bowl. The bowl still sits in my office as a symbol of letting the past go. Two years later, the class I was teaching at that time has continued, and I have changed my version of it, I speak about it, and the bell jar is no longer sealed.

My own acceptance of the limited view of creativity of my clan has been dispelled. Creativity is beautiful, expansive, and profoundly important. In a way, it extends my feminism to a more graceful humanism. Marion Woodman (Bly, 1998), a Jungian analyst, speaks about the divine marriage of the feminine and masculine in our psyche, which has nothing to do with the power principles of patriarchy or matriarchy (pp. 183-197). Western culture, she argues, lacks a gritty, earthy, senescent feminine energy that she calls the Baba Yaga from Eastern Folklore. Encountering this energetic idea in readings, while exploring a broader more fully human notion of creativity, has literally healed me of the burdens from working many years in the Wall Street broker-dealer-system, which must be one of western civilization's last great strongholds of pure patriarchy. Masculinity and femininity are coming together in creative movements like Conscious Capitalism, while patriarchal values are dissolving in the process. This is the transforming power of creativity. All of my history is being reshaped and reused in new empowering ways—creatively.

Sandra Enos's Story

Enos earned her PhD late in life after a long career in public service, motivated by a desire to teach sociology in an inspired, active, and engaged way. She considers herself a public sociologist and leads community engagement efforts on campus and on the national stage. With a focus on engaged-learning, her aim is to help students understand the deep lessons of sociology by connecting their personal lives to those of others.

"Divided no more." Two practices are especially important for me. The first is music, the second drawing. For forty years or so, I have played the guitar, completely self-taught. I learned by ear, formed musical groups when I was young, and wrote some music: all for my own pleasure. Two years ago, I started playing the mandolin, and for the first time in my life, took music lessons. I did this because I was becoming tired in my teaching. I was losing patience with students, who seemed to have unaccountable difficulties understanding what I was teaching. Of course, I realized my disciplinary training in sociology was so ingrained that it is sometimes hard for me to understand what it is like to be a novice learner in a subject. I thought I would take up a new instrument, learn to read music (something I have failed to teach myself despite years of effort), and be open to performing with an ensemble in public concerts. I wanted to put myself in the place of the new

learner and feel that challenge and anxiety. Additionally, I wanted this to be in something I do not easily master, unlike writing, reading, and analysis. I wanted to get out of my comfort zone and have an opportunity to think carefully about metacognition—how the brain, the hands, the soul learn music—with the hope that this would illuminate my own teaching in sociology. In his wonderful book tracking his journey from being non-musical to playing the guitar, Gary Marcus (2012) demonstrates that our ideas about what and how we learn can either erect overwhelming obstacles or build powerful levers for deep learning.

For twenty years, I tried to teach myself how to draw using the books by Edwards (1979, 2012). I have the earliest editions to her classic, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. No lesson in that book was more important than the one that taught that drawing was not a matter of brilliant hand-eye coordination, nor was it a case of native talent. Drawing was learning to see, to bury your left-brained knowledge of how the world was, and instead to use your eyes to really scope out how images appear. The idea that with study and practice I could learn a skill that I thought was confined to the talented few was a significant moment of learning liberation. To comprehend that to learn some things one has to unlearn others was also a profound realization. These lessons carry into the classroom, as I consider the deeply held beliefs and the mental models that students bring to the classroom and to the study of sociology. It is challenging for them to jettison their ideas about social relationships. They need to unlearn some things before we can move on.

The belief that without natural talent one can learn music and master the skills of drawing rests upon a belief in what Carol Dweck (2012) calls, "growth mindset." A growth mindset suggests that skills can be acquired through practice and effort. Opposed to a fixed mindset, which proposes that some of us are good at math and others are good at language skills, a growth mindset puts us in the position of reflecting on how we learn. We move from regretting that we are not more talented to imagining that we can expand our learning.

The CF program provided me with the intellectual and practical space I needed to move forward on ideas I had been considering for a while. I am asking more of students and allowing them more freedom in the classroom. I have a developed a new course in the "Sociology of Innovation and Creativity," which was inspired by the CF experience. When a CF participant, I realized that I had enough interest, material, and energy to teach about creativity and innovation—a full semester's course was in order. The aim of the class is two-fold: (1) to examine the sociological aspects of creativity (Where does creativity and innovation come from? What is the role of community in creativity and innovation? Can creativity be taught?) and (2) to develop and strengthen students' creative confidence. Students are challenged to put their faith in a growth mindset. They must jettison the belief that only a few are truly creative. And, they must suspend their expectation that a twenty-page paper and rote learning will suffice to earn a good grade.

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Terri Hasseler's Story

Hasseler is a professor of literary and cultural studies, who started teaching in narrative, theory, and film, but has since developed an interest in teaching the creative process and a studio course in the book arts. With a PhD in British Victorian literature, she is now studying children's book illustration and writing.

"**Drawing a straight line.**" In the early 2000s, the Department of English and Humanities at Bryant University underwent a soul-searching look at its place in the institution and the purpose of its pedagogy. The faculty felt that the programmatic student outcomes should continue to include applying theoretical lenses to cultural artifacts, but should also include the ability to actively create and produce. At the time, we did not have a course that put these activities in connection with each other. There were many courses focused on critical theory and a few that engaged in creative production, but none that integrated the two. The result of this soul-searching was a reformed program in Literary and Cultural Studies with a culminating course, combining creative production with critical theory.

The Senior Practicum, as the course would be known, was not officially offered until Spring 2012, and I was given the chance to teach it. From the beginning, I had helped define the course and was a strong supporter. However, when faced with the chance to teach it, I was overwhelmed and confused. I did not have an active creative practice of my own. I did not "make things," as I understood creating to be, and I saw myself as a theory person, who could take apart ideas, but was rarely forced to put them back together. In fact, this had become one of my personal pet peeves with Cultural Theory—that it dismantled concepts while offering few options for putting them back together. For students and for me, this was becoming increasingly more unsatisfying, hence my support and interest in a course that would purposefully emphasize creating. But now that I was actually going to be teaching it, I felt like a fraud and a fake. I had a history in music, playing and singing, but I had a complex emotional relationship with my own creativity. In my family, creativity was widely accepted and encouraged, but as a child, I felt the competition with my siblings very painfully. Both my brother and sister were talented artists, and I was, as my brother would joke, "the one in the family who couldn't draw straight line." Of course, this was not entirely true, but I learned to keep my creativity very personal and quiet. I did not share my writings and did not want to engage in any performance outside of music.

But now I had to design a course whose purpose was creative production. Quickly, I threw myself into several different experiences to reawaken some creative places that had gone dormant through graduate school and, then, the tenure process. I tried pottery, some writing, and experimented with new instruments. Although I had a personal background in music and writing and I enjoyed craft-related activities (I was an expert DIYer), I had never looked at

creative production as something that I needed to attend to as a teacher and critical thinker. Keep in mind, I taught students about creative productions. So the first time I taught the Senior Practicum, I used it as a laboratory to explore possibilities. I was as much a student to the process as the students were. We read Tim Ingold's critical theory book on lines (2007), and used it as the inspiration for a series of creative productions—in writing, pottery, visual art, etc. The course culminated in two presentations of their work—an installation and a public reading of their written work. I presented my work at the installation, as well. For students, the experience was career-affirming, one telling me that this course reminded her of why she wanted to study literature and culture. For me, the experience was transformative. At the end of the semester, I told the class that their encouragement had inspired me to pursue a degree in children's book illustration and writing. From there, I knew that this was an experience that needed to be shared with others.

Robert Shea's Story

Shea is the Associate Vice President for Teaching & Learning and the Director of the Center for Teaching & Learning at Bryant University. He has oversight responsibility for many of the institution's teaching and learning support units, including the Academic Center for Excellence, the Writing Center, English as a Second Language Programming, Disability Services, Peer Tutoring, Undergraduate Advising, Study Abroad, and the First-Year Experience Curriculum. A sociologist by training, Shea teaches in the first-year seminar.

"A mashing success?" For many years, I have approached course development, as well as faculty and professional development activities, using a backward design process. That is, clarity about the broad learning outcomes I had for students and colleagues enabled me to structure my courses and workshops to support learning and success. It helped me think about the timing and nature of assignments, as well as the scaffolding that would be necessary to help students move toward meaningful performance. Participating in the CF program was eye-opening for me. I approached each of our creativity assignments in this same way, and I do know that the assignments that caused me the most anxiety were those with a time constraint. Before putting my hands to work, I typically think for a long time about my desired outcome: What do I want my project to look like? What message do I want to relay? When I have a clear vision for a project in my head, I feel more confident about starting my task. Yet even here, I often found myself thinking for a long time about the pieces and the process before moving forward. What materials did I have at my disposal? In what ways might they come together in support of my imagined outcome? What foundation did I have to establish in order to accomplish my vision? Only then did I feel comfortable setting to work. Of course, nothing ever went exactly as planned. It was always the case that I met unforeseen challenges, reimagined possibilities, and took to

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heart the feedback of other Fellows. Consequently, completed projects always departed to some degree from my original vision, usually for the better.

The CF program enhanced my classroom practice in a number of ways, but chief among these is creating meaningful and authentic tasks that allow students, individually and collectively, to explore ways of making their voice heard. I put into practice the reflection on my learning that I experienced in the Fellows by developing assignments that allow students choice in how they demonstrate learning. One such assignment has worked successfully in my course on "Citizenship in a Digital Age." Students are asked to produce a 30-60 second public service announcement (PSA) on a topic of their choice. The PSA assignment flows from a lengthy annotated bibliography assignment that informed a speech they delivered in a public setting in the center of campus, in the style of London's Speakers Corner. Students record their speeches and reflect on their performance. We collectively note that despite their preparation and the spectacle of the event, few people stopped to listen. We question the value of such a venue as a means of conveying a message in a digital age. As an alternative approach, students are then asked to create a PSA aimed at raising awareness and/or prompting action on their topic. They are asked to experiment with a variety of images, audio tracks, video clips, designs, platforms, etc. Additionally, they are encouraged to seek feedback throughout the design phase and to amend their work accordingly. We discuss copyright and fair uses issues, and explore the ethics of "mashing content," which includes the intellectual property of others. The lesson culminates with a showing of the PSAs in class. Students are proud of the work they have produced, often expressing excitement about their ability to effectively convey a powerful message about their subject. Similarly, they appreciate their classmates' work, recognizing that these too are engaging, creative, and powerful personal statements. As evidenced in most student reflections, this assignment is empowering because it enables them "to mash" diverse content and different learning practices into a personal and coherent whole. A typical comment was offered by one student:

This project was a great way for us to develop our ability and willingness to share our voice with the public. Before this project, I had never attempted to compile and edit material to create a video. I had never tinkered with movie-editing software, but I am glad I had the opportunity to for this project. I learned that it isn't difficult! After asking around and deciding on a user-friendly, polished program and exploring its features, I was able to work through the process of creating a video. Now that I have the capacity and confidence to make my voice heard through filmmaking, I truly realize how incredible a medium technology is for creating a message and broadcasting that message to others. Expression of ideas is the key to inspiring meaningful and positive change. This project was the culmination of a semester in which I learned about the importance of having a voice and the importance of being able to effectively communicate that voice to others. I implemented this learned knowledge and can now make my voice heard effectively, broadly,

and confidently in speech and in film.

The Impact of Praxis for the Student

Ivan Illich (1968), in his acerbic lecture, "To Hell with Good Intentions," addresses the problem of "good hearted" First Worlders forcing their charitable acts upon suspicious Third Worlders. Those "good intentions" originate, he argues, in places of privilege and an aggressive need to "help" without really understanding what that means and whether it is wanted in the first place. Speaking to a group of American college students about to engage in volunteer work in Mexico, Illich states,

I am here to suggest that you voluntarily renounce exercising the power which being an American gives you. I am here to entreat you to freely, consciously and humbly give up the legal right you have to impose your benevolence on Mexico. I am here to challenge you to recognize your inability, your powerlessness and your incapacity to do the "good" which you intended to do. (para. 34).

Faculty can often be like these "good-hearted" folks, whose actions lack a solid sense of praxis, who embrace the idea of helping the student, but still understand "help" from their perspective: (i.e., I know how to help you! I know what you need!) However good-intentioned, faculty sometimes impose their will on students, not recognizing their inability, powerlessness and, often, incapacity to effectively understand the experiences of the student. These impositions can inhibit new learner excitement, forcing the student back down to the foot of the guru, rather than standing up and claiming learning as their own.

As noted earlier, praxis emerges most often in the encounter with the student. In the CF, faculty experienced being a student, of course, never exactly like students who are in their classrooms, but a student, nevertheless. That is humbling; it creates feelings of powerlessness, and although we did not encourage faculty to give up their right to teach, as Illich suggests for the volunteers, we did try to question the motivations that are at the core of their teaching. If praxis, as Smith (1999, 2011) argues, is meaningful only in each particular situation (a classroom on a particular day), and each new encounter might require radical rethinking and understanding (an individual student from unique contexts), then teaching, at its best, is always about praxis. Each teaching moment requires a reconnection with the "dialogic" and "other-seeking" nature of praxis. Students can disappoint, content can grow old, and academic hoop-jumping can exhaust, but the "search for truth" and the emphasis on "human well-being" sustain the teacher. They do so because they are humbling and awe-inspiring pursuits. Even though we all fail miserably at this, it is the continued attempt and the commitment to informed action that sustains the teacher through the doubts and uncertainties, the moments of bravado and of despair.

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To measure this kind of accomplishment, as a part of the CF experience, is both hard to do and a little absurd: How do you measure newfound humility? How do you justify multiple failures? How do you assess a faculty member's ability to commit to human well-being? In fact, some of these ventures can be career-damaging for faculty—the poor student perceptions that might emerge for a junior faculty member, who is trying new activities for the first time and is bucking a system built upon grades and content coverage. Institutional changes are essential for any measurement to be actually measuring learning. Some future measurements might include the oxymoronic approach of measuring the success of a "failure," narratives that allow faculty to put student comments in a much broader context of learning objectives, and a tenure-process that rewards experimentation and puts failure in context.

Nevertheless, we offer two possibilities that come from the CF experience: the development of intrinsically-motivated activities and assignments, with the direct purpose of making space for students to claim their education as their own, and faculty modeling of reflection and metacognition. The first crucial change has been the focus on intrinsically-motivated activities and assignments. Extrinsic motivation is a powerful motivator for students: What grade am I going to get? And sadly, even though faculty wish students were more intrinsically motivated, they often quickly turn to rapping the stick (you'll fail) or wagging the carrot (this will help your grade) to get students to perform. Extrinsic motivation feels like the catch-22 of education: You can't get students to do something without it, and they will never fully embrace learning if that is the motivation. Intrinsic motivation is a part of Csikszentmihaly's (1997) concept of creative flow, a process demonstrated by designers and creators of all sorts. When in "flow," actions become "autotelic," meaning "something that is an end for itself" (p. 113). Csikszentmihalyi states,

> Some activities such as art, music, and sports are usually autotelic: There is not reason for doing them except to feel the experience they provide. Most things in life are *exotelic.* We do them not because we enjoy them but in order to get at some later goal. (p. 113)

Exotelic activities are often a necessary part of creating (doing steps that need to get done to pave the way for later goals), but education often resides solely in the exotelic for students—hoops to jump through to become credentialed for professions. Fritz (2003, 2009) argues that exotelic activities are often necessary for creating, but without the desire for the creative object and process, without the structural tension that propels one from nothing to something, creating does not happen. It may replicate creativity on some level, but the process is devoid of a meaningful connection with the creating and the creation (pp. 12-18).

Second, through installations and discussion, the CF community modeled how to reflect upon learning for students, which positively affect students'

perceptions of creativity and risk-taking, itself. N. Kenny, K. Mann and H. MacLeod (2003) acknowledge that role modeling is an untapped pedagogical tool; role modeling guides the student in processing through observation and nuanced reflection. Through a public installation, the CF modeled both visually and verbally their creative processes, their self-reflection on their processes, and their observations on further growth. The community's enthusiasm and pride were infectious.

Students unanimously indicated that it was valuable for them to see the creative works of professors. Seeing faculty taking risks, demonstrating process, and making themselves vulnerable to critique helped students recognize that creating was possible for them, too. As one student stated, "Seeing teachers that may or may not seem 'creative', be creative. It shows me that I can do anything." Furthermore, students often do not see faculty embracing their own risk, uncertainty, and process. One student noted,

I found this valuable because it shows that these people who are experts in their fields are willing to take risks. I am sure doing these projects felt a little unnatural and it was interesting to see how they dealt with that and created something to be proud of. This is much like what the student (sic) experience here at Bryant. We are all comfortable going to school, but the professors push us to do more that may not feel natural right away.

Perhaps the most common response from students was that they were surprised to see Business faculty creating because "creativity" was not something they associated with business:

I found that it was valuable because it not only showed talent in people you wouldn't necessarily think of (businessmen/women) but it also showed that people like businessmen, who are traditionally in a very structured atmosphere, were willing to leave their comfort zones and try something new.

The result of this new understanding was translated into an understanding of the connection between the liberal arts and business, "I think it is valuable because it shows that Business and Arts & Sciences can be combined. Skills in both fields are very useful and can help one develop a diverse background."

One further result is that students glimpsed the humanity of faculty—having a creative practice and producing art revealed something that students saw as crucial to understanding faculty as full human beings:

I found it valuable because sometimes you only look at professors just as guiders who specialize in a particular area, the subject they are teaching. And we can forget that our professors do more than just "teach." They can take part in activities just like us students and express themselves through art activities.

Or as another noted, "It was interesting to see professors doing the same things that we are in class and how proud they were of their work." This, perhaps more than anything, provides a valuable insight into student reception of

faculty modeling since seeing each other as fully human can translate into a greater understanding of each other in the learning process. For faculty, displaying their work to students turned the tables on them. It was uniquely uncomfortable given that faculty, more often than not, are the ones assessing and critiquing students' work. One student noted the value of this experience, stating, "It was valuable because you could also relate to things you had in common with professors you knew who had their artwork presented. When i walked in, i (sic) felt like it was my turn to critique, assess, and become the professor." Becoming both critic and colleague, the student and faculty member reverse and share roles, at the same time, thereby experiencing each other's place within academia.

CF refined existing assignments and developed new courses and programs to reflect these elements of praxis, focusing on developing intrinsic motivation and modeling processes of reflection. Relevance, meaningfulness, and authenticity are the features of courses and assignments that promote student ownership of their learning. Designing courses around big questions provides the content for the expression of a creative process. It is within such a context that students feel empowered and supported to explore, experiment, reflect, and learn. The Fellows program enhanced Shea's classroom practice in a number of ways, but chief among these was creating meaningful and authentic tasks that allow students, individually and collectively, to explore ways of making their voice heard. In his course on "Citizenship in a Digital Age," he developed numerous assignments that meet these criteria, including, drafting letters to the editor, redesigning high school websites to include language on global citizenship, recording videos of students reading from their choice of banned books, delivering a public speech in the center of campus, and creating the previously mentioned 30-60 second PSA on topic of choice.

In the past year, Dowling changed her Financial Management 201 course to focus on contrasts and tensions that propel students to goals and objectives that are personally meaningful. In this course, she orients students thinking about finance: Finance is about creating value. It is about the future, which is unknown. Tools and framing are used to develop ideas about the future (forecasting). However, at its core finance and mathematics are incredibly creative fields. This can be highlighted by changing the way we teach—in particular by placing more emphasis on creating value rather than on strategic decision-making. The use of what Peter Senge (2006) calls "the fifth discipline," the readings of Paolo Freire (1970, 2000), and her industry experience made her rethink this class. As noted above, there is a lot of focus on curriculum coverage and the idea of "exposing students" to finance tools. However, in the new assignment, students negotiate a house purchase and learn about the motivations of the Principal and Agent; they are given "checks" for $100,000 that they use to finance a mortgage, and, then, they see if in the Craigslist rental market they would have positive cash flow. They learn the concepts of debt and equity in practice. They seek to improve the property and raise the level of the rent above market and recalculate their net income.

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In this way, they see financing and operational cash flows more distinctly. Equity and debt together form the contrast that illustrates, educates, and attracts interest. A basis of this assignment comes from the work of a musician and composer, Fritz (2003, 2008). His emphasis on creating contrasts and tensions that set up a structural dynamic that propel the creator from point A to point B was very helpful to this course.

In Enos's "Sociology of Creativity and Innovation" course, students searched their personal lives for creative inspiration and analysis. In their final project, which she did alongside them, they used 3D, visual, and other representations to make connections between a key sociological concept, "sociological imagination," and their own lives: "The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise" (Mills, 1959, p. 3). She insisted that the students not do a research paper but instead use other means to express their ideas. As a group, they brainstormed ideas—maps, slide shows, pop-up books, collections of poetry, board games, flip books and others—and worked on them in class. To guide students on how to reflect upon their learning, the class discussed how to evaluate their results. Could the students create a rubric for themselves so that they could appropriately and authentically evaluate each other's work and hers? This exercise was not intended to support extrinsic motivation but to have them consider the various levels of effort, achievement, and mastery required by the assignment. She was interested in how they decided what to report on, how they chose their 3D representation, and how they selected the vehicle for the story they wished to tell.

The work was showcased in a poster presentation open to the larger community. Students commented on each other's work, recognizing strengths. In their final essays, they reflected on their own projects and how they could have improved them. Some of the projects were exceptional; others excelled in the presentation format but failed to connect their work to their lives; still others did not integrate the work with the conceptual content of the assignment. Enos suggested a series of changes to improve her own practice with this assignment, and she shared these with students. Despite the challenging nature of the assignment, students reported in course evaluations that this was one of the most memorable assignments that they had ever completed, one that they learned most from, not only because it was different but also because they were asked to relate course materials to their own lives, using talents they hadn't explored before.

The Impact of Praxis at the University Level

Despite the growth of programs like the Fellows, the institution is still left with some difficult challenges to bring creativity and innovation from the periphery to the mainstream. Whether we are talking about whom in a com-

munity will be the first to buy an Apple's newest gizmo or examining who on campus is most likely to embrace a new idea in teaching, scholarship or service, we can look to lessons from research on how ideas spread from experimentation to adoption. Sociologist Everett Rogers (2003) initiated studies of innovation—how ideas move through communities and how quickly they take hold or not. In deliberatively moving an institution to a stronger embrace of creativity and innovation, five findings from innovation research are helpful: That an individual is more likely to perceive that benefits outweigh costs (What I will be able to do vs. the learning curve or other costs?), that resources are available (What time, talent, money, mind, and space are required?), that there is access to communication networks (Who is talking about this? How do I learn more?), that these new ideas are compatible with prized-values, and that these ideas can be tested (Can I can test in little pieces? Do I have to buy the whole program?). If these are present, innovation is more likely (Rogers, 2003, p. 150).

Another important finding in innovation research relates to the arc of adoption. In any population or community, there will be what the researchers call early adopters, those who bring ideas to a community and are eager and confident in trying them out (Rogers, 2003, p. 134). They don't seek absolute proof of the value of ideas, but they are eager to try them out. They seek novelty and new ways to do things. At the other end of the spectrum are the laggards, those last to adopt an innovation. They want proof; they want models. They need to understand that this new idea is much better than what is provided by current practice.

When we think about changing a campus culture around creativity, we need to attract early adopters, support them with resources and tools, engage their willingness to test ideas in classrooms and beyond, and help this emerging community create models and arguments for those who later adopt these models. In his research on paradigm shifts in science, Thomas Kuhn (1962) found models of science that no longer explained phenomenon were often preserved long after their usefulness because of institutional and personal pressures. This is often the case in teaching and learning in higher education. It is challenging for faculty to comprehend that what they are doing in the classroom could be done in radically different ways. To build creativity and innovation opportunities on campus (a creativity paradigm shift), moving it from the periphery to the mainstream, Kuhn offers some advice: "If a paradigm is ever to triumph, it must gain some first supporters . . . men who will develop it . . . improve it, explore its possibilities, and show what it would be like to belong to the community guided by it" (p. 158-159).

A series of changes have emerged from the Fellows program. These include the establishment of the first university-wide commencement award in Creative Expression. New courses and programs of study in creative and applied arts have been established in Literary and Cultural Students. As discussed earlier, a new course in creativity and innovation has been established in sociology. A campus-wide month-long Creativity Sketchbook Challenge

drew more than one hundred participants. Professional papers have been published and presentations given. But it is in the space of the classroom and the mindset of both teachers and students that the greatest changes are starting to emerge, as evidence by the narratives above, the student commentary, and the micro- and macro-changes to experiences of learning. With a group of faculty embracing informed, committed action, changes emerge in ways that are both measurable and felt.

Conclusion

The CF Program started with a physical, intellectual, and creative space dedicated to faculty imagining, thinking, and making outside the accepted structures of academia—less inhibited, among a growing group of similarly committed faculty. Most important, however, has been the continual renewal of praxis—an informed, committed action that is other-centered and focused on human well-being. The CF route has been circuitous, starting with the faculty member's practice, circling into the classroom, back-tracking to personal narratives, jumping forward to experiences with students, getting lost in new approaches to content, and rounding back to individual faculty members as a part of a community compromised, at the most immediate level, of faculty, students, and the institution. By starting with the mindset, faculty become reacquainted with and develop their own creative practices, making them better able to model creative learning, thinking, and behavior for students. Better able to embody and embrace praxis.

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Acknowledgement

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