A few thoughts regarding our College of Education Conceptual Framework

Do those served grow as persons?

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Being relatively new to Heritage University and having the opportunity to revise or develop syllabi for the Online Culturally Relevant Graduate Program has placed me in a position of needing to very seriously examine the College of Education’s Conceptual Framework. As I have examined it, I am impressed with how thoughtfully and carefully the components must have been considered. With each new look I become more amazed. In quite a simple but very deliberate design, I conclude that it includes not only direction for effective teaching and learning but also for leading and living life in general.

I am drawn to consider how closely the Conceptual Framework aligns with so many other recipes or prescriptions for teaching, learning, leading and living which I have enjoyed. In an article entitled “Serve, teach, and lead: it’s all about relationships,” Carolyn Crippen affirms the reality that once a person assumes the mantle of teacher, one becomes a leader, first, in the classroom and then in the school. She emphasizes the need for making connections with people, investing in others and their future. This is much the same as the Conceptual Framework identifies as “building a community of learners.

In a couple of other articles of research on learning I discovered that after a great deal of deliberation, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) agreed upon four essential pillars of learning. They are: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be. More simply, but for me, almost more meaningful are four pillars of learning discussed by
James Zull. For learning to occur, Zull contends there must be the gathering of knowledge, reflection upon this knowledge, creating and associating meaning from prior knowledge, and finally testing by some action such as writing down the results of the learning so it is analyzed and synthesized and not merely left as the individual facts that were gathered.

Each of these recipes also provides a pathway to relationships that build a community of diverse learners by reflecting critically, and facilitating a constructivist view of teaching, learning, and leading.

I also agree with the premise that fruitful relationships are unable to blossom without attention to the basic needs of affirmation, belonging, and competency. A fellow colleague recently shared these ABC’s with his class but pointed out an additional component that is necessary to get to A and an additional benefit of getting to C. In order to provide affirmation, it is critical that one invests time and attention to learning about another’s history. Then affirmation, belonging, and competency can be realized which provide the trust or covenant to move on to the next component which is the creating of individual or mutual dreams.

By reaching out to others in this way as I have witnessed so many staff and faculty practice is what Robert Spitzer claims will bring about true happiness. It is not about the acquisition of fame and fortune rather it is about contributing not comparing, looking for the positive in others, considering the person not the what, and committing to the common good rather than individual ego. Through this kind of behavior come empowerment, positive collaboration, and action which are manifested by achieving social justice and quality service.

It is also obvious to me that Sloan’s Pillars
of access, student and faculty satisfaction, and cost and learning effectiveness are also enhanced by holding fast to the practices suggested by Crippen, UNESCO, Zull, and Spitzer.

I believe all of this has been comprehensively packaged in the practice of qualities Robert Greenleaf professed in his advocacy for Servant Leadership. Each of the interlocking concentric circles in the Conceptual Framework which contain the foundational principles of the College of Education is fueled by the practice of the following Servant Leadership qualities: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, conceptualization, persuasion, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, and building community. Each of these qualities, either alone or in concert with others provides the ability to build community while constructing knowledge to serve a pluralistic society.

So, do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?" If we follow the design of the Conceptual Framework, I submit that they do.