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The Personal is Professional: Feminist Pedagogy And Student Support Services

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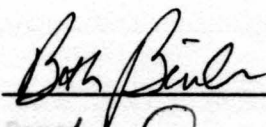
This starred paper submitted by Angela L. Witte in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science at St. Cloud State University is hereby approved by the final evaluation committee.

AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

by

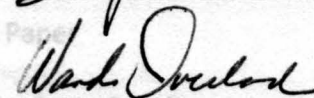
Angela L. Witte

B.E.S., St. Cloud State University, 2006



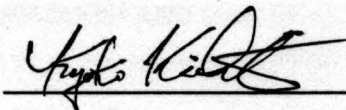
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Submitted to the Graduate School

of



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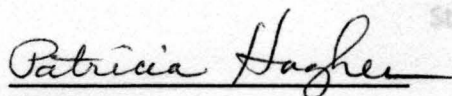
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Science

14003252

St. Cloud, Minnesota



Dean

School of Graduate Studies

May, 2014

THE PERSONAL IS PROFESSIONAL: FEMINIST PEDAGOGY

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AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

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Chapter I
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INTRODUCTION

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desperate family members locally or in other countries? When a friend is assaulted and hospitalized, who should sit with the friend so the student does not have to

Chapter I

alarm the family or involve the police who may or may not be helpful? These are

some of the everyday realities we **INTRODUCTION** facing. In most cases, it is not that

there is a clear "right" or "wrong" choice, rather, just tough choices. In Multicultural

A student's emotional intelligence, as well as social and psychological development is evidenced in many ways. Her/his ability to make thoughtful and informed choices rather than react to life challenges, daily distractions, and personal

and intimate relationships impacts their potential success in college. I am a

professional in the student services division at St. Cloud State University (SCSU). I

work in the office of Multicultural Student Services (MSS) where we are tasked with

facilitating student success, which includes: persistence; a student's continuance

through college, retention; a student's return each academic year, and graduation

rate of domestic (excluding international visa holding) students of color. However, it

is not my responsibility alone to impact and increase these measures. I work in an

office with a team—truly my extended family—to achieve our desired results. In this

paper, I propose a model for student success that is based on the many years of

working with MSS.

Students of color are faced with difficult decisions daily; do they miss class to

commute home to care for their sick family member, or to accompany relatives to

appointments to serve as interpreters, or work more hours in order to send money to

increasing the persistence, retention, and graduation rates. A model that meets the

desperate family members locally or in other countries? When a friend is assaulted and hospitalized, who should sit with the friend so the student does not have to alarm the family or involve the police who may or may not be helpful? These are some of the everyday realities we our students are facing. In most cases, it is not that there is a clear "right" or "wrong" choice, rather, just tough choices. In Multicultural Student Services, the staff view our role as helping the students by empowering them to make informed decisions and be aware of the possible consequences of their decisions. The invisible silos such as academic affairs and student affairs, become less of a barrier. The work of William Sedlacek (1982, 1993, 2011) regarding non-cognitive variables most accurately describes what many student services professionals see and experience daily in our interactions with students. His work with non-cognitive variables is used in developing Admissions criteria that assesses college readiness and predicts success beyond standardized test scores. In this paper, I argue that we need to reframe the discussion. Institutions should not try to develop assessments or rely on measurements that will reassure them that they will have an acceptable return on investment in every student they admit. That seems impossible to predict and treats students as commodities rather than people with self-determination who can and do perform outside of and beyond the calculated norm. Rather, institutions should offer programs, services, and spaces in which the student is supported, encouraged, mentored, empowered, and taught to develop their emotional intelligence, thereby increasing the persistence, retention, and graduation rates. A model that meets the

students where they are at emotionally, socially, and intellectually is much more effective.

Student services professionals can use non-cognitive variables as a starting point for a discussion about support services, programming and teaching models for students of color to thrive in. If we begin the conversation acknowledging non-cognitive variables, such as a student's social, emotional, and psychological development as a way to assess students' experiences, then the structures of the university, the invisible silos such as academic affairs and student affairs, become less of a barrier or filter for analyzing the student experience. Instead their developmental need will drive the focus of programming, delivery of support services, resource availability and allocation, and pedagogical innovation.

In this project, I will draw on engaged feminist pedagogy to build a model that effectively meets the student where she/he is at developmentally through programming, services, and resources and thus minimizes the limitations of the perceived barriers of academic affairs and student affairs. Engaged feminist pedagogy ultimately provides the necessary tools to build community, share lived experiences, mentor, and foster self-reflection, and empowerment, while also providing a framework for educating the whole student. Feminist pedagogy takes into account power dynamics and everyday lived experiences, and is a call to social action. Scholars such as Paulo Freire and bell hooks make a case to teach to the whole student and even go so far as to include a responsibility to heal the student

(Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994). Whether teaching or healing the whole student, we have an obligation to teach beyond textbooks, lectures, and exams to nurture the whole student. We have the responsibility of preparing our future's next generation of leaders, educators, and citizens. This cannot be accomplished if we only focus on classroom learning. In doing so, it is imperative that we meet the students where they are at developmentally, emotionally, socially, and academically. At times, the student's academic experience may seem disconnected from their experiences with services and resources. Service-learning and experiential learning programs seem to be the sites where we see the most intentional intersection of classroom learning and social emotional engagement. My project will offer an additional model as I connect what we do in Multicultural Student Services through programming that addresses resources, academic support, community building and interface it directly with the classroom as I teach an Introduction to Women's Studies course. By implementing this model, the persistence, retention, and graduation rates of students of color, and thereby all students, will increase because the classroom will become an additional site for engaging the student beyond the requirements of a particular class. My model will intentionally build community in the classroom between the professor and students and it will connect students to valuable resources and services early which, is an intervention that is more effective the earlier it occurs. This model is an innovative approach to teaching and delivering support services.

teach the Introduction to Women's Studies (WS 201) course. However, there was a purpose behind this opportunity, which was to recruit women of color into the class.

Chapter II

There were several reasons for this; most significantly, early in my position in

Multicultural Student Services, I found CONTEXT of color coming to me with a variety

of concerns beyond academic needs: relationship problems, domestic violence and

SCSU is situated in central Minnesota about 90 minutes northwest of the sexual assault, experiences of racism, sexism in their families and communities,

Minneapolis and St. Paul metropolitan area. SCSU is a predominantly White campus

coming out, and self-esteem concerns. Guiding these women into women's studies and surrounded by many rural communities. SCSU is also the second largest

courses seemed like an appropriate avenue to help women address these issues.

university in the state of Minnesota, second to the University of Minnesota.

Nevertheless, often in women's studies classrooms the space is dominated by White

Enrollment hovers at approximately 16,000 students with nearly 14.5% or 2350

women and the voices of women of color is minimal (hooks, 1994). So, it was not

domestic students of color and roughly 940 international students (Student of color

enrollment, 2013). While the diversity of the institution has dramatically increased in

participation was critical also. This begged the question, "how do you encourage and

the past ten years, voices from students of color regarding their experience might

increase the participation of women of color in discussions in academic courses and

suggest otherwise. Although SCSU boasts a diverse enrollment of around 14.5%

outside of the classroom"? Shifting the demographics of the class was one way to

students of color, it is very possible, even likely, that students of color may have a

increase composition and diversity; however, creating a community that honors

very racially isolated experience (Student of color enrollment, 2013). In my 6 years of

one's lived experience was also necessary.

experience, students have reported that it is not uncommon to be the only or one of

After teaching several sections of the course I began to wonder if the two

a few students of color in a class. The result is a very isolated experience that

divisions within the university structure, student affairs and academic affairs, could

negatively impacts the persistence, retention, and graduation rates.

talk to one another, would they see they had some characteristics in common. I

My work at SCSU is in MSS as Program Coordinator. Having taken several

began to question, is there a way to maximize the great work being done in both

women's studies undergraduate courses, I was offered a fantastic opportunity to

divisions that would ultimately serve students best?

teach the Introduction to Women's Studies (WS 201) course. However, there was a purpose behind this opportunity, which was to recruit women of color into the class. There were several reasons for this; most significantly, early in my position in Multicultural Student Services, I found women of color coming to me with a variety of concerns beyond academic needs: relationship problems, domestic violence and sexual assault, experiences of racism, sexism in their families and communities, coming out, and self-esteem concerns. Guiding these women into women's studies courses seemed like an appropriate avenue to help women address these issues. Nevertheless, often in women's studies classrooms the space is dominated by White women and the voices of women of color is minimal (hooks, 1994). So, it was not enough to increase the enrollment of women of color in the course; their participation was critical also. This begged the question, "how do you encourage and increase the participation of women of color in discussions in academic courses and outside of the classroom"? Shifting the demographics of the class was one way to increase composition and diversity; however, creating a community that honors one's lived experience was also necessary. After teaching several sections of the course I began to wonder if the two divisions within the university structure, student affairs and academic affairs, could talk to one another, would they see they had some characteristics in common. I began to question, is there a way to maximize the great work being done in both divisions that would ultimately serve students best?

Within each division, you can find examples of community building, honoring the student's lived experience, student's self-reflection, and empowerment, which are also tenets of feminist pedagogy. Non-cognitive variables and conversations in student engagement literature direct us to focus our efforts towards a student of color and her/his emotional intelligence, including their ability to engage with the university faculty and staff, find and develop community, and make meaning of their education (Sedlacek 1993, Hawkins & Larabee, 2009). Between feminist pedagogy and non-cognitive variables, there is a connection. Characteristics of the two overlap. They complement one another. The intent of my project is to illustrate how feminist pedagogical methods can facilitate an integrated student experience between student affairs and academic affairs. I specifically draw from my work in MSS because I believe our approach is feminist though we might not use that language to describe it. I also draw upon my experiences teaching the WS 201 course as I was concurrently their instructor and student affairs professional. A student's personal life, family, health, economic situation, all affects a student's academic performance. I could not teach without discussing or asking if they had purchased their books for the semester, did anyone have questions or need assistance with the financial aid process, how was their overall academic performance, ask if they were registered for the next semester of classes? It seemed to me that it was my ethical responsibility to ask these questions and make time for these discussions. Finally, meeting the student where they are at developmentally is a holistic and integrated approach. Based on

the student's experience, my model will offer the best educational, persistence, and retention outcomes for students, especially students of color. To achieve this, my model consists of four features: community building, honoring the student's lived experience, student self-reflection, and empowerment. This happens organically as well as intentionally.

Chapter III

Lack of scholarship regarding student engagement both in and outside of the classroom is hardly an issue; in fact, it is the opposite. There is a multitude of articles and essays one can find that speaks to each. However, they are separate conversations and the trends and practices in higher education are increasingly leaning towards an integrated student experience that ties together, holistically, the student experience in both student affairs and the classroom. Núñez (cited in Fried, 2012) defines this model as linking "...all of a student's academic, social, and co-curricular activities into a cohesive whole...In such an integrated model, every element of a student's day is tied together -classroom, residential, co-curricular-with a clear academic goal and a plan for achieving it..." (p. 121). However, the disconnect between the academic side and the student affairs side leaves the student experience parceled and incomplete. This is particularly true for students of color, who already must find ways to bridge the gaps that exist and navigate the hurdles towards success (Harper & Quaye, 2009).

Although a vast amount of research has been conducted regarding student engagement, such as Shaun R. Harper and Stephen John Quaye's book *Student*

Engagement in Higher Education, Terence J. Tracey and William E. Sedlacek's (1982)

article *Non-Cognitive Variables in Predicting Academic Success by Race*, or Alexander

Astin's (1984) *Tracey Student Involvement: A developmental theory for higher*

education, even within this context. LITERATURE REVIEW interaction between academic

affairs and student affairs. I found little research on the direct intersection of student

Lack of scholarship regarding student engagement both in and outside of the affairs with academic affairs outside of service-learning or experiential learning classroom is hardly an issue; in fact, it is the opposite. There is a multitude of articles programs. Remnants of this research can be found within various units of Student and essays one can find that speaks to each. However, they are separate Affairs such as Residential Life, Campus Involvement, and affinity group offices. I am conversations and the trends and practices in higher education are increasingly intentionally limiting the scope of this paper to non-cognitive variable admissions leaning towards an integrated student experience that ties together, holistically, the criteria used to predict student success and persistence as this is the student's entry student experience in both student affairs and the classroom. Núñez (cited in Fried, point into an academic institution. I will also limit the scope of my research on 'the 2012) defines this model as linking "...all of a student's academic, social, and co-classroom' to teaching models that foster growth. I chose to do this because the curricular activities into a cohesive whole...In such an integrated model, every greater conversations around student engagement or classroom teaching models are element of a student's day is tied together -classroom, residential, co-curricular-with a clear academic goal and a plan for achieving it..." (p. 121). However, the disconnect academic affairs is siloed this would explain why the literature is siloed. The between the academic side and the student affairs side leaves the student classroom space is shepherded by the instructor and the student affairs division experience parceled and incomplete. This is particularly true for students of color, delivers services and resources to aid a student's academic performance, their social who already must find ways to bridge the gaps that exist and navigate the hurdles outlet, their physical and mental health, or their life in the institutions' residence towards success (Harper & Quaye, 2009).

Although a vast amount of research has been conducted regarding student their journey through college and so are their hurdles and challenges. Lastly, I chose engagement, such as Shaun R. Harper and Stephen John Quaye's book *Student* to specifically focus on race and gender and feminist pedagogies as filters for finding

Engagement in Higher Education, Terence J. Tracey and William E. Sedlacek's (1982) article *Non-Cognitive Variables in Predicting Academic Success by Race*, or Alexander Astin's (1984) *Tracey Student Involvement: A developmental theory for higher education*, even within this conversation there is a separation between academic affairs and student affairs. I found little research on the direct intersection of student affairs with academic affairs outside of service-learning or experiential learning programs. Remnants of this research can be found within various units of Student Affairs such as Residential Life, Campus Involvement, and affinity group offices. I am intentionally limiting the scope of this paper to non-cognitive variable admissions criteria used to predict student success and persistence as this is the student's entry point into an academic institution. I will also limit the scope of my research on 'the classroom' to teaching models that foster growth. I chose to do this because the greater conversations around student engagement or classroom teaching models are far too vast for this project. While the academy's divisions of student affairs and academic affairs is siloed this would explain why the literature is siloed. The classroom space is shepherded by the instructor and the student affairs division delivers services and resources to aid a student's academic performance, their social outlet, their physical and mental health, or their life in the institutions' residence halls. From one perspective, it is as though the student is traveling parallel tracks in their journey through college and so are their hurdles and challenges. Lastly, I chose to specifically focus on race and gender and feminist pedagogies as filters for finding

relevant literature. Race and gender are appropriate because of my work within the Multicultural Student Services and teaching a Women's Studies course in which women of color were recruited into the course.

There is a whole laundry list of challenges that professionals in higher education recognize students of color face in predominantly white institutions.

Within the academic division there may be challenges such as: classroom, instructors, and texts. Within the student affairs side there may be challenges such as: social activities, connecting to services and resources, or club engagement and leadership development, or the administration and business process of the institution.

Regardless of which division these challenges occur, they can impact student engagement and ultimately success. Additionally, what is quite obvious is the racial/ethnic binary that exists between students of color and white students and exacerbates the challenges (Harper & Quaye, 2009; Sedlacek, 2011).

For example, at predominantly white institutions, the student of color may be the only (or one of a few) student of color in the classroom (Harper & Quaye, 2009, p. 159). Students of color often become hyper-visible regarding conversations or class content around race/ethnicity. They often do not see themselves represented by the faculty and staff at the institution as well; meaning do they see others who look like them (Harper & Quaye, 2009, p. 159). These conditions often result in students feeling alienated in the classroom because they often are looked to as the 'native informant' (Harper & Quaye, 2009, p. 158) or expert and expected to speak for all

people of her/his gender/race/ethnicity or perceived gender/race/ethnicity. Or, the reverse can occur, and the student(s) of color are rendered invisible as the instructor chooses to overlook the presence of students of color in the classroom and/or the experiences of students of color in the dialogue. Instead, the conversation(s) remains centered on the "normal" experience, the mainstream experience, ultimately, the white experience. Not only can the classroom experience be alienating, the texts and literature often serve as barriers if they do not take into account the student of color experience or diverse perspectives. This, along with an overall course curriculum or design that may not thoughtfully incorporate diverse experiences or perspectives, culminates in the eventual disenfranchisement of the student of color (Harper & Quaye, 2009, p. 158).

While higher education is increasingly concerned with the engagement and success of students of color, we must ask, what defines success? Is it measured by retention rates, persistence, grade point average, graduation rates, or student engagement with the institution? While retention and graduation are the primary indicators used for measuring success, one might also wonder, how do we predict the success rate of each incoming student? Certainly, institutions are strategizing to increase the return on their investment in the student. Instead of responding to the student after they have arrived at the institution, is it not also plausible that the institution might first attempt to determine who will be successful when considering a student's admission to the institution? One response to this is the trend in higher

education admissions offices. They may be shifting away from relying on traditional cognitive measures such as ACT or SAT test scores, class rank, and grade point average to determine the potential of a student and rather institutions are now looking at what has been coined as 'non-cognitive' variables for measuring student success (Komarraju, Ramsey & Rinella, 2013; Kulatunga-Moruzi & Norman, 2002; Sedlacek, 1993; Sparkman, Maulding, & Roberts, 2012).

ACT/SAT and grade point average are common cognitive measures used by institutions as criteria for admissions. Sedlacek first devised what he considers non-cognitive variables for use by institutions in deciding admissions for students. He argues that these non-cognitive variables actually predict student engagement and success more accurately than the widely used cognitive variables or standardized test scores such as ACT and SAT. While Sedlacek identifies eight non-cognitive variables that inform a student's success, I have found the ones most related to the work I do with students of color are: understand and deals with racism, availability of strong support person in the institution, successful leadership experience, and demonstrated community service (1993). Each seems to speak to the particular ways in which students of color have adapted to being on predominantly white campuses. Historically, marginalized communities have had to adapt to their environments and this is especially true in the case of higher education. Students of color are working with staff on university campuses to be allocated spaces, calling for race/ethnic studies majors and minors, transforming residence halls into communal living spaces

that celebrate cultures, and responding quickly and loudly to administration's student of practices they disagree with. However, this type of student activity is often found outside of the classroom. clubs and organizations, academic preparation, utilization of student Student engagement and success outside of the classroom on predominantly white campuses is largely affected by the overall campus climate, culturally exclusive environmental norms, overwhelming whiteness, and ethnic clubs and organizations (Harper & Quaye, 2009). History and experience have shown us that student programs engagement outside of the classroom is essential, in fact, critical to a student's success. In my own work, along with the MSS staff, we concur with some of the and findings of the conversations around non-cognitive variables. In fact, we might even go so far as to say, some of these are details we have known based on our our white observations of students over the years. MSS staff recognize, because we have are witnessed, time and time again, that student of color success is tied to leadership development, which often comes from their involvement with the university? What community and cultural organization affiliation(s) and an engaged community one is relationship. Those students who have shown the emotional intelligence to navigate the transition from high school to college, can make friends, are willing to ask for es help, and engage the institution in and out of the classroom have consistently proven to be our most successful students academically, along with their leadership capabilities (Sparkman et al., 2012). reduced non-cognitive variables and established

their connection to providing quality student support services. They also can be used

for cre Additionally, key non-cognitive factors to be significant in assessing student of color engagement outside the classroom on predominantly white campuses are: campus climate, ethnic clubs and organizations, academic preparation, utilization of student services, and mattering and marginality (Harper & Quaye, 2009; Sedlacek, 1993). Campus climate refers to: How welcoming is the overall campus environment to students of color? Do students see positive role models in the faculty and staff and they interact with? Does the campus community celebrate diversity in the programs and events that are offered? Are there clubs and organizations that represent racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse students? How active are these clubs and organizations in engaging the larger campus community? Is the academic preparedness of students of color proportionate or disproportionate to their white counterparts? Are students of color left feeling inadequate in the classroom? Are students of color as savvy as their white counterparts at seeking out and utilizing student support services that are available? What do all these questions mean? What is the purpose of asking all of these questions? By answering these questions, one is able to truthfully assess the actual experience of students of color on their particular campus. These experiences are then useful in developing programming and services to meet the needs of the students by adding, removing, or adjusting programming, services, and outreach.

The literature review has introduced non-cognitive variables and established their connection to providing quality student support services. They also can be used

for creating an approach to teaching that considers the needs of the student as a holistic endeavor. Non-cognitive variables and their use in higher education admissions point to student engagement needs that impact the persistence and retention throughout the student's college experience. These variables also reflect a similar conversation that a definition of engaged feminist pedagogy provides,

Chapter IV

In order for my use of feminist pedagogy in this project to make sense, I need however; it is also important to have a thorough understanding of the definition and to first offer a definition. Because feminist pedagogy is made up of many voices and foundations of feminist pedagogy is also needed in order to proceed. perspectives it is necessary to borrow from some of the best definitions to comprehensively articulate the feminist pedagogy to which I am referring throughout this paper. If, as Webber (2006) states, feminist pedagogy is a, "...diverse body of literature, with central themes and/or concepts which are approached differently by its various authors", then it is important to establish the framework of feminist pedagogy that I am working within. When hooks (1994) states that, "Progressive, holistic education, 'engaged pedagogy' is more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy...it emphasizes well-being" (p. 15), she is making a similar claim that proponents of non-cognitive variables are also making: that we must see the students in higher education as more than merely learners of academic knowledge.

Webber (2006) offered a more comprehensive definition of feminist pedagogy to include, "...a diverse body of literature... understanding and making gender relations and oppression visible" (p. 454). Webber (2006), along with Browne (2005) and hooks (1994) also define feminist pedagogy with some commonalities, such as an

examination of power relations, placing value on one's lived experiences and realities, and developing critical thinking.

Chapter IV

From the body of feminist pedagogy literature we can consider new models

to enable student success and invites educators

FOUNDATIONS IN FEMINIST PEDAGOGY

to embrace teaching to the whole student, yet limits the vision to pedagogy as a

In order for my use of feminist pedagogy in this project to make sense, I need to first offer a definition. Because feminist pedagogy is made up of many voices and perspectives it is necessary to borrow from some of the best definitions to comprehensively articulate the feminist pedagogy to which I am referring throughout this paper. If, as Webber (2006) states, feminist pedagogy is a, "...diverse body of prevailing scholars of progressive pedagogy also reinforce the silos of the academy. literature, with central themes and/or concepts which are approached differently by its various authors", then it is important to establish the framework of feminist pedagogy that I am working within. When hooks (1994) states that, "Progressive, holistic education, 'engaged pedagogy' is more demanding than conventional critical the student's lived experience, advising and mentorship, and creating an opportunity or feminist pedagogy...it emphasizes well-being"(p. 15), she is making a similar claim that proponents of non-cognitive variables are also making: that we must see the students in higher education as more than merely learners of academic knowledge.

Characteristics and features of an engaged feminist classroom are modest. Webber (2006) offered a more comprehensive definition of feminist pedagogy to include, "...a diverse body of literature... understanding and making gender relations and oppression visible" (p. 454). Webber (2006), along with Browne (2005) and hooks (1994) also define feminist pedagogy with some commonalities, such as an

examination of power relations, placing value on one's lived experiences and realities, and developing critical thinking. From the body of feminist pedagogy literature we can consider new models to enable student success. hooks makes this progressive claim and invites educators to embrace teaching to the whole student, yet limits the vision to pedagogy as a classroom activity/experience. She does not address the overall experience of students in higher education beyond the classroom. At first glance, it appears that feminist pedagogies fall short or fail to demonstrate that feminist pedagogy is not exclusively bound to the classroom. From one perspective, it may even appear that prevailing scholars of progressive pedagogy also reinforce the silos of the academy. While this might be the case initially, I assert that by taking feminist pedagogy a step further, outside the classroom to embody the educator and inform their practice along with emphasizing tools to create a strong sense of community, acknowledging the student's lived experience, advising and mentorship, and creating an opportunity and space for self-reflection and empowerment, the engaged form of feminist pedagogy ultimately provides the bridge to unify the two silos. Characteristics and features of an engaged feminist classroom are modest, such as having the students face one another, incorporating many discussion based activities, using each other's names, and sharing personal experiences. Along with these characteristics, a consideration of the physical space of the classroom and the number of students in the course are also important. While hooks (1994) repeatedly

makes a call for community in various fashions throughout her text, she also acknowledges that, "...engaged pedagogy is physically exhausting!" and that, "Even the best, most engaged classroom can fail under the weight of too many people" (p. 160). Webber (2006) and hooks (1994) agree that if engaged pedagogy is the goal, the number of students in the class can undermine this endeavor. With departments or university administrators, rather than instructors, determining the size of the class, it is clearly a quantity not quality approach and engaged pedagogy is an afterthought (hooks, 1994; Webber, 2006). This is also a tactic used by professors who do not wish to be engaged and can conveniently blame the size of the class on the inability to effectively teach through engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994; Webber, 2006). Feminist pedagogy offers both a philosophical and conceptual definition of the classroom, along with addressing the actual classroom by talking about physical space and class size. Browne (2005), hooks (1994), and Webber (2006) all express the value and the challenges of the teacher sharing their own personal experiences. Engaged feminist pedagogy is rooted in the belief that the teacher is also a learner and healer, expecting and encouraging students to take risks in sharing their personal stories. However, the teacher must be willing to do so as well. Often, in an attempt to equalize the power dynamics in the teacher-student relationship, some teachers have progressed to recognizing the value of taking risks, being vulnerable, and sharing their own personal experiences within the classroom dialogue (hooks, 1994).

If the teacher decides to infuse the personal, it works best in a class structure designed around dialogue. Truly, the banking style of education would not support a teacher sharing personal stories and experiences because it would have no context or connection to the student experience. If the banking style is more linear, then the teacher is not learning from the student because there is no place for dialogue or sharing; the relationship is not reciprocal. Browne (2005), hooks (1994), and Webber (2006) also speak to the value of students being encouraged and invited to share their own lived experiences and realities. By doing so, they can connect more with the theories and concepts they are reading about. They, and others, can start to untangle how these theories and concepts present themselves in the experiences people share. It is one thing to understand sexism or institutional racism as a concept woven throughout a semester's readings. However, it is another thing to sit with a classmate throughout the semester and hear her/his stories of how she/he experiences and absorbs sexism and how institutional racism is impacting their life, their reality, on a day-to-day basis. By valuing and sharing student's lived experiences, we can make real and tangible the abstract theories and concepts. They are not flat, one-dimensional words on paper; they are embodied in their classmates, friends, and teacher with whom they have built community. While this is a tenet of feminist pedagogy, one cannot assume that every "feminist" classroom enacts the same practices. If, as Webber states, there are varying forms or perspectives of feminist pedagogy, then is

it not reasonable to assume that there are also a variety of forms of the feminist classroom as well?

Chapter V

After an examination of the literature and exploration of the foundations of feminist pedagogy common themes emerged that represent the focus of my model.

Community building, lived experience, advising and mentorship, and self-reflection

Community building is the foundation for all the work we do in MSS. You and empowerment are the tenets necessary for a holistic and integrated approach to student success. Each is essential and will now be explained in greater detail.

would also explain why this section is significantly longer than those that will follow.

The model I propose begins with a strong sense of community, only then can the rest of the model develop. My work in higher education over the past six years has taught me students, especially students of color, want to be known by people at their university as a person and they desire a sense of community with those people. Why, you might ask? For many, they already come with a strong sense of community. As U.S. citizens, immigrants, refugees, and asylees, they tend to gather in areas where they can establish a sense of community, a relocated version of home where people can speak a common language and share in customs and traditions that are the foundation of the people. In these, safer communities, no explanations are needed for why they do what they do or believe what they believe. They are able to exist, a community within the dominant community, where they are accepted without question or explanation. I have also found that students of color long to be a part of something bigger. They often speak about wanting to give back or about the debt of

gratitude they owe to those who have supported, sacrificed, and encouraged them along the way. There is an outgrowth of community that is driven by the students.

Chapter V

When surrounded by a sea of Whiteness, students of color have created race/ethnic specific organizations and clubs of their community (Hawkins

& Larabee, 2009). Community can be built around sharing food, language, traditions,

religious affiliation, celebrations, music, race/ethnicity, nation, and family. For many could say that I have been trained well in community building. Since this is the case, it students of color, their identity—security—and support systems—or more

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gratitude they owe to those who have supported, sacrificed, and encouraged them along the way. There is an outgrowth of community that is driven by the students. When surrounded by a sea of Whiteness, students of color have created race/ethnic specific organizations and clubs to help meet the needs of their community (Hawkins & Larabee, 2009). Community can be built around sharing food, language, traditions, religious affiliation, celebrations, music, race/ethnicity, nation, and family. For many students of color, their identity--security—and support systems—or more specifically—their social and emotional development—have originated in their communities. In MSS, staff believe our task is to extend, create, or integrate that sense of community that students come from and provide semblances of that community within the university in order to positively influence student engagement, retention, persistence, and graduation.

Throughout my work, whether it is in the classroom or within Multicultural Student Services, creating and building community is the foundation of my interactions and relationships with students. I approach my work by building a relationship with the student grounded in trust. Therefore, I must earn the trust of each student, either directly or indirectly. This happens in a number of different ways. Trust can be inferred when one student, with whom I have a relationship, refers another student to me. Trust is also established when I am able to help students get answers to their questions, connect them to the resources, or just listen to their concerns. By earning a student's trust, I am also building community. Each

student I help, or engage with at an event, is a testimonial to other students for engaging with the MSS community. By creating a community of service and genuine care for the student's best interests, trust is built in the student community. MSS staff relies on students' endorsements of our services so that other students are encouraged to work with us.

The following are MSS programs and spaces in which I facilitate community building. These programs reflect components of our model for student engagement and support:

- Admitted Student Day (ASD) for students of color
- Advising and Registration Days (A/R Days) for students of color
- Advanced Preparation Program (APP)
- The Power in Diversity Leadership Conference
- The academic advising and mentorship that I provide

The order that I list these programs and points of contact with students of color is intentional and resembles what the path of a potential student to SCSU might look like and the programming MSS has developed to compliment that path. The idea is to showcase our office, services, and resources as early and often as we can so that the students know and have a sense of the community that waits to welcome them and support them throughout their academic experience.

This potential student path begins with collaborative efforts of Multicultural Student Services with offices and departments to enhance the student of color

experience in recruitment efforts. Two programs that exemplify this are Admitted Student Day for students of color, in collaboration with the Office of Admissions, and Advising and Registration Days for students of color, in collaboration with the Advising Center. Admitted Student Day (ASD) is a recruitment event meant to encourage admitted students to choose St. Cloud State University. Until they register for fall semester courses we are still courting them to choose to attend St. Cloud State University. While MSS works closely with the Office of Admissions to create an agenda and program that is welcoming to students and their families, my responsibility is to showcase our community. Advising and Registration Days (A/R Days) are programs where students and their families come to St. Cloud State University to register for fall courses. Much like the ASD, the MSS staff works closely with the Advising Center to create an agenda, program, and academic advising experience that welcome the student and their family to the St. Cloud State University community.

For both programs, our intentional community building is evident through the role our current students who are involved in MSS play in the programs. I enlist the efforts of dozens of our students to help us host these events. These students greet and welcome the students and families when they arrive; they mingle with them and share their own stories and personal experiences with them. They talk about why they chose St. Cloud State University and what it has been like for them as enrolled students. Our students also join us for lunch and remain throughout the day to escort

families to and from events during the program. They are also available for questions and their presence illustrates the community we have established prior to these events to the visiting students and families. For students to be engaged at this level, it is critical that I have a relationship with the students in order to ask them to volunteer their time and energy. We cannot showcase a community for students if we have not already established community to begin with. What our students do in collaboration with staff during these programs is not scripted and is a reflection of years of daily engagement with our students and the community relationship we have built.

While the transition from high school to college can be challenging for any student, an added hurdle exists for students of color entering a predominantly White institution. Sparkman, Maulding, and Roberts (2012) make a case for considering the emotional intelligence of the student as a factor for predicting success in college.

They point out that though colleges and universities tend to rely on quantitative data such as ACT/SAT scores and grade point average, institutions should also rely on data that can be collected from inventories or assessments that can be given to students to measure, among other things, their emotional intelligence. In other words, emotional intelligence can speak to the student's ability to make decisions and engage the institution in and out of the classroom. For the past 27 years, Multicultural Student Services has offered Advanced Preparation Program (APP), a summer bridge program for incoming first-year students that I have coordinated

since 2008. APP is designed to provide incoming first-year students an opportunity to take two college courses and live on campus and learn about university resources and support services. The program introduces students to college life and leadership opportunities and builds community prior to the beginning of the fall academic calendar. This program is an opportunity to engage the students in and out of the classroom. During the program, the courses, program activities, and field trips they participate in are designed to continuously build many layers of community and engagement. These experiences are intimately designed to challenge and support their emotional intelligence, essentially teaching them how to engage the institution in and outside of the classroom. By providing tutors at their study session, introducing them to services and resources offered by other university offices, and connecting them to current student leaders and leadership opportunities, they begin to envision their college experience as larger than just the classroom. Additional opportunities for engagement include community development with fellow participants, the student counselors, MSS staff, current students, and cultural organizations.

The Power in Diversity Leadership Conference is a great example of the necessary community building that must be ongoing and deliberate throughout the fall semester in order for us to have a successful conference at the start of spring semester. Success is defined by several markers, which include student of color attendance at the conference, student volunteers, and cultural organization

ambassador nominations. Annually, we have increased student participation and support of the conference is encouraging. This supports the above statements about the importance of community building.

The Power in Diversity Leadership Conference has been an exercise in community building. I am building community with the students and the students are building community with each other. Though I coordinate the efforts to solicit workshop proposals, select and schedule the workshop presentations, and establish the registration process, my most important role is getting the students at St. Cloud State involved, more specifically, our students of color. This conference has grown in size and scope for the past five years. In 2014, 26 colleges and universities attended with over 600 participants. While there are many opportunities for students to attend conferences that are specific to race or ethnicity, such as Big XXII, an African American conference; Midwest Asian American Student Union (MAASU); Pan-African Conference; VIA-1, a Vietnamese student conference; and Hmong National Conference, we found our students asking for an event that celebrated diversity. Behind the scenes what has been most important to MSS is student involvement. The first year of the conference we did not have the student involvement or excitement we had hoped for. It was not until 2012 when I implemented the concept of conference ambassadors that the student role in the conference took shape. I selected our finest leaders and invited them to have an elevated role in the conference. I knew we needed help reaching our student base and could not achieve

this through staff alone. By enlisting the ambassadors in programs and events promoting the conference an energy and excitement was created amongst our students. This did not happen in a vacuum. Building community with our ambassadors was very intentional. I, along with the essential help of a graduate assistant, held informational meetings and participated in socials, potlucks, ice-breakers, created a Facebook group, texted the group constantly, and tabled several days a week for many weeks leading up to the conference to promote the conference. These events gave the ambassadors an opportunity to “work” and socialize together and with other students. During the conference, the task was to expand our community. Student ambassadorship opportunities were not limited to SCSU students. There are partner institutions that help host the conference and each institution had ambassadors. The SCSU ambassadors were tasked with building community between each other, with the visiting partner institution ambassadors, with the SCSU Conference Representatives, and the students attending the conference. Also during the conference, we did a flash mob so at dance practice I was there learning to dance *Gangnam* style. As we practiced together, we got silly together. We laughed and had fun, never taking ourselves too seriously. These flash mob practices were opportunities for me to participate in creating community and for me to get to know all the ambassadors more personally, many who I had met at previous conferences. I am as much a host and representative of this conference as

to honor student accomplishments. Students nominate their peers for recognition.

the university ambassadors. I cannot expect anything from them that I am not ready to do myself.

The leadership we are asking them to provide during the conference must be the same kind of leadership they see in me. The same is true in my classroom. How can I ask students to take risks, share their experiences, and be open to growth and learning even when it is not always comfortable? I take risks and share my personal experiences with students. We have laughed and cried together, supported and encouraged one another, and shared in a journey together. The Power in Diversity Leadership Conference is an experience much like that in the classroom and participating in the flash mob is an opportunity to create community by not building a wall or boundary that separates me from the students.

The results of our continual community building efforts are evident at our fall and spring BBQ, our awards reception, and alumni reunions. These are celebrations of our community throughout the year. Each fall we gather at the beginning of the semester to welcome students, faculty, and staff. The fall BBQ is very informal and meant to be a time to gather, catch up, and start the academic year together. Twice a semester we host a community luncheon. Students, faculty, and staff are invited to have lunch with students. It is an opportunity to pause and gather as a community to support one another. Late spring semester, we host two events to bring closure to the academic year and highlight student accomplishments. The Awards Reception is to honor student accomplishments. Students nominate their peers for recognition.

Our last program is the spring graduation BBQ where we celebrate all students of and color who will be graduating. We personally invite each graduate and then acknowledge him or her in the brief program. Again, our entire community is invited and we end our semester with the greatest accomplishment, graduation.

I have provided several examples of the community we build in MSS for which I am significantly involved. For purposes of this paper, it is critical to discuss how this community I have referred to comes to exist. For MSS, community and community building does not and cannot be confined to Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:30 pm. There are many community-building activities that occur in evenings and on the weekends. Because of the critical importance of staff being part of community building, it requires staff to be available as much as possible and not only through email or during office hours. Students have my cell phone number and they text me often. I respond to texts like emails; meaning, I weigh them based on urgency and importance. I have personal relationships with many students and use Facebook and other social media as a tool or bulletin board for MSS events and programs. Because of this I may privately message someone if I have not seen a student in a while or to check in to see how the student might be handling a situation we have talked about. I have turned to texting and Facebook messaging because students don't respond to emails often and these are two means of connecting staff with students that usually result in responses, whereas email may or may not. If it is important that I connect with a student, build community with them, and if it is not

happening via email, I must meet them where they are at. If I am able to connect and build community with them by utilizing Facebook or texting, then the solution has been found.

Building community also means we must be engaged in various communities. We must be where the students are. This may mean we are engaged in their SCSU community and attending their programs and cultural nights. However, this may also mean that we are in their personal communities and attending celebrations or funerals. When we are in these spaces, as genuine participants, we begin to see the whole picture of the student's life. We see the family dynamic, the cultural navigations, and the personal challenges and victories the students are experiencing. For example, when there is struggle between our African students, we know it may not be confined to the university. Often, the outside community and the student community are close to one in the same and we see how both are affecting and impacting the other. For example, if we did not have a relationship with various African communities (Somali, Ethiopian, Oromo, Nigerian, Liberian, Kenyan) off-campus, we would not know or understand how the personal, familial, cultural, tribal, and political inform our students' experiences on campus.

If community building means I am in the student's spaces and communities and in turn they are in mine, the challenges of defining professional boundaries is complex. When is the professional personal or personal professional? Anytime your career, vocation, job, becomes more than a means to a paycheck, anytime you put

care and effort into what you do, it inevitably becomes personal. For some, there are varying degrees to which the boundary applies. If you only feel connected or accountable to a community or student(s) from the perspective of service provider, it becomes easy to miss the indirect or subtle details, which allow us to probe deeper. For instance, do advisors, either for a major or for liberal education courses, provide guidance, support, and suggestions for students as they go about selecting their classes and creating their course schedules for the semester? Yes, they do. Or, does financial aid provide answers to the questions students come to their office with? Yes, they do. However, in providing the answers or service, do these particular offices or people working in these offices feel compelled, ethically obligated, communally connected to also ask some questions, dig a little deeper and read between the lines to reveal where is the student's question is actually stemming from? Really, why are they asking this question?

Our community is truly like a family. I am honored that at both the beginning and end of the semester or before or after a break, students stop by my office to say hi and catch up or say good-bye and see you soon. It is as if they feel obligated to include us or keep us informed about their life.

Community building in the classroom can be a bit different; though I have approached it with the same feminist pedagogy I do in my position with Multicultural Student Services. Relying on the outline that an engaged feminist pedagogy provides is indeed helpful. From the onset, there are some easy structural changes that can be

made. We sit in a circle so that we can see each other's faces as we share and discuss. Students display nametags so that we can be more personal with one another. Also, typically, there are 50% women of color in the course. I have recruited these women or a student with whom I have a relationship with has suggested they take the course. This means I have a relationship. Early on, I try to deconstruct the

Chapter VI

Once I have built community with students, I am then able to gain their trust, power dynamics in the teacher-student relationship as much as possible. One way in which means they may feel more comfortable sharing their lived experience with me, which I do this is to create a classroom that is very discussion based, stressing that A student's lived experience is important because: (1) women, particularly women of color, are rarely at the center of the conversation; (2) by validating one's lived experience—within the community we create in the classroom and within my successful completion of the course requires active participation and active listening. Another way that I do this is by taking risks and sharing my own personal stories with experience—within the community we create in the classroom and within my my students to help illustrate the concept or theory we are reading about and approach to student services in Multicultural Student Services—students can grow discussing in class. It is necessary to relate the everyday lived experiences of women towards self-reflection and empowerment; and (3) students can begin to recognize, to make the theories and concepts not only real, but tangible also. By doing this analyze, and challenge assumptions and deconstruct the variables that separate and through large group or small group discussions in class a number of things happen. divide us.

The women find their voice, they are able to access the language, theories, and concepts to validate their lived experiences, and they also discover that they may not be alone in their experiences. In being able to relate to one another we continue to need my assistance in MSS and/or how I come to know them as students in my build and enhance community in the classroom. Through this example, community classroom. When students come to me through MSS, there is generally some issue building informs lived experience and lived experience informs community. They are that needs to be resolved or some problem that needs urgent attention. Knowing a very reciprocal in nature and complement each other well.

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current existence. Acknowledging an individual's lived experience recognizes that we all have a story that deserves to be honored.

Chapter VI

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approximately 40 students. I am in continuous communication with students as they

Once I have built community with students, I am then able to gain their trust, decide on whether to participate. Often, the communication I have with these students goes far deeper than the transactional level of sending the application and program fee. For example, for many, the \$575 fee is a hardship for the student and their family. This is uncovered, along with other personal details about the student's lived experience—within the community we create in the classroom and within my approach to student services in Multicultural Student Services—students can grow towards self-reflection and empowerment; and (3) students can begin to recognize, analyze, and challenge assumptions and deconstruct the variables that separate and divide us.

One's lived experience is critical to the story of how they come to be students at St. Cloud State University. It also affects how they may eventually either come to need my assistance in MSS and/or how I come to know them as students in my classroom. When students come to me through MSS, there is generally some issue that needs to be resolved or some problem that needs urgent attention. Knowing a student's lived experience is not for the sake of pity or empathy; it is for understanding their reality. It creates a larger frame for me to understand their

current existence. Acknowledging an individual's lived experience recognizes that we all have a story that deserves to be honored. *example, I often share that I failed out of college*

As I stated earlier, in MSS I coordinate our summer bridge program, APP. Each year we receive 70-100 applications for the program and we only accept *member* approximately 40 students. I am in continuous communication with students as they decide on whether to participate. Often, the communication I have with these *I was* students goes far deeper than the transactional level of sending the application and program fee. For example, for many, the \$575 fee is a hardship for the student and their family. This is uncovered, along with other personal details about the student and their family, as we begin to build a relationship with one another through *that I* conversations about the program. I may find out a student has experienced the death of a family member, that they are quite poor and working to help support the family, here or abroad. Or they might share that they have a learning disability and are worried about college level academic work. I tend to find out quite a bit about the student prior to the start of the program. Even the students who seem to be contacting me simply to ask questions in preparation for the program reveal pieces about themselves without knowing it. My point is, the student's lived experience, *his* sharing that lived experience, and connecting with someone is critical to his or her engagement with college and the institution. Of course, not everyone is an open book. It takes the passion, dedication and commitment of our entire staff to provide an engaged experience that is personal for each student. *that community building*

and she Essential to this relationship I am establishing is the fact that I must also take risks and share my own lived experiences. For example, I often share that I failed out of college and it took me ten years to decide to come back and try again. I share that I know what it is like to feel inadequate and have no self-confidence. I remember what it was like not understanding the university system or not being aware of all the resources and services that were available to assist me. I share with them that I was too naïve to ask for help and recognize what a wonderful opportunity it is to attend college. I also share how explosive education was for me when I discovered my passion and interests. College and an education provided a language and framework for analyzing and understanding my own lived experience; I could now name what I always had a sense of. Finally, college and an education opened up doors for me I did not even know existed. A student complimented me saying she was glad I was not perfect. She went on to elaborate and say that she is skeptical and distrusting of mentors or those offering advice that seem to have made all the right choices and traveled a path without mistakes. On other occasions, I have students who are relieved when I share that I failed out of college, not as permission to continue on a path of doing poorly or not asking for help, but in knowing there is always hope. This is a constant cycle of community building, sharing lived experience, and self-reflection that leads to empowerment. friends have experienced, it is more difficult

for the In the classroom, I find that feminist teaching methods compliment the way I operate. That is not to say that I am perfect, it only means that community building

and sharing one's lived experience is not uncomfortable or threatening to me. At the beginning of each semester I inform the students that my women's studies class is very much conversational or discussion based and that they should not expect me to lecture for the entire class period while they frantically scribble to record everything that I say. The assigned readings define or provide examples of the concepts we are learning about. Forms of oppression such as sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism and homophobia are introduced to explore further and expand our language to intellectualize, problematize, and deconstruct our experiences. Then through class discussion and the sharing of lived experiences we can, as a class, begin to see the real life faces, people, and experiences or manifestations of these forms of oppression we are defining and making real and tangible. Students need to be able to draw the connections between textbooks and real life. They need to be able to see/hear that what they are reading is not the "other" or abstract. The everyday lived realities we are discussing are embodied in the person sitting right next to them or even themselves. Students can begin to connect the theory of institutional sexism and racism to actual lived experiences and to see how subtly they are represented and how easy it is to dismiss someone's claims. For example, when we are discussing racism and the women of color in the classroom speak about countless examples of the racism that they, their family, and friends have experienced, it is more difficult for the student sitting next to her or him to dispute the experiences. I find that students have a hard time going back and forth between a macro-level and micro-

level observation and analysis, especially since it is uncomfortable to accept these realities when they are not one's own experiences. However, if there are several students providing lived experiences as examples, the class can then take what we have learned from the macro-level analysis and see it occurring on the micro-level through individual experiences.

It is not a common experience for women of color to have their experiences placed at the center of the conversation for the purpose of growth and education. Often in other classes, these women feel silenced and their experiences negated and unimportant. To find that there is a space where we are free to and encouraged to share their experiences in relation to the concepts and theories we are reading about in class is new and exciting. The validation we experience by realizing there is actually a language or even a field of study that has been developed because of this experience is incredibly relieving, empowering, and inspiring. It is empowering to discover that what we have been thinking, feeling, and experiencing is real and in fact, variations of it are common among women.

Both in the office and in the classroom, already knowing the student, I may push the student more and encourage them to take some risks, explore themselves and their experiences. I can ask them to intellectualize, contextualize, and analyze their experiences in relation to the course content. By beginning with community building and then including sharing my/our lived experiences, I am able to create an

environment that supports the individual and collective relationships. Then it is easier to step into the role of advisor and mentor.

Chapter VII

ADVISING AND MENTORSHIP

Community building has provided an entry point for me to engage with students both personally and academically through academic advising and mentorship. As I build community with students, I then have opportunities to advise them academically and mentor them.

Students must see an advisor to register for courses. Whether the advisor is a staff member they have been assigned to by the Advising Center or a faculty member from the department of the discipline they wish to major in, students have an advisor. In my experience, when an advisor, thinking they are doing the student a favor in efficiency, simply instructs the student to enroll in specific courses without the advice or interaction personalized, the student is often deeply disappointed and confused about the expectations they have regarding the purpose of academic advising.

The consistent message the university stresses is that students must consult their advisor for class registration and any changes to their schedule, meaning if a student is considering withdrawing from a course, we highly encourage the student to meet with their advisor first to review the consequences of withdrawing from a

course and to discuss the particular impact of their decision. For the students who are looking for expert advice, guidance on academic choices and life decisions, and a relationship with the person who will impact the rest of their life in terms of career and life opportunities, simply

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ADVISING AND MENTORSHIP

merely a transaction can leave students feeling very disconnected from the process and their education.

Community building has provided an entry point for me to engage with

When a student comes to me for advising help, the conversations are rarely just about degree completion requirements. While we may talk about that, I also mentorship. As I build community with students, I then have opportunities to advise them academically and mentor them. must take the time to ask, "so, how is your mom," "are you still working two jobs," "how are things with your sister and nephew," "are you still seeing your counselor,"

Students must see an advisor to register for courses. Whether the advisor is a staff member they have been assigned to by the Advising Center or a faculty member they are part of the community and family at SCSU. Then, this line of questioning, a sincere interest in the student's life, is a "normal" part of the conversations. In many cases, I believe the student would be disappointed and possibly even hurt if I didn't favor in efficiency, simply instructs the student to enroll in specific courses without ask. Also, they expect that by their sharing their story, I will be better able to give the advice or interaction personalized, the student is often deeply disappointed and them advice or suggestions. For instance, if I already know the student I am talking with is working two jobs to support the family and trying to take care of a sick relative but also indicates they want to take 15 credits and commute back and forth

The consistent message the university stresses is that students must consult to the Twin Cities to help out their family, I might suggest a lighter credit load, their advisor for class registration and any changes to their schedule, meaning if a looking at an online class, or, if needed, considering taking the semester off if the student is considering withdrawing from a course, we highly encourage the student situation seems to be really burdening the student emotionally and mentally. With to meet with their advisor first to review the consequences of withdrawing from a these suggestions, together we investigate potential consequences (like financial aid

course and to discuss the particular impact of their decision. For the students who are looking for expert advice, guidance on academic choices and life decisions, and a relationship with the person who will impact the rest of their life in terms of career and life opportunities, simplifying the advising process to merely a transaction can leave students feeling very disconnected from the process and their education.

When a student comes to me for advising help, the conversations are rarely just about degree completion requirements. While we may talk about that, I also must take the time to ask, "so, how is your mom," "are you still working two jobs," "how are things with your sister and nephew," "are you still seeing your counselor," "how is your anxiety doing"? This is because we have established a relationship and they are part of the community and family at SCSU. Then, this line of questioning, a sincere interest in the student's life, is a "normal" part of the conversations. In many cases, I believe the student would be disappointed and possibly even hurt if I didn't ask. Also, they expect that by their sharing their story, I will be better able to give them advice or suggestions. For instance, if I already know the student I am talking with is working two jobs to support the family and trying to take care of a sick relative but also indicates they want to take 15 credits and commute back and forth to the Twin Cities to help out their family, I might suggest a lighter credit load, looking at an online class, or, if needed, considering taking the semester off if the situation seems to be really burdening the student emotionally and mentally. With these suggestions, together we investigate potential consequences (like financial aid

or being sure to maintain the university's academic progress standards) to the student's choices that are available. I may also have the conversation with the student about what has and has not worked for them in the past. *as an advisor, mentor, and advocate.*

As an advisor, I can look at their grade history for each semester and connect that to what has been going on in their life. The access to real data, instead of relying on a student's recollection or disclosure regarding their academic progress can provide an entry point to a conversation. Typically, a student's grade history will say a lot about their personal life. For example, if I see that a student was at one time earning good grades and then there is a semester or two of significantly lower grades, it is an indication that something, possibly serious, has changed or happened. Now, I have a reason, tangible proof, to ask the student what has happened.

In the classroom, advising and mentorship can be a pedagogical tool. I insert advising and mentorship into my classroom teaching as a way to show students that I am committed to their successful completion of not just the course, but college as well. Each semester I introduce myself to the class as both teacher and resource and remind the students of this throughout the semester. I invite students to my office to discuss issues related to class but also financial aid, time management, personal issues, academic advising, preparing for the next semester, and help with decisions related to dropping or withdrawing from courses; these are personal one-to-one conversations that strengthen and build our relationship that in turn, help build a stronger sense of community in our classroom interactions. I also encourage students

to participate in campus events, programs, and performances related to women's issues and/or enhancing the college experience. This is a way to expand their lived experiences and establish credibility with them as an advisor, mentor, and advocate.

Chapter VIII

Feminist pedagogy is an engaged pedagogy. When integrated, it treats the student as more than just a learner and views teaching the student a function of the teacher as well. These characteristics of feminist pedagogy are a sound basis for opportunities for meaningful conversations with the student. Because of my arguing that the role of advisor, advocate and teacher can exist interchangeably connection to them through community and because they have shared their lived experiences with me, regardless of whether or not they have been in my class, I can use that material to draw out conversations about self-reflection. It is not as easy because I do not know how long I will have their engagement. They may come to see me once or twice and I may not see them again. At least when they are enrolled in my course, I know how much time I have to work with them and can design the course or individualize my interactions with them to meet the objective(s) or learning outcome(s).

Absolutely, the most difficult situations are those that I can see require self-reflection and yet, I know, the student is not developmentally ready for it. Over the years I have wondered, how do I foster or nurture self-reflection in someone when they are not ready? Can it? Agency must come from within. It is not conferred. I know there may come a time when a student has to experience loss, difficulty, or failure and then must persevere. However, if at the same time, I believe that variables like,

race, gender, class, etc. are always present, and how do I recognize their presence in any and all situations while not falling back on them as excuses? How do I help students to navigate that? How can I appreciate this and still teach or help students learn they are still responsible to themselves?

Chapter VIII

SELF-REFLECTION AND EMPOWERMENT

Self-reflection and empowerment pose an interesting challenge to an instructor and mentor. Trying to foster both individual and group reflection is a place where I continue to learn. In my office, especially depending on how well I know the student, I have opportunities for meaningful conversations with the student. Because of my connection to them through community and because they have shared their lived experiences with me, regardless of whether or not they have been in my class, I can use that material to draw out conversations about self-reflection. It is not as easy as the need to look in the mirror before one blames someone else for the same shortcoming. I feel it is at least easier to start the conversation from an intellectual me once or twice and I may not see them again. At least when they are enrolled in my course, I know how much time I have to work with them and can design the material available that I can use as the instructor to begin to inform the students and course or individualize my interactions with them to meet the objective(s) or learning outcome(s).

Absolutely, the most difficult situations are those that I can see require self-reflection and yet, I know, the student is not developmentally ready for it. Over the years I have wondered, how do I foster or nurture self-reflection in someone when they are not ready? Can I? Agency must come from within. It is not conferred. I know there may come a time when a student has to experience loss, difficulty, or failure and then must persevere. However, if at the same time, I believe that variables like, the opportunity to grow personally and others who resist the challenge because they

race, gender, class, etc. are always present, and how do I recognize their presence in any and all situations while not falling back on them as excuses? How do I help students to navigate that? How can I appreciate this and still teach or help students learn they are still responsible for themselves and accountable to themselves?

Self-reflection and empowerment pose an interesting challenge to an instructor and mentor. Trying to foster both individual and group reflection is a place where I continue to learn. In the classroom, students are simultaneously individuals embedded in a collectivity. However, in the classroom I can also intentionally incorporate self-reflection as a learning outcome for the course. I often talk about the need to look in the mirror before one blames someone else for the same shortcoming. I feel it is at least easier to start the conversation from an intellectual foundation of understanding power and privilege. There is a wealth of reading material available that I can use as the instructor to begin to inform the students and assist me in the classroom discussions. Approaching this in the classroom makes complete pedagogical sense in regards to educating students about various forms of oppression and how we see it manifested in all of our everyday lived experiences. Once students begin to grasp the depth and breadth of oppression and are then able to connect their own lived experiences to concepts and realities of power and privilege, it is much easier to push this conversation and the individuals to engage in serious and intentional reflecting. Of course, there are some students who embrace the opportunity to grow personally and others who resist the challenge because they

are more comfortable with the banking system model of education and so uncomfortable with the challenge of embarking the unknown. Deconstructing education, removing the idea that it is simply a consumable product, and re-visioning it as a process or journey or relationship that the student has with oneself can be a task some are not ready for.

In higher education, we are fortunate to witness countless transformations within students, some subtle, some profound. I know that sometimes all I can do is plant seeds, knowing I may not be around to see them grow. However, this should not change my level or degree of engagement, advocacy, or support for the student. The intent is not that all transformation and changes occur while in college but that we positively inform a lifetime of learning.

By bringing the community I have created through MSS into the classroom, I start with a foundation of community to build from. By always presenting myself as a resource and teacher interchangeably, students will know that I recognize their personal lives and their experiences as students as one. If my ultimate goal is to increase the retention and graduation rate of women of color/students of color and to provide a transformative educational experience, then my classroom space must exist without a separation of the personal from the educational or the separation between academic and student services.

Chapter IX

A MODEL FOR INTEGRATING THE CLASSROOM AND STUDENT AFFAIRS EXPERIENCE

This project provided an opportunity to significantly shift the dynamics of the classroom by incorporating a significant number of women of color/students of color into an engaged feminist classroom. My project demonstrated new methods of providing and connecting students to services and resources as an integral part of my teaching function. I have taken the strongest pieces from both student affairs and teaching to create a classroom and model that demonstrates an integrated student experience in the classroom and outside of the classroom.

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Based on my model, universities now have an additional way of approaching student engagement to increase retention, persistence, and graduation rates through the classroom. This paper outlined why this model is particularly effective for students of color based on feminist pedagogy that mirrors the same community engagement many students of color come from. This model is also applicable to all students. Higher education continues to evolve and it is projected there will be a dramatic increase of students of color into higher education. Universities who are open to progressive models will continue to be able to meet the needs of the all of the various communities students come from, especially communities of color. My model of providing support and resources in the classroom has allowed me to develop deeper relationships and a community with students. By serving as their advisor and mentor I have traveled alongside the student in their educational journey. I have been privileged to learn of their lived experiences and how they relate and impact their academic success. Also, opportunities to foster self-reflection and empowerment are present in intimate relationships such as the ones I am able to create with the students. In conclusion, because of the nature of my engagement with students, I have am in the position to provide letters of recommendation that can speak to their academic strength's, community engagement, leadership skills, and personal growth. Our relationships span far beyond their time at SCSU as students. For me, and the way that we work in MSS, the personal is always professional.

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