**Interdisciplinary Research Forum**

*By Dr. Barbara Roberts*

The WorkLife Office addresses the workplace from many perspectives and kinds of experiences. While the overall focus this year is on workplace flexibility for staff and faculty, demonstrated in our October conference and upcoming workshops on the topic, this month we are excited to build our research area by co-hosting an Interdisciplinary Research Forum with the Office of the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies (OVPRGS). Work life is an area that is approached from many different academic disciplines - family studies, of course, but also economics, when we look at the impact on productivity and costs of faculty and staff turnover; political science when we look at the changing political climate and the impact of various policy initiatives such as healthcare and overtime; sociology and social work when we study the effects of employees in the workforce with child/eldercare needs and the culture within workplaces; and even fields like urban planning that look at transportation and commuting to/from work - all of these and more contribute to our understanding of what makes people more productive and satisfied both at work and at home.

At the Interdisciplinary Research Forum on February 24, research faculty will be invited to bring their creativity and curiosity to explore potential partnerships and projects together that might generate a proposal, collaboration, or simply raise interest and awareness for future possibilities. The goal is to connect researchers across disciplines and simultaneously connect those researchers to the mission of the WorkLife Office. Discussion at the Forum will assist us in exploring interdisciplinary work life issues that can help inform the engagement and education projects of the WorkLife Office.

Participants of the Forum will hear from five MSU researchers in various disciplines, including: Dr. Kami Silk, Professor in Communication Arts and Sciences who will talk about her work in health and well-being communications, and how communication affects organizations’ impacts on work life; Dr. Clare Luz, Assistant Professor in Family Medicine who will focus her comments on gerontology, functional health and optimal aging; Dr. Roger Baldwin, Erickson Distinguished Chair in Education, who will speak...
about academic career life, particularly in its later stages; Dr. Leslie Gonzales, Assistant Professor in Education who will discuss agency among academics to negotiate marginalizing structural and cultural features of academia and the connection to work life; Dr. José Rubén Parra-Cardona, Associate Professor in Human Development and Family Studies, who will comment on the cultural adaptation of evidence-based parenting interventions for Latino/a populations and related work life issues for Latino/a employees.

Approaching work life from many different perspectives gives us a wide window into areas ripe for collaboration and connection. While the event is limited to people with research interests within the scope of work life issues, we hope to share with the whole community the exciting projects and ideas that emerge from this opportunity to connect researchers with one another. Stay tuned to the Research page on our website for more about the results of this Interdisciplinary Research Forum on Work Life!

Interdisciplinary Research Forum on WORK LIFE
Friday, February 24, 2017
3:00pm-5:00pm
Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center, Room 105AB

Presenters:

Questions? Contact the WorkLife Office at (517) 353-1635 or worklife@msu.edu.
Register online at: http://vprgs.msu.edu/form/interdisciplinary-forum-work-life

Flexibility Workshops

Flex for U: Tools to Implement Flex for Support Staff
Thursday, February 16, 2017
3:00PM—5:00PM
Linton Hall, Room 113

It is now more challenging than ever to manage our responsibilities and feel satisfied in both our work and home lives. Have you considered a flexible work schedule, but are not sure how to approach your supervisor? In this interactive session, tips will be shared about implementing a flexible schedule with guidance on how to talk to your supervisor, how to meet your supervisor’s business needs and your co-workers’ needs, and create a successful win-win arrangement in the unit.

Presenters: Lori Strom, MSU WorkLife Office, Lifespan and Family Services Coordinator & Greg Harris, Employee Relations Professional, Human Resources Analyst

Flex for U: Tools to Implement Flex for Supervisors
Thursday, March 16, 2017
3:00PM—5:00PM
Linton Hall, Room 113

In this interactive session, participants will discuss and learn more about issues related to workplace flexibility, with tips to implement flexible work arrangements in your unit from a supervisor’s perspective. Positive leadership ideas will be shared to help create and support a culture of flexibility to enhance productivity and positive morale in the workplace.

Presenter: Lori Strom, MSU WorkLife Office, Lifespan and Family Services Coordinator

For both sessions, RSVP by email to worklife@msu.edu (subject line: Flex for U) or by phone (517) 353-1635.

Stay Connected!

WorkLife Office Social Media & Events Calendar

You can stay up to date on all of the WorkLife Office Initiatives on our website and social media accounts. For a complete listing of upcoming WorkLife events, visit our website: https://worklife.msu.edu. Interested in receiving weekly e-mails about upcoming programs and events? Join the WorkLife Listserv, by sending an e-mail with the subject line “WorkLife Listserv” to: worklife@msu.edu. Be sure to indicate your name and e-mail address. While you’re at it, be sure to follow us on social media!

Join us on Facebook:
Search: MSU WorkLife Office

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Having Difficult Dialogues

By Lydia Weiss

Lately, there has been a great deal of focus on concerns about how to engage students in the classroom in a political and social atmosphere that can, at times, feel very divisive. Faculty, staff, and students alike have raised questions about the sometimes blurry line between freedom of speech and respectful dialogue.

The MSU Academic Advancement Network (AAN) has compiled a list of resources and reading materials about difficult dialogues in the classroom. These resources are sure to be helpful for faculty, instructors, and all who are invested in creating a climate that is welcoming and respectful for everyone at Michigan State University – whether in a classroom, or any other work environment on campus.

The AAN resources cover a wide range of topics including: creating and implementing multicultural and inclusive learning environments; policies that govern behavior for all MSU-affiliated persons; trainings and workshops regarding cultural competence; action steps for reducing racism and other forms of bias in the classroom or work environment; among others.

After a quick review of the materials, here are a few tips found in the document, “Theory Into Practice Strategies: Inclusive Practices for Managing Controversial Issues” published by Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia:

1. **Controversy is everywhere.** For example, even if a professor believes their course topic is free from controversy, approaching every topic as controversial may enhance learning. “Given the provisional nature of knowledge” it can be helpful to recognize the diversity of the student body and the alternative viewpoints possible on every subject.

2. **“Plan for Inclusive Teaching.”** Anticipate what topics might be controversial and plan accordingly. Make clear, in the syllabus or before a dialogue has begun, the expectations for behavior and language used when talking about controversial topics.

3. **“Build trust and create a positive classroom climate.”** Whether in a classroom, or other work setting, building an environment where people feel like they can talk openly and respectfully with one another can be critical for handling controversial dialogues. If you are a supervisor or professor, modeling respectful behavior can be the first step towards creating a positive climate.


Several other resources can be found on the Academic Advancement Network website at [http://aan.msu.edu/opportunities/resources-difficult-dialogues](http://aan.msu.edu/opportunities/resources-difficult-dialogues).
Calendar of Events @ a Glance

For a full listing of events with details and RSVP information, visit https://worklife.msu.edu.

February 7
6:00PM—7:00PM: Income Tax Prep. MSU Federal Credit Union-Farm Lane Branch Community Room (4825 E. Mt. Hope Road, East Lansing). Co-sponsored with the MSU Federal Credit Union.

February 8
12:00PM—1:00PM: Income Tax Prep. MSU Federal Credit Union-Farm Lane Branch Community Room (4825 E. Mt. Hope Road, East Lansing). Co-sponsored with the MSU Federal Credit Union.

12:00PM—1:00PM: Perspectives on Aging Series: Planning for Long Term Care/Understanding Medicare and Medicaid. Linton Hall, Room 113 (479 West Circle Drive).

February 16
3:00PM—5:00PM: Flex for U: Tools to Implement Flex for Support Staff. Linton Hall, Room 113 (479 West Circle Drive).

February 28
6:00PM—7:00PM: Special Needs Planning. MSU Federal Credit Union-Farm Lane Branch Community Room (4825 E. Mt. Hope Road, East Lansing). Co-sponsored with the MSU Federal Credit Union.

Women’s Networking Association

The mission of the Women’s Networking Association is to connect professional women across campus through meaningful and empowering relationships. Events are free and open to all.

Wednesday, February 22, 2017
Panel & Evening of Networking
RSVP by February 17 via email worklife@msu.edu or phone (517) 353-1635.

Academic Women’s Forum Presents...

Intercultural Dialogue:
Strategies and Techniques for Incorporating Dialogic Pedagogy in the Classroom and Beyond

February 14, 2017
3:30PM-5:00PM
MSU Main Library, Green Room-W444

Presented by: Dr. Donna Rich Kaplowitz

If the 2016 election taught us anything, it is that we don’t know how to listen to one another when we come from different ideological, racial, gender, sexual orientation, social class or other identity groups that have history of conflict. In this session, we will explore what Intercultural Dialogue is from a theoretical and practical perspective. Participants will learn basic strategies for setting up a dialogic format in classrooms, as well as methods for using dialogue techniques beyond the classroom setting.

RSVP at: http://health4u.msu.edu/courses/academic-womens-forum#course-sessions

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The Reflect & Connect series provides an opportunity for MSU faculty and staff to come together to examine the personal and professional impacts of contemporary national and global events/tragedies and provides a space to explore best self-care/work-effectiveness strategies.

**Resilience in Times of Chaos and Uncertainty**

**Monday, February 13, 2017**

11:30AM-1:00PM, Chittenden Hall, Room 110

During times of uncertainty, such as those caused by new policies that impact our students, colleagues and family/friends, we can quickly feel unbalanced. Sometimes uncertainty can make our lives feel chaotic and exhausting. Many of us have multiple roles that require us to be in service to other people. This is an opportunity to gain intentional practices to help ground ourselves in order to serve others in our roles as employees, coworkers, parents, partners, and community members. Guest speakers: Amber Cordell, Office for International Students and Scholars and Lisa Laughman, Employee Assistance Program/Health4U.

RSVP requested (but not required) to the MSU WorkLife Office at worklife@msu.edu or (517) 353-1635.

Co-sponsored by MSU Office of the University Physician-Employee Assistance Program, Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives, and WorkLife Office.