**Spirituality, Authenticity, Wholeness, and Self-Renewal in the Academy**

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This facilitated dialogue is based on a workshop held at the 1998 AAHE National Conference and is an outgrowth of a project funded by the John E. Fetzer Institute on Sustaining Authenticity, Wholeness, and Self-Renewal in Higher Education. Since that time, the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition has hosted a similar conversation at each of its major conferences because we recognize that faculty and administrators still face many of the challenges identified in that early work. Such ongoing challeges include demands to do more in the face of declining resources; competing values of research, service, and teaching; struggles to balance personal and professional obligations; and institutional processes that hinder learning, development, and success for both higher education professionals and the students they serve. At the same time, students increasingly view themselves as spiritual beings. By addressing our own search for authenticity and wholeness, we are better positioned to support the spiritual development and personal growth of the students they serve.

**What do we mean by spirituality?**

* “a personal commitment to a process on inner development…a contemplative attitude, a disposition to a life of depth, and the search for ultimate meaning, direction, and belonging” (Teasdale, 1999)
* “Our definition distinguishes religion from spirituality, with the term religion encompassing an affiliation with and practice of an established denominational tradition and spirituality marked by a highly personal search for ultimate meaning, purpose, and values wherever they may be found.” (Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2006, p. 38).

**Two major sets of questions will guide our discussions. These are presented to serve as “triggers” for your thoughts in addition to those the moderators will present at the session’s opening.**

**First**, in the context of the most important individual values that we bring into our workplaces:

1. As faculty and staff, to what extent are we aware of the congruities and incongruities in our work lives?
2. Are we aware of the beliefs and values that structure our relationships with colleagues?
3. What is the personal meaning of our scholarly work or of its impact on the world?
4. How do we view the efficacy of our teaching and mentoring?
5. Can we identify specific incidents in which the institution required or expected us to act in a way that was not consistent with our most deeply felt values and beliefs? And then how did we deal with this?
6. Alternatively, what are specific incidents in which your institution has made either policy decisions and/or taken specific actions which were not consistent with, or actually violated, your most deeply felt values and beliefs. And how did you deal with this?

**Second**, in the context of conflicts between our personal values and dynamics that arise in our work environments:

1. What are some of the institutional sources that fuel incongruence or encourage inauthenticity?
2. To what extent do we resonate with explicit policies and implicit values of our department?
3. What departmental or institutional expectations do we, as faculty and staff, perceive as unfair, counterproductive, or educationally unsound?
4. What kinds of collegial behavior or administrative policies and actions are likely to generate values conflicts or inauthentic behavior?

**Small Group Discussion Topics**

**After considering the questions above, and listening to the facilitators share some of their own experiences with the challenges of achieving authenticity and wholeness within our higher education work settings, we would like you to join a group and engage your new colleagues in a discussion as a response to the ideas presented by the facilitators. The following five options are possible directions your conversation could take. Please first introduce yourselves and then allow the group process to take over and move the conversation forward. Ideally, we would like to have a brief report from each group summarizing the content of its discussion, with special attention to major areas of concurrence, or the opposite, and unresolved questions that need further consideration.**

1. In your institutional life and work, can you think of specific times or situations in which you have experienced a clash between your personal values and institutional values and practices? Give specific examples of times or occasions in which you felt compelled to compromise your values and beliefs.
2. What kind of collegial behavior or administrative policies generate value conflicts for you or create inauthentic behavior?
3. In what ways are the beliefs and values of your department or institution congruent or incongruent with your own?

4. Are there times when your interactions with students have offered opportunities to discuss issues of spirituality, authenticity, and wholeness? How have you reacted to the opportunity?

5. Does your institution provide safe structures or opportunities for the sharing of values? Would the process used for this session facilitate such sharing on your home campus?

**Resources**

***Books***

Astin, A. W., & Astin, H. S. (1999) *Meaning and spirituality in the lives of college faculty: A study of values, authenticity, and stress.* Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.

Ben-Shahar, T. (2007). *Happier: Learn the secrets to daily joy and lasting fulfillment*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Brown, B. (2017). *Braving the wilderness: The quest for true belonging and the courage to stand alone*. New York, NY: Random House.

Brown, B. (2018). *Dare to lead: Brave work. Tough conversations. Whole hearts*. New York, NY: Random House.

Chickering, A. W., Dalton, J. C., & Stamm, L. (2006). *Encouraging authenticity and spirituality in higher education*.San Franciso, CA: Jossey-Bass*.*

Daloz Parks, S. (2011). *Big questions, worthy dreams: Mentoring emgerging adults in their search for meaning, purpose, and faith* (Rev. ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

McKeown, G. (2014). *Essentialism: The disciplined pursuit of less*. New York, NY: Crown

Palmer, P. J. (2009). *A hidden wholeness: The journey toward an undivided life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Patel, E., Bringman Baxter, K, & Silverman, N. (2015). Leadership practices for interfaith excellence in higher education. *Liberal Education, 101*(1/2). Retrieved from https://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/2015/winter-spring/patel

***Websites, Blogs, Podcasts, etc****.*

Brave Girls Club <http://bravegirlsclub.com/>

Brené Brown <https://brenebrown.com/blog/>

Center for Courage and Renewal <http://www.couragerenewal.org/>

Goalcoast <https://www.goalcast.com/>

IDEALS Survey <https://www.ifyc.org/IDEALS>

Intefaith Youth Core <https://www.ifyc.org/>

On Being <https://onbeing.org/>

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What would you add to this list? What are your favorite articles, books, blogs, podcasts, etc. on this topic? Where do you go for guidance and inspiration? Share your ideas with us so that we can grow our resources.