



Center for Teaching Excellence
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Teaching Matters

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In This Issue

◆ Reflections on
Character and Work

◆ Announcements

Quiet Character: On the Dignity of Work

by

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In April, the Hampton University community acknowledged the decision by the Board of Trustees to increase the minimum wage with whole-hearted approval. We all know the iconic story of Booker T. Washington's long trek to Hampton and the work ethic instilled in him once he became a student, but too often we remain ignorant of the stories of work that surround us all over the campus today. We hear the hum of the mowers as we walk between buildings and the hushed sound of cleaning carts rolling down hallways, never consciously noting the steady, careful work that keeps the campus functional. As teachers, we rely on that quiet, steady work to uphold our daily routines, to make **our** work possible.

Of course, these efforts also create an environment where our students can focus on their studies, but those students rely on the work of their families, as well. In her inspirational memoir, *Becoming*, former first lady Michelle Obama writes movingly of her working father, a man who rose and went to work in a water treatment plant every morning despite the increasing suffering he endured from multiple sclerosis. His work allowed her to aspire

to higher education and gave her the example she would use to conquer the obstacles she encountered as a woman of color in Harvard Law School. In this issue that closes the 2018-2019 academic year, we want to take the time to recognize the labor that sustains Hampton University with this poem by Walt Whitman:

I Hear America Singing

*I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on
the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or at noon
intermission or at sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl
sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows, robust,
friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.*

Many of you will recognize echoes of the alma mater in Whitman's words: may we all "let our lives do the singing" as we move forward into new challenges.

Announcements

Hampton University is a member of the American Association of Colleges and Universities, which offers the following information and opportunities for faculty members:

Transforming STEM Higher Education

November 7, 2019 to November 9, 2019
Sheraton Grand Chicago
301 East North Water Street
Chicago, IL 60611

Conference Overview

Sankofa, a word in the Twi language of the Akan tribe of Ghana, loosely translates to “looking back while going forward.” This year, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) will celebrate the thirty years of success that Project Kaleidoscope (PKAL) has had in providing effective professional and leadership development for STEM faculty. At the same time, we anticipate the ten-year anniversary of PKAL’s affiliation with AAC&U in 2020. The union of AAC&U and PKAL as a voice and force for undergraduate STEM reform represents a bold organizational move toward ensuring that STEM disciplines remain central to what constitutes a quality undergraduate education. It also reveals the magnitude of what’s possible when diverse perspectives, disciplines, and worldviews are fully considered and brought to bear on organizational change.

It is in the spirit of such change that this conference calls upon STEM disciplinary faculty and education researchers to join us in charting a daring path for STEM higher education reform that is paved with social consciousness, critical reflection, introspection, and disciplinary boundary crossing. Indeed, if we are to heed the nation’s call for a competitively trained and diverse STEM workforce, we must first be open in acknowledging that our unique disciplinary approaches to problem solving, by themselves, will not fully resolve our most perplexing challenges. Examination and investigation of undergraduate STEM education reform must not only extend across multiple institutional contexts, but also be critical, intelligent, and patient,^[1] serving all student demographics and withstanding the influences of existing systems and structures of exclusion. Above all, these efforts must be unceasing.

To that end, the “Transforming STEM Higher Education” conference will question and examine the entire range of contemporary challenges to—and opportunities for—STEM higher education reform, including exploring contemporary approaches to teaching, broadening participation, interrogating research studies, and verifying assessment tools for determining effectiveness. In keeping with our commitment to STEM faculty, we will also explore novel approaches to professional and leadership development. Conference attendees will be invited to unveil and abate disciplinary biases, confront fixations on “fix the student” reform models, and question theories about what can and cannot count as evidence of effectiveness.

Through this unique conference experience, together we will continue our legacy of advancing the kind of undergraduate STEM education reform that brings diverse perspectives and worldviews to bear on levers of change. In doing so, we will also guarantee our nation’s capacity to use those levers to drive innovation, discovery, social change, and life choices. Ultimately, we give deeper meaning and purpose to our way of knowing, understanding, and advancing STEM higher education practice, research, and policy.

[1] Carter G. Woodson Center, Berea College, “The Power of Sankofa: Know

History,” <https://www.berea.edu/cgwc/the-power-of-sankofa/>.

New Publication from AAC&U: We Have a Rubric for That

The newest publication in a series of reports on the AAC&U Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) Initiative—*We Have a Rubric for That: The VALUE Approach to Assessment*—compiles ten years of evidence to provide an argument-based framework for the assessment of student learning in higher education using the VALUE rubrics. This publication presents a wide range of sources to provide timely evidence of the power of the VALUE approach to assessment.

We Have a Rubric for That: The VALUE Approach to Assessment

By: Kathryne Drezek McConnell, Erin M. Horan, Bethany Zimmerman, and Terrel L. Rhodes

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First introduced in 2009 as an alternative to the predominant educational assessment paradigm—standardized tests—the VALUE rubrics have moved from the periphery of student outcomes assessment to the center of conversations about the quality of student learning within and across institutions. As of 2018, the rubrics have been downloaded more than 70,000 times by individuals representing nearly 5,900 organizations, including more than 2,188 colleges and universities. We invite you to [download the rubrics](#)—available for free on AAC&U’s website.

For information or to order, visit www.aacu.org/value/publications, email pub_desk@aacu.org, or call 202.387.3760.

Applications are due July 15 for the 2019 Delphi Award, given annually to two individuals or groups who have worked to support adjunct, contingent, and non-tenure-track faculty in promoting student success. The awards, funded by a grant from the Teagle Foundation, are presented by the Pullias Center at the University of Southern California in partnership with AAC&U.