Summary Report  
14th Annual Undergraduate Experiences Symposium, October 19, 2018

The symposium agenda provides an outline of the presentations and activities summarized below.

Goals of this Symposium: How are the characteristics and needs of 21st-century university students different from those prior? What evidence-based teaching practices best help today’s students learn and succeed? This symposium, the first in 14 years to focus primarily on teaching and learning, highlighted the centrality of those functions not just to the educational mission but to the imperatives of student success and equity. In a workshop-like environment, our own faculty and staff were invited to teach and learn answers to these questions, both from each other’s experience and from national best practices.

Quick Summary Data:
- Total who registered for the symposium: 237
- Total verified attendees: 200
- Number who completed the Exit Survey: 112, 56% of attendees
- Percentage who rated the whole day as “excellent” or “good”: 90%

Exit Survey: “Please rate the symposium day as a whole”: Excellent, 42%; Good, 48%; Average, 6%; Poor, 3%; Terrible, 1%.

Exit Survey: “My role at CU Denver is”: Faculty, 46%; Staff, 45%; Administrator, 6%; Other, 3%.
Click on this link to peruse the exit survey questions and complete attendee responses.

Keynote Address: Dr. Drew Koch, President and Chief Operating Officer of the Gardner Institute, “Many Thousands Failed—Ending the Unconscious Tyranny of Practice through Local, Faculty-Drive Action”: Dr. Koch drew upon his scholarship and work with 70 colleges and universities to shed light on why gateway courses must be redesigned if institutions are to fulfil their missions of student learning, success, and equity. He showed why and how formerly unquestioned teaching and institutional practices need to be examined and altered – how maintaining the status quo and changing nothing can further erode public faith in universities while perpetuating inequity. He then shared examples, relevant to work underway at CU Denver, of where and how faculty are at the forefront of efforts to alter historically systemic patterns.

Exit Survey: “The keynote speaker, Drew Koch, provided relevant, useful information and inspiration”:

Breakout Sessions: The primary work of the day was done by the attendees in the seven morning and then afternoon breakouts. The seven leaders of those sessions contributed even more substantially in planning and facilitating them, and their 5-minute “TED Talks,” which summarized their topics for the entire body, may have been the highlight of the day. Those talks, available in full here, are summed up below for the sake of this record, with apologies to the authors for oversimplification.
Breakout-session leaders, topics, and “tED Talks”:

**Talk #1.** Dr. Joan Bihun, *Teaching Metacognition, Growth Mindset, and Belonging*: the problem: ‘unskilled and unaware’; students hate ‘study skills’ but love ‘metacognitive strategies’; Cognitive Self-Regulation: forethought → performance → self-reflection; metacognition and affect; The Study Cycle for more confident learners: preview, attend, review, study, check; using Bloom’s Taxonomy; Academic Mindset; Grit (matters more than IQ); Sense of Belonging; scaling up (in other universities).

**Talk #2.** Dr. Marjorie Levine-Clark, *Inclusive Pedagogy and Equitable Classrooms*: define “inclusive pedagogy”; importance of self-reflection upon one’s own assumptions and privilege; examples of how to (re)design courses to be more inclusive; suggestions for how to create an inclusive classroom environment.

**Talk #3.** Dr. Antwan Jefferson, *Community-Based Learning* (CBL): examples of different types of community; importance of understanding “whose community?”; “seeing” the community as it truly is; two categories of CBL—Strengths-based, recognizing community’s strengths, or Compensatory, assuming a deficit that you will fill; communities may be displaced by others, as in “urban renewal”; the connectedness of policy, power, and privilege; the challenge to change how we see, not through our own assumptions and interests.

**Talk #4.** Dr. Lindsey Hamilton, *Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities*: the current revolution in URCA; URCA as more personal and active as opposed to removed and passive; URCA contributes to retention, GPA, completion, equity, rating of faculty; required rethinking teaching and learning and meeting students where they are; images of CU Denver faculty who do it.

**Talk #5.** Dr. Michael Ferrara, *Peer-Based Learning*: definition w/ examples of types of PBL—collaborative, team-based, or peer teaching; principles and benefits of collaborative learning; benefits of peer teaching for recipients; benefits of peer teaching for the peer mentors.

**Talk #6.** Dr. Wendy Bolyard, *Digital and Hybrid Pedagogies*: how are digital & hybrid pedagogies good for students?—examples; research showing how taking online courses correlates with success variables such as GPA; examples of how student sense of belonging can be enhanced through digital learning; meritocracy?; digital and hybrid evidence-based teaching practices; data on the number of U.S. and Colorado students taking distance-education courses.

**Talk #7.** Dr. Donna Sobel, *Practical Strategies for Improving Learning and Engagement*: the differences between engaging and non-engaging teaching; examples of evidenced-based teaching strategies that foster engagement; exemplary cases, from multiple disciplines, of faculty at CU Denver who are practicing engaged teaching-and-learning strategies.

*Exit Survey:* “Please select which Breakout Session you participated in.”
Breakout-Session Notes: Each breakout used large flip-pads for notes and posted note-filled pages in the central room after morning and afternoon sessions—thanks to the volunteer note-takers! In concluding, the breakout leaders asking their group to list five take-aways and one question worth asking in the coming year. These are listed below. A fuller understanding of the breakout conversations and conclusions can be found in the complete notes, which were transcribed from the flip pads.

**#1: Metacognition, Growth Mindset, and Belonging:**
1) have students teach to learn; 2) teach difference between “studying” and “learning”; 3) reduce content to focus on the process of learning; 4) give more support for “at will” faculty to teach these skills; 5) teach the importance to “fail productively.” (More points in the full notes.) How can we, staff, collaborate with departments to support metacognitive practices?

**#2: Inclusive Pedagogy and Equitable Classrooms:**
1) being “objective” can be culturally insensitive; 2) get to know our students (avoid assumptions); 3) be on students’ side, show excitement for their success; 4) acknowledge structural racism; 5) empowerment comes from a. “third space” and b. trustworthy faculty. (More points in the full notes.) How do our assumptions about the relative value of research versus teaching create a barrier to the institutionalization of inclusive pedagogy?

**#3: Community-Based Learning (CBL):**
1) Resources? [the university offers to communities, or that it provides internally for CBL?]; 2) Grace/Humility? [in approaching communities, controlling our assumptions]; 3) University political? [the political role of the university]; 4) Campus network? [how best to link into the community?]; 5) Balancing/supporting priorities? (See the full notes for clarifications.) What is the university role in service to communities? Is civics instruction a moral imperative?

**#4: Undergraduate Research & Creative Activities (URCA):**
1) get research to 1st years, required in First-Year Seminars; 2) incentivize faculty; 3) consistent messaging about definition of “research” and its benefits [to faculty and students]; 4) certifications for advisors, students, mentors; 5) multi-mentor/advisor model with a 1-stop shop for URCA. How quickly can we relocate resources—align resources w/ our priorities—to make [more URCA for more students] happen?

**#5: Peer-Based Learning (PBL):**
1) Higher Ed is a culturally coded exclusionary system that markets itself as an inclusive meritocracy; 2) PBL helps mitigate 1) above. 3) Structure and norms are an indispensable part of PBL at any scale; 4) Accept and support students where they are NOT, where they “should” be; 5) True change is not revenue neutral; value and support adjuncts. What is a peer? (See the full notes for further discussion.)

**#6: Digital & Hybrid Learning (D&HL):**
1) assumptions about “online” from different perspectives—course design, assessment, recruiting, technically, etc. . . . need for shared vision; 2) Open Education is a minimal conversation (and perhaps should be expanded) in D&HL; 3) online education would benefit from a strategy that harmonizes digital perspectives beyond enrollment growth; 4) anchoring retention goals to D&HL pedagogies, including teaching students to interact in their career network; 5) important to understand training opportunities for faculty and the need for it to fit in to other priorities — this. . .should be THE work we do. (Many more notes in full.) How can we weave digital and hybrid pedagogies throughout all of today’s sessions?

**#7: Practical Strategies for Improving Learning and Engagement:**
1) freshman seminars should be required; 2) get students to engage with university resources; 3) plan for ways to scale-up our resources (the high number of first-gen students on the wait-list for support is concerning); 4) current initiatives such as the ACUE course should not only continue but be extended. What is CU Denver doing to lead the way for low-income, first-generation, and under-represented students?

Lunchtime Video: Dr. Margaret Wood, Director of the Center for Faculty Development, created and showed a video titled “Who We Are: By the Numbers.” It provided a statistical portrait of our faculty and students, partially answering the question, “who are 21st-century students?” Using data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, it showed, among many other points, that 50% of our students are first-generation; 49% transfer students; 50% Pell-Grant recipients; 32% Underrepresented
Minorities (URMs); 26% part-time; 33% of freshman not returning for a second year (in 2016); 45% graduating within six years, 24% URMs; and a 7% “equity gap” between non-URM and URM students. It ended with the questions, “Why does this achievement gap exist?” and “What can we do about it?”

Additional Exit Survey Responses:

**Question:** “What did you find most interesting about your breakout session and why?”

**Recurring themes:** great dialogue; instructive to hear from others; research-driven teaching reforms; innovative techniques and useful practical teaching tips; multiple and diverse views.

**Exemplary responses:**
- “There are great strategies being used in classrooms to make students partners in learning.”
- “I felt it was fantastic to learn about the ways in which faculty are integrating learning about learning beyond instructing students on/about content.”
- “Passion of the participants and how quickly and strongly we linked community-based learning to the student experience.”
- “How much non faculty (advisors, library staff) want to get involved.”
- “The different approaches faculty take to get students engaged and being able to transfer that knowledge to my role in student services.”
- “The ability to meet people with shared interests from other parts of the university with whom I rarely or never interact.”

**Question:** “What is the biggest take-away from the symposium as a whole?”

**Recurring themes:** teaching is central to student success; equity is essential; reform pedagogy in gateway courses; put student learning first; more resources to incentivize teaching reform; more faculty and staff collaboration; the symposium was too faculty-centric for some staff.

**Exemplary responses:**
- “Being tuned in to how the lowest 15% of the class is performing and how to support them.”
- “I have SO MUCH TO LEARN from colleagues when I leave the ‘bubble’ of my own college.”
- “We can create stronger and more intentional partnerships between faculty and student affairs to support a campus culture of learning beyond what occurs in individual classrooms and offices.”
- “We need to champion our faculty and reward their teaching efforts more! They are the leaders of our institution and we need them to help propel our efforts to improve student experiences!”
- “That CU Denver is very much engaged with and committed to giving their students the best possible chance at success.”
- “That this campus is expecting change - not just hoping for it.”

**Question:** “What suggestions do you have for future symposiums?”

**Recurring themes:** include more staff-focused topics; focus again on teaching and faculty role; teach faculty about staff roles; balance teaching and research missions; loved the break-out sessions.

**Practical suggestions to consider:** schedule earlier in the fall; allow attendance of more than one breakout topic; have a CU Denver keynote speaker; invite students; make attendance mandatory (!).

**Exemplary responses:**
- “I think it would be helpful if the symposium had more intentionally inclusive and collaborative conversations between faculty, staff, and students not only about the teaching and learning of our students but also about ourselves as professionals.”
- “Let’s align our priorities and our resources based on these conversations!”

There was a final “additional thoughts” question. For the raw attendee responses to that and all questions, please visit the “Exit Survey Data and Responses.”

A heartfelt “thank you” to all who organized, participated, contributed, showed up. See you next year!