FOSTERING CURIOSITY & CREATIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
An Essential Agenda for Student Success

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Informal Audience Poll

◦ How many of you would describe yourself as:

• Not very creative
• Somewhat creative
• Very creative
Informal Audience Poll

How many of you believe that the type of learning you experienced in college most often:

- Prompted growth in your creativity
- Didn’t impact your creativity one way or another
- Stifled your creativity
Informal Audience Poll

How many of you believe you would be more successful in your work if you were able to be more creative?
'I expect you all to be independent, innovative, critical thinkers who will do exactly as I say.'
GOALS

Given that contemporary problems aren’t getting easier and thus creativity is in high demand, this presentation will focus on:

◦ Findings from research that help us understand students’ definitions of creativity and their creative identities

◦ The complex relationship between curiosity, creativity, learning and development

◦ How educators can develop students’ creativity
Inquiry design:

- Interpretive, constructivist, inductive/emergent, qualitative, narrative

- Data sources—free-write exercise, “alternative representation,” interviews

- Participant selection
  - 19 students (3 majors/each division of institution, 1 undecided)
  - Diverse first & second-year students
  - Self-identified range on creativity continuum (1 = not creative to 10 = very creative)
FINDINGS (Welkener, 2000)

- Students struggled with defining such an abstract concept.

- Their definitions suggested that creativity involves cognitive aspects (doing something in a new way, imagination, knowledge communication) as well as affect (self-expression, risk-taking).

- Late in high school/early in college—creativity is set aside for “professional,” “intellectual” (with the exception of those in arts-related fields).
FINDINGS, cont. (Welkener, 2000)

- Students whose creative efforts were validated by others continue to take risks.
- Students not receiving positive results when taking creative risks often sacrifice creativity for pleasing the teacher/“getting the grade.”
- Students’ definitions of creativity and creative identity are mediated by their overall development.
COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP

- Curiosity can set the stage for creativity
- Creativity is linked to one’s understanding of self, nature and limits of knowledge, and role of relationships with others (holistic development)
- Curiosity, creativity, and development can create conditions for optimal, “deep learning” (Tagg, 2003)
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide “ill-structured problems” (King & Kitchener, 1994) like defining creativity (promote developing one’s own point-of-view).

- Offer more opportunities for creative risk-taking and model it. Help students adjust to these new expectations by starting with low-risk challenges (Welkener, 2011).

- Promote self-exploration (Baxter Magolda, 2001).
REFERENCES


