

Chairs Update November 2017

Message from Chair Fellow

“You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it.”

To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee

Harper Lee’s oft quoted piece of wisdom speaks to me regularly – most powerfully when I assume the role of teacher or dialogue with classroom instructors. My students – our students – are attending college during an era I could not have imagined when I sat in my own undergraduate courses; economic crises, social media development (and hacks), transient lives and the rising cost of their educational journeys are just a few of the characteristics that separate my student experience and their daily lives.

Additionally, research on undergraduate students suggest this generation of college students – those men and women sitting in our classrooms right now – are some of the most stressed out people on our planet. One in three undergraduate students experience mental health issues and/or high levels of psychological distress (Bruffaerts et al, 2018), a noticeably greater proportion than their peers who do not attend university (Hussain, et al., 2013). And while some students enter the university balancing previous mental or physical health concerns, stressors associates with the college experience itself can lead to manifestations of symptoms (Cook, 2007; Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010). Furthermore, a great number of these student do not seek help or support services (Laidlaw, McLellan & Ozakinci, 2016).

This information suggests that our role as faculty members is more important than ever. Our regular classroom interactions provide opportunities to know and notice our students. Faculty (and Chairs) cannot nor should not replace the work done by trained mental health professionals for students’ needs. However, I do believe passionately that our awareness of our students’ lives and mindsets – including their stressors and challenges – is fundamental to our role as faculty and teachers. Are we, as Harper Lee challenges in her timeless story of misunderstanding and judgement, willing to walk around in their skin?

In October, we had the opportunity to learn more about our Oakland students’ experiences through the Chair Forum on student success. Rueben Ternes, Assistant Director of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA), shared data on the roadblocks (and potential stressors) to student success. Judy Ableser, Director of CETL, challenged us to think about our expectations of student workload. Both of these conversations lead us closer to understanding the daily lives of students in this millennia. November 20th marks the final Chair Forum of the fall semester. Expanding on our conversations from the August retreat, we will have Drs. Karen Markel and Jo Reger facilitate discussion on faculty success through mentoring and supportive practices. All are welcome to join us for this this event. Registration links are below.

Chair Events and Resources

1. **Chair Forums.** 12:00-1:30- Lunch included- Our final Chair Forum of the semester will focus on strategies for initiating strong faculty mentoring programs within departments. Drs. Jo Reger and Karin Markel will share their scholarship and lead our discussion on how Chairs can increase faculty success. Monday, Nov. 20th
[Click here to register.](#)
2. As **Chair Fellow**, I am always open and available to discuss, listen, and connect with department Chairs across the university. If you would like to schedule a moment to chat (or just say, "Hello"), I can be reached at heisler@oakland.edu.
3. **Resources.** Information, research, and support for departmental academic leaders.
 - **Chairs' Corner** (<http://wwwp.oakland.edu/cetl/chairs-corner/>) contains previous messages and lists of countless resources for a Chair's internal and external work for the university.
 - **Chairs' Resource Guide** (<http://wwwp.oakland.edu/Assets/Oakland/cetl/files-and-documents/Chairs/Chairs-Manual/Chairs-Resource-Guide-Aug2017.pdf>) Resources shared at the Chairs' Retreat are available as well as news and best practices from other universities on topics such as mentoring, retention, and hiring.

Faculty Events

1. **CETL website-** (<http://wwwp.oakland.edu/cetl/>)
2. **Faculty Handbook-** (<http://wwwp.oakland.edu/Assets/Oakland/cetl/files-and-documents/Handbooks/2017-18FacHandbookAug10.pdf>)
3. **Fall Schedule of Events and Programs-** (<https://www.oakland.edu/cetl/faculty-development/workshops/>)

Respectfully,

Jennifer Heisler Chair Fellow heisler@oakland.edu

Judy Abelser CETL Director ableser@oakland.edu