

We began each meeting by sharing stories of our own transformative learning experiences.

Here are some lessons that can be gleaned from those stories that can help shape our teaching:

Make it real.

Doing less the right way is better than doing a lot, but doing it wrong.

No matter what experience a person has had in life, a good teacher can find a way to connect.

Everyone has something to teach.

Give space to grow and make mistakes.

Be open and receptive.

People are prepared and cultivated, not “trained.”

Find the questions that will stir your students’ minds and hearts.

Form real relationships with your larger community.

Create a safety net so students are able to stretch themselves.

Practice is key.

Model having the tough conversations; avoid being too politically correct.

Bringing many different types of people together is exhilarating and leads to places unknown.

Music is more than frivolous entertainment—it can be a profound way of making meaning and serving the community.

Immerse yourself in something brand new.

Learn how to bring international experiences into routine of everyday life.

Give a voice to the voiceless.

Give people a chance to be part of something bigger than them as individuals.

Find ways to share cross-generational knowledge.

Find ways to empower people to teach each other when you're gone.

Get people outside working in teams with the land and animals.

Take advantage of diverse life experiences and abilities.

Find ways to break down the stereotypes you have about certain groups.

Be more generous than you can imagine being.

Remember that children are eager to learn about and better understand the world.

We may learn more by overcoming our institutional constraints than by trying to succeed within them.

Be ready for moments of epiphany.

Show your vulnerabilities—let go of ego and desire for perfection.

Keep yourself in a state of receptivity and readiness.

Hands-on activities are great, especially if you can make a game out of learning.

Stick your neck out—push the boundaries a bit to see what is possible.

Listen deeply to the community—don't expect easy answers or to hear what you want to hear.

Merge the gifts of the young and old.

Touch the places that you're thinking about and teaching about.

Have a patient routine that allows you to sense the patterns and textures of a place.

Sometimes you just need to be thrown into a situation and left to figure it out.

Find the balance between theory and practice—Learn how to walk the walk by asking, "How can we live our politics in our community today?"

Nothing can inspire or impact students like being totally immersed in a culture different from their own.

Always ask, "What am I not seeing?" and "What are the ways I can see more?"

Enable others to get into vulnerable spaces.

Think about what universities are good at, and not so good at.

Take a risk, and trust.

We're all in over our heads (students and teachers), and that's how we learn.

Compassion is essential—every day.

Enact tolerance.

Be willing to rethink everything—something that seems dead might have a lot of life left.

Students and teacher bond when they recognize the challenges that each of them have overcome. This bond allows them to learn from each other more deeply.

Allow students to use their own ways of thinking to come up with solutions.

Science is not a spectator sport.

Take what you think you know, and dig deeper.

Find space to concentrate.

Fear no discipline (even math!).

Feeling that your body is powerful and strong builds confidence for learning and life in general.

After drifting through early life, a new and unfamiliar situation “sparked something within me that caused me to become part of the world.”

Get students out in the woods (even to learn the humanities!).

Be open and honest.

We can't always control, but we can always love.

Our goal should be to help students be humans, not just high achievers.

Help students learn enough so they have something useful to share with the world.

Give students permission to fail.

Engage in open dialogue with community by bringing yourself into their space.

See your discipline as a community practice, not the work of isolated individuals.

“Art has to be engaged to be relevant.”

Get students beyond the blinders of grades. How can they really be useful?

Allow students to become the “doers” sooner than later, and trust them to be successful.

Observe the gaps in what others think they know—often the crowd rushes to the obvious and wrong solution.

Write every day.

Allow students to realize that they can truly touch another person with what they say, write, and do.

Those who share knowledge and care at the same time can inspire.

Be patient, and stand firm against pressure.

Keep your eyes open.

Allow students to feel pride and ownership over their projects.

People of all walks of life have something to teach.

Kindred spirits need to find each other.

Find a place that reminds you that there are other ways of knowing than your own.

We all learn the most when no one has the answer, and we have to figure it out together.

Simply having the intention to build a community, not just teach a method or theory, can make all the difference.

It’s important to observe, not just discuss or theorize.

Help students be truly heard and truly seen.

Teachers should not be planting knowledge, but allowing knowledge to be found by students—“Set things up and then let go.”

The best learning environments mimic real life. They are a balance of action and reflection, work and fun, and group time and alone time.

Help students realize what they have overcome.

We then shared why we chose to be part of the Fellows program.

Our diverse answers are a sign of the many ways we can be resources for each other:

I'm looking for great ideas for engaging students.

I know my field well, but am fairly new to teaching.

I'm fed up with science sitting on the shelves.

We are paid to serve our students and the public, and this should be in our heads all the time.

We need to dialogue and interact with the community that supports our academic lives.

I want to help students avoid existential crisis at graduation, which more often happens when they have no real-world experience.

I want to help students grow beyond arrogance that they have all the answers; they need to see where others are coming from, and that environmental issues are not clear-cut.

Teaching methods were not taught to me in graduate school.

I'm looking for a "juicy" project that can push my college toward real community engagement, instead of working around the edges.

I want to learn how our educational systems can better support non-traditional students.

I want a community to talk with about how people really learn, and how we can support them.

I've done a lot of community activism, but never really connected it with my scholarly work.

As a new person in the region, I'm trying to learn more about big local issues, especially related to Native American land claims and history.

I want to learn from others who have walked the path before me.

Want to start a program in Bellingham like one I created elsewhere.

I want to establish the connections I need to do engaged scholarship.

I want to be part of inspiring conversations.

I don't meet people as much as I know I should, and this program will help because it is interdisciplinary and inter-institutional.

I like working in teams that support each other.

I want to get better at showing how history can be useful and fun.

I want to help students feel the thrill of "digging in" to old documents.

I want to help young people who slip through the cracks of society—to make them feel important and appreciated.

My department has no structure to help students and faculty share their work beyond our "ivory basement."

I'm looking for ways to grow service-learning at my college in many departments.

I seek to bring the vibe on international service-learning experiences into the classroom.

I'm looking for a community to support the transformative learning work that I'm doing, because now I feel that I need to do it under the radar.

I want to get beyond sense of fear around trying new things.

I want to learn how to use small-group techniques in larger classes.

I want to engage more women in STEM fields.

I'm looking to create a new research group.

I'm hoping to find ways to give back to the community.

I'm looking for local experts to bring in for lectures.

I'm seeking ways to get the word out about the work that my office does.

I'm looking for a supportive group of peers to talk with about pedagogy.

I'm hoping to get community-engaged research project off the ground and need to take relationships to the next level.

I want to do research with communities, not just on communities.

I always benefit from more ears and eyes.

I want to learn how to go from one-way outreach to reciprocal relationship.

How can I help students be prepared to work with people different from them?

I want to help tell stories that are not often told.

I want to develop my own sense of place.

I hope to take time to reflect on engagement methods, not just dive into the next thing.

I'm seeking to find connections between social justice, activism, critical theory, and learning.

How can I help students cut through and understand complicated and controversial theories (race, gender, sexuality, etc.)?

I hope the relationships we build humanize our workplace.

It's valuable to step outside of our high-stakes, high-pressure environment and reflect on our work.

It's important (and enjoyable) to think about our work in the context of our whole lives as members of a community.

I feel that I'm on this earth to build community, and this is part of that work.

It's time for me to "shake up" my teaching—to keep striving for better models.

I need to learn to be OK with not having everything planned out and controlled.

I want to help students find the "Holy Shit! I can't believe it!" moment. 😊

My previous university had system for all students to do a service-learning project, and I want to figure out how to do this at Western.

I want to help students and teachers in my discipline see that they could learn it in a totally new and more effective way.

I'm new to the region and want to expand my network of colleagues.

My previous service-learning class was rewarding by very exhausting. I want to learn how to make it more manageable.

I want to learn how to turn my community activism into scholarship.

I want to learn how to reach students effectively through online teaching. Can community engagement happen in this medium?

I want to listen.

I want to build a course around local examples of the cultural phenomena I study.

I want to expand the options my students have for engaging in the community—one size doesn't always fit all.

I want to help more of my students see the value and importance of community engagement—to get them in the right mindset from the beginning.

I want to be more proactive in my department.

I want to figure out a way to get my huge introductory lecture class out in the field.

I want to build relationships with other disciplines and programs around campus.

I want to help my students see relevance of my course's material to their everyday lives.

I want students to do community-based projects that last more than one term.

I want to publish an article exploring lessons learned from my service-learning activities.

No one in my department has done service-learning projects, and I want to figure out how.

I want to discover how to engage undergraduates in research that is meaningful—challenge is that we often teach them simplified models that don't really apply to real world.

I want to do work that actually makes a difference in society.

I want to learn how to influence elected officials with data.

I want to find the balance between traditional standards and creative openness in my teaching practices.

I want students to realize that writing is a public act.

I know that magic happens when cool people with different backgrounds get together.

I want to think big.

I want to think about students as assets to the community, not problems to be solved.

I need up-to-date examples that engage students.

I want to help students see how they can be useful to society.

I want to teach my discipline as community-defined and expressed, not as self-expression.

I want to push our systems to better serve our students.

I want to help students develop prudence, which is knowledge you can only gain by doing.

I want to update my program's curriculum so that it's more relevant and useful.

I want to grow my program so that it serves the whole campus.

I want to help us break outside of our organizational silos.

I want to publish a paper comparing civic education in two different countries, and then use it in my teaching.

I want to keep myself from becoming complacent.

I want to help my students relate with their clients as whole people, not just problems to be solved.

I'm here to learn what community is, learn from others, and learn about the real world.

I'm hoping to develop a program that helps students from other regions feel comfortable and engaged here.

I want to become more confident in working with community partners—to get beyond miscommunication and assumptions.

I want to empower students no matter where they are coming from.

I want to help new students thrive and stay in school.

I want to help students see how they can practice what they learned during their life long after college.

I want to plan out my service-learning projects ahead of time, so that they are not so challenging to manage.

I'm looking for collaborations with other colleges.

I want to create "in the wild" experiences for my students, not controlled experiments.

I want to help community partners explore new strategies, not just seek help in tactics.

I want to develop community engagement models that are scalable, and not just the private knowledge of individuals.

I want to help the non-profit I work with engage more effectively with higher education institutions.

I want to replicate and build on existing successful models.

I want to build a sustainable system that will still be around when I'm gone.

Finally we discussed which principles would be wise to follow in order to achieve our goals during the program.

Here is a master list of the principles that were offered:

Assume the best intentions

Be open to disagreement and challenge

Share the air

Use concrete examples from our work and life

Represent your discipline—think about what you have to teach

Look for collaborative opportunities

Share your passions

Be present

Listen actively and compassionately

Avoid interrupting

Silence is OK

Feel free to move around

Find ways to socialize and connect outside of meetings

Be respectful of privacy

No insults, put-downs, or sarcasm

Avoid defensiveness—our goal is to grow and learn

Leave space and flexibility in meeting structure

Respect and embody diversity

Be mindful of the community—how do they perceive us and want to work with us?

Lean into discomfort

Humor is essential

Be honest

Show gratitude

Have clear deadlines and meet them

Encourage all questions

Avoid jargon and acronyms—be open to explain as needed

Avoid the “cult of the expert”

Start and end on time

Food is good, and coffee is best ☺