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Cultivating an Environment Inclusive of Students with Varying Developmental, Emotional, and Learning Needs

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Presenter Information

Alisha Ortiz, Victor R. Wilburn, Julie Ray, and Melissa Odegard-Koester

1) Presentation Title: “Cultivating an Environment Inclusive of Students with Varying Developmental, Emotional, and Learning Needs”

2) Presenter Information

Melissa Odegard-Koester

Melissa Odegard-Koester is Chairperson and Professor of the Department of Psychology and Counseling at Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. She is also a Licensed Professional Counselor in Missouri and has clinical expertise in a variety of mental health areas such as depression, anxiety, LGBT+ concerns, and social justice advocacy. She has authored and co-authored publications, presentations, and workshops in the fields of counseling, counselor education, and higher education. Dr. Odegard-Koester earned her Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Counseling at Idaho State University.

Alisha Youngblood Ortiz (Primary Presenter)

Alisha Youngblood Ortiz is Associate Dean of the Harrison College of Business & Computing at Southeast Missouri State University. She teaches business statistics and management science. Dr. Ortiz earned her BSIE, MSIE, and PhD in Industrial Engineering at the University of Arkansas.

Julie Ray

Julie Ray has been the Chair of the Dept. of Elementary, Early and Special Education at Southeast Missouri State University since 2011. She has a PhD in Curriculum & Instruction: Early Childhood Education from the University of Missouri: Columbia. In addition to the chair position, she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in the early childhood program.

Victor Wilburn

Victor R. Wilburn is the Chairperson for the Department of Child and Family Studies (CFS) at Southeast Missouri State University. His responsibilities are to coordinate and oversee the Department which consists of 10 full-time faculty, eight part-time faculty, and over 175 undergraduate students. Dr. Wilburn’s activities consist of teaching in CFS and education, research, and student advising. Dr. Wilburn has also provided consultation and trainings to organizations committed to community development and preschool education. His research focus is rural families/community development and suicidality and domestic violence among youth. His works have been published in journals and presented at conferences. He has been at the position of Interim Chair of Human Environmental Studies (January 2017 to July 2018) and the position of Chairperson of Child and Family Studies (August 2018 to Present).

3) Disciplines: Disability and Equity in Education, Student Counseling and Personnel Services

4) Presentation Theme: Issues and Trends in Higher Education

5) Presentation Type: Best Practice Presentation (45 minutes)

6) Abstract:

The learning needs of students today represent a unique shift in the way we think about student preparedness for the academic experience and our duty to create the optimal learning environment for them. This presentation provides different ways Department Chairs have led faculty to help students with varying needs find success in higher education.

7) Keywords: Disabilities, Accommodations, Mental Health

8) Presentation Document:

Today's college students bring a wide variety of developmental, emotional, and learning needs to the higher education classroom. A multidimensional perspective is required as we re-evaluate best practices and approaches to this new norm of students.

This presentation will focus on the department chair's role in leading faculty to be prepared and to support students who may have developmental needs, such as adjustment to the college setting or test anxiety, emotional needs, such as a background with trauma, and learning needs, such as reading or math difficulties. The presenters will share different actions taken in their departments and at their university, such as creating a Counseling Training Lab for graduate counseling majors to work with students experiencing anxiety, depression, relationship problems, drug or alcohol abuse, creating an interdisciplinary course, The Trauma Informed Professional, and faculty professional development and curriculum revision on trauma informed schools and secondary trauma.

Presenters will also share examples of student success made possible by dedicated faculty who stay informed of the current practices in Universal Design and appropriate accommodation.

The underlying philosophy of this presentation is the understanding that while our goals as academic leaders are of meeting students where they are and getting them where they need to be have not changed, our paths to execution are much different.

Participants will receive a handout of easy-to-implement techniques, links to useful resources, and sample syllabus statements.

9) Recommended Citation:

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