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2020: Suki Kwon

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During Women's History Month, the University of Dayton Women's Center coordinates, as an experiential learning opportunity for students, an annual exhibit highlighting the contributions women have made at the University of Dayton.

Theme for 2020: Voices of Courage

2020: Suki Kwon

Written by Margaret Murray Davis, Programming Coordinator, Women's Center

Suki Kwon's professional and personal journey has been one of transformative turning points and life-changing experiences that have shaped her perspective. "You must constantly explore in order to find yourself," Kwon says as she reflects on this journey. As a young student in Korea, Professor Kwon originally studied psychology, but after a yearlong stay in London, U.K., she embarked on a backpacking trip through Europe. Her first destination on her backpacking trip was the d'Orsay Museum in Paris, France, where she encountered Jean Francois Millet's painting, "The Angelus". It was at this moment, as she viewed this painting, that she decided to change course from studying psychology and pursue a career as an artist.



Professor Kwon came to the United States in 1997 through an exchange program at the University of Iowa. At the University of Iowa, she studied both computer graphics and 3-dimensional design and earned her M.A. and M.F.A. of Design, establishing her design theory and experimenting with various medium and methodologies. Professor Kwon works with media and ideas that transcend limited definitions of design. She practices "wabi-sabi", the Japanese art of finding beauty in imperfection and profundity in nature, in her professional and personal life. She strives to bring together a sense of humanity and spirituality in her work and to give material form to concepts of beauty, simplicity, and harmony with nature. While currently an associate professor of Art and Design at the University of Dayton, she recently earned her promotion to full professor, beginning in fall 2020.

In her classroom and across campus, Professor Kwon has always been a fierce champion for cultural diversity and an outspoken voice for international students and foreign-born faculty at

the University of Dayton. While she is trilingual in Korean, English and Japanese, she says that language barriers are one of the main disconnects that her U.S. counterparts face when interacting with an international population. When asked what her U.S. colleagues and students could do to better understand their international peers, she smiled and with a bit of wit responded, “watch more subtitled foreign films”. She credits her appointment as a LTC Faculty Development Fellow for Teaching a Global Student Community as a critical shift in her personal and professional career, particularly as it relates to her advocacy of international students. In this role, she found a way to give back and help other faculty have more empathy and understanding towards their international colleagues and international students. She teamed up with Dr. Kenya Crosson from the School of Engineering, also a LTC Faculty Development Fellow, to assist faculty with diversity and inclusion conversations, particularly as they interact with international students through course policies, teaching methods, and assignment designs that may or may not align with the student’s cultural preferences or learned professional standards. Professor Kwon also initiated a Foreign-Born Female Faculty group to support international women faculty on campus.

Professor Kwon is an adamant believer in "design activism" - not only “do good design” but “do good with design”. With this belief, she has consciously fostered this activism in her classes by connecting students with the greater Dayton community so that they could work towards a greater good. Through her work inside and outside the classroom, she has opened up a diverse world for students and greatly improved their intercultural awareness and competency.