

## Editor's Notes and Interviews

### Norman Dolch University of North Texas

An author e-mailed me recently inquiring about her manuscript and expressing some concern because of rumors she had heard about the *Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership* (JNEL). I reassured her, and want to reassure all of you as well, that although some changes have occurred, JNEL is fine, continues to thrive, and has a very bright future.

After careful consideration, the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance decided this fall to discontinue their sponsorship of the journal. On behalf of all those involved, including our authors and subscribers, I would like to thank the Alliance for the leadership and financial support provided during their involvement with this project's partnership.

I am very pleased to announce that on December 13, 2013 the WKU Research Foundation and Sagamore Publishing, L.L.C. entered into a long-term partnership to publish the *Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership*. This exciting collaboration (more details later) positions the journal for on-going growth and success. <http://www.sagamorepub.com/>.

JNEL has accepted and scheduled a number of articles for future editions, and several themed issues are under development, including three on nonprofit education in various regions of the globe and an issue on the recent nonprofit education conference sponsored by the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council in Chicago this past July. Our subscription base is increasing, and your enduring support through individual and institutional subscriptions will help ensure the success of JNEL.

Our mission continues unaffected by the management changes. JNEL strives to improve nonprofit education and leadership through the publication and dissemination of peer-reviewed manuscripts centered on professional practice, research, and theoretical discussions. We deeply appreciate the efforts of the editorial board and the reviewers of JNEL, who make this blind, peer-reviewed journal possible. This issue has three insightful and intellectually challenging articles.

The article by Stuart Mendel examines partnerships among public, private, and nonprofit organizations providing insight beyond simply contracting for service. Mendel examines the enhanced benefits of partnerships to the organizations' operations. This examination leads to interesting leadership implications to share with people in classrooms, workshops, or coaching relationships.

Theresa Ricke-Kiely and Diana C. J. Matthias have written an article on teaching leadership using museum visits. They ground their presentation in a considerable literature

review and offer a number of examples sharing this ingenious approach for others to use. Anyone engaged in teaching leadership should find it a thought-provoking pedagogical piece, one readily transferable.

The final article is on youth worker efficacy by Shannon Meissner, Christopher L. Kowalski, and Julianne Gassman. Their evidence and conclusion that attendance at educational training sessions in the youth development field and type of youth organization impact on youth efficacy should be of interest to all preparing students. How nice it is to validate that education makes an impact on the performance of nonprofit sector professionals. It reinforces our efforts and commitment as nonprofit educators.

The JNEL fall issue is published about the time we start thinking about our classes for the Spring Semester, so I interviewed a few faculty on their thoughts about teaching at the beginning of the semester. Those interviewed were Jennifer Rinella from Rockhurst University in Kansas City, Missouri; Stephanie Krick from University of Central Florida in Orlando, Florida, and Pier Rogers of North Park University in Chicago, Illinois. Here are their thoughts.

***What are two or three key ideas that you try to keep in mind when starting classes at the beginning of the semester?***

#### Jennifer Rinella

Jennifer tries to envision each student in the class as an individual graced with unique gifts and talents, bringing diverse background and experiences to the group. In addition, Jennifer keeps in mind that the classroom is a community, and she sets up the tone for that community early on. Creating a safe place for students to discuss values, ethical dilemmas, and differing opinions in a respectful manner is critical. So is having fun, with each member of the classroom community contributing and interacting.

Jennifer believes that student-learning outcomes need to drive the course. Thinking about what she wants students to be able to do at the end of the course helps her determine the paths to take to get there. The semester schedule is a roadmap, but she says that she has to remind herself at the outset that detours may deflect the journey and that flexibility will be required.

#### Pier Rogers

Pier teaches one class each semester so, in her own words, the experience resembles that of an adjunct professor. She has to switch from an administrative to a teaching mind set. She likes to start by looking at a list of those enrolled in the course and then thinks about online and face-to-face instructional differences. Pier asks herself how can she make it an enjoyable experience for the students and establish a flow of activities and learning.

#### Stephanie Krick

Stephanie tries to consider past student experiences in the course in planning for the following semester. What worked and what did not? Were there any trends in this regard? Can we apply any quality management principles here? She is definitely concerned with being current in terms of topics and content. Additionally, she indicates that matching activities with course objectives is important. Finally, she tries to present the material in an interesting manner. Stephanie makes a real effort to base activities on the course objectives, relating them to the literature, and tying them to service learning activities.

***What do you consider the single most important aspect to student success in courses and how do you convey that to students?***

### Jennifer Rinella

“I think the most important aspect to student success in a course is student learning. My goal is to help students learn – about nonprofit management and leadership and about themselves as leaders – so that they can contribute to finding solutions to challenges in their communities and become thoughtful members of society.” Jennifer wants her students to learn all they can to inform their decisions as leaders regardless of whether they are staff members, volunteers, donors, board members, or clients.

When introducing the course to students, Jennifer shares this goal with her students and explains the construction of assignments for the semester, many of which have a personal reflection component (e.g., comparing and contrasting an organization’s mission and values with your own personal mission and values). The assignments are to help the students think critically about issues and discern how they will lead. Jennifer strives to have the learning of students personally meaningful to them and to have them be responsible for their own learning.

### Pier Rogers

For Pier, many challenges emerge. Keeping up with expectations, asking questions about material, and using other students as a resource for help and assistance are all-important. Pier wants to help students understand the application of the material studied. Here, she notes a distinction between face-to-face classes and online classes. In online classes, Pier perceives the single most important aspect for student success to be keeping up with the work and not falling behind. In face-to-face classes, the most important aspect of student success is participation. Some students tend to be quiet, but she has found that those who participate are most successful.

### Stephanie Krick

Stephanie’s immediate thought was communication with the professor and other students. By asking questions, students clarify thoughts and realize relationships or concepts. It is especially important according to Stephanie that students read their syllabus and ask questions. Stephanie never wants students to be afraid to ask their questions. She wants students to be successful and is happy to answer questions to help clarify assignments.

She also makes a distinction between face-to-face classes and online classes for student success. In a face-to-face class, students can come to the office and ask questions. In online classes, they send messages, and Stephanie tries to respond quickly, but that is not quite the same. So, she likes to provide an area where students can communicate to one another, an area referred to as a “discussion area.” Stephanie emphasizes the importance of communication: Students should never be afraid to ask their professors questions.

### ***What are your greatest personal challenges at the beginning of a semester?***

### Jennifer Rinella

One of Jennifer’s challenges is setting attainable goals and keeping the workload manageable. Before the semester begins, when the creative juices are flowing, it may seem like a great idea to include field trips, guest speaker panels, new texts and assignments, a research project *and* a service learning component ... but a month or two into the semester, the work can become overwhelming for everyone, especially considering the demands of scholarship and service upon faculty. “Balancing an enthusiastic desire to test new teaching and learning opportunities with careful attention to the primary learning outcomes is a challenge for me because there’s so much to learn and it’s all so important.” Guidance and resources from mentors on campus and through the NLA and NACC networks help Jennifer prioritize strategically and intentionally.

### Pier Rogers

The mindset of transferring from being a program administrator to a teacher is the biggest challenge for Pier. Changing mindsets is certainly an issue for all professors with mixed responsibilities.

### Stephanie Krick

Time! Since just a few weeks (2 or 3) separate one semester from the other, most of the preparation has to go into this short window. Stephanie creates course schedules with time built-in between larger assignments to allow grading time for meaningful student feedback. Also, she is constantly trying to make sure the texts are timely and cover relevant material for the students.

### *Does experience make the start of a new semester easier?*

### Jennifer Rinella

Yes, with regard to teaching. Jennifer looks forward to the start of a new semester, with a sense of hope, “offering a quick prayer of thanksgiving and blessing for my students in the car on the way to work each morning.” However, because many other demands are made, the start of a new semester is always hectic with student retreats, faculty workshops, committee work, research and writing, etc., and faculty may feel pulled in a million different directions. Jennifer says, “I don’t know if this part will ever get easier. For this reason, I also enjoy the end of each semester and have come to appreciate the cycles of the academic year – when things are stressful, the academic calendar reminds us that this too shall pass and a fresh start is around the corner.”

### Pier Rogers

Pier says that teaching makes you realize that it entails more than just expertise and knowledge. Experience is helpful. However, experience teaching face-to-face or online is no guarantee of success. Experience helps one know what worked in the past and what did not work.

### Stephanie Krick

Experience, according to Stephanie, helps one to know what to do in a course, and sometimes what not to do. It certainly helps in setting a course schedule, especially if you have a 20-page individual assignment for a class of 60 students. It also helps one realize that grading rubrics are important for the teacher and student. Another realization from experience according to Stephanie is that it is important to remind students of important dates, not only in the course but also at the university, dates for dropping and withdrawing from courses, for example. Experience is important but not a guarantee of success.

## **Interview conclusions**

For those of us who have taught, these comments may simply reinforce our own thoughts. I salute these colleagues for sharing their thoughts and suggest that the conclusions are best reached by simply reviewing the comments of each. They have imparted good thoughts for all to consider as they begin preparations for a new semester. Moreover, I want to suggest that dialogue about issues and tasks is important for those of us who teach, whether it is a face-to-face class, online class, workshop, or individual mentoring of a nonprofit professional. We need more of it, and I would welcome thoughtful essays and research pieces for JNEL.