

An AAC&U Faculty Friday Webinar

May 15, 2020

The Association of American Colleges and Universities hosted a series of Friday Faculty Seminars in which national leaders discussed how the ongoing pandemic disruption of higher education presents new challenges and opportunities.

In a webinar setting, the May 2020 Friday Faculty Seminar *Let's Start with "How Are You Doing?": How Resilience and Hope Can Shape a New Normal for Learning and Teaching* explored the implications relating to the "new normal," ways that campuses can support students and faculty not merely to survive in these challenging times, but to thrive.

The question addressed at the beginning of this May AAC&U Faculty Webinar is similar the question asked by academics and architects at the beginning of giving attention to *where* learning will happen:

What do we want our students to be able to do—over the short, medium, and long-term?

NOTES FROM THE WEBINAR TRANSCRIPTION

What do we want our students to be able to do—over the short, medium and long term? Does it matter? To whom? What are the resources within and beyond our community that enable that becoming?

What can we do to reduce their loneliness? What can we do to enhance student well-being? What are students fearful of? What pains them? What causes them anxiety? How do we transform education—the way we facilitate the learning of our students.

How can we focus on hope, hope is the ability to envision a future in which a student wishes to participate? Hope is opening the window and letting the fresh air in. Hope can be proximate, global, desired, uncertain. Hope is envisioning a future that a student could grow into. It is about relationships. Hope is when a student asks his or herself "am I being, becoming the person I hope to be?" Hope thrives on images and metaphors.

Hope relates to resilience, to becoming resilient. In this time of crisis, we have the opportunity and responsibility to prepare new generations of leaders. For minority-identifying students, hope is interrelated and interconnected at the institutional and social level.

What we are about in this time is preparing a new generation of leaders, is facilitating the identity and intercultural development of students. Our students do not come from the same place—a challenge when we are thinking about identity, intercultural development, about the values of diversity and inclusion, about human dignity.

We are in a time in which we are redesigning for systemic change and we are needing to do this in a matter of weeks. We will come out at the other end with kinds of learning environments; it is our responsibility to make them inclusive, equitable. We have to remember that experiences are to be interconnected and integrated as we are addressing the challenges of inclusivity and equity.

If we take resilient as what we want our students to become, how do we describe what that means: persistence, grit, flexibility, stick-to-it-ness, tenacity, adaptability, buoyancy, flourishing, thriving, with agency.

How are we fostering resiliency? How are we getting in the way? What do we do with the scarce resources that we have? What strategic investments can we make around hope and civility?

Response: capitalize on our biggest resources—our students. One of the good things about Zoom conferences is that we are all the same size. What should we do?

We now have the opportunity to redesign ourselves as institutions and as individuals. To make this happen, we need more diversity, more perspectives at the table. Diversity in discussions make us better. Disruptive is good; that is how partnerships work in the world beyond the campus.

What we are needing to do now needs to be done as a community. Hope relates to engagement. We must remember that resources are more than funds. We need to ask: what are assets?

We need to be thinking about the relationships within our community. We need to be thinking about how people have a sense of belonging in a virtual world; we need to determine how AAC&U’s High Impact Practices can be “practiced” in a virtual world. How can virtual environment be spontaneous?

What do people need? Is there some way the shared experiences that are quirky be woven into the new environments we are imagining? We often see others as less complex than we are personally. Can we begin to see others as complex as we are? We should ask the students *what does the community mean to them*.

Final question: How to invite colleagues beyond the small group on a campus dealing with inclusivity and equity? Know the research: heterogeneous teams perform at a higher level than do homogeneous teams. Start the conversations with sharing personal stories, what matters to each person personally.

This is a time for institutions to think about building capacity.

Link to webinar website and recording:

- [AAC&U Webinar page and recording](#)
- [AAC&U is an LSC Collaborating Partner](#)