Featured Sessions

General Interest Sessions:

Communities of Care: Creating Belonging Through a Care and Wellbeing Initiative (Dorian McCoy & Miranda Rutan, University of Tennessee, Knoxville)
At the beginning of the 2023-2024 academic year, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences, Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion piloted its Communities of Care initiative. Communities of Care (The Care Collective, 2020) are groups or networks of individuals with shared personal interests and lived experiences who connect to support the whole person, including enhancing emotion. Involvement in Communities of Care is voluntary. Join us to learn how Communities of Care center and advance care and well-being to create community for historically underrepresented and marginalized faculty, staff, and administrators.

Disability/Ableism/Higher Education (Dr. Arpita Sarker ,University of Iowa)
Jay Dolmage, in his book Academic Ableism (2017), recognizes how disability is composed in and by higher education and rewrites and defines the spaces, times, and economies of disability from every perspective. Dolmage argues that for a long time, disability has been seen as an antithesis of higher education, often identifying disability as a distraction and a deficit problem to be solved. The narrative in higher education to specialize and valorize perfection either in performance or in idea stigmatizes students with disabilities and anything that hints at intellectual, mental, or physical weakness. Such ableism exists even when we continue doing the diversity and inclusion work within the colleges. The racialized perception of ability further impacts the participation and experiences of disability in higher education. Hence, a more intersectional approach to disability in higher education can offer us a better idea of how disability is perceived in higher education. In this paper, I intend to discuss how ableism is prevalent in higher education and how it affects how we create, structure, and practice our curriculum, instruction, teaching, and learning experiences in colleges. I further intend to address how race and gender/sexuality affect the way students with disabilities are perceived and discriminated against in classrooms and the academy.

"In loco Parentis" and the Difficult Love of Serving in Place of the Parent (Dr. Blue Brazelton & Jodi Stooksberry, Northern Arizona University)
In loco parentis may be a classical concept, but as institutions continue to evolve their student service model in response to court cases and stakeholder expectations, echos of serving "in place of the parent" grow louder. Stories of professionals burning out due to the expectation of trying to meet every need of every student illustrate that the work carries a heavy emotional burden of such service. Our presentation will engage this topic and discuss ways in which professionals and institutions have managed such an expectation while striving to understand the burden placed on all professionals providing support to students.

Neurodiversity in Higher Education: A Comprehensive Approach to Inclusion, Support, and Community Building (Ashley Murray, Cambridge College)
This presentation explores the multifaceted concept of neurodiversity in higher education, aiming to equip educators, support staff and administrators with actionable insights for fostering inclusivity. It delves into the foundational understanding of neurodiversity, dispels common myths, and discusses effective teaching strategies. The presentation also highlights the importance of specialized academic advising, peer mentorship, and faculty training as support systems for neurodiverse students. Additionally, it examines the intersectionality of neurodiversity with other social identities and looks at the role of student organizations in building inclusive communities.

Safe Enough For Whom?: Envisioning Institutional Response Models to Anti-LGBTQIA+ Campus Hate Speech Incidents Grounded in an Ethic of Care (Sam Lim, Penn Cary Law)
First Amendment protections have posed historical challenges for colleges and universities in addressing campus hate speech, especially public institutions. When responding to such concerns, administrators often cite and offer education on the First Amendment. Such responses frequently fall short of supporting queer and trans* students. Engaging with case studies and reflection on my own experiences leading LGBTQIA+ programs at a New England regional university during the COVID-19 Pandemic, I seek to contextualize the impact of hate speech and traditional institutional responses on queer and trans* students, while highlighting alternative practices that center an ethic of care for LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Selfcare is NOT Selfish! Cultivating the Relationship with Yourself from Surviving to Thriving in Uncertain Times (Fabiola Riobé, Kansas City Kansas Community College)
The presentation, "Selfcare is NOT Selfish!" explores the profound importance of nurturing one's relationship with oneself during uncertain times. In an era of relentless change and uncertainty, the session sheds light on how self-care goes far beyond personal indulgence—it's a vital component of resilience. Attendees will uncover practical strategies for moving from merely surviving to truly thriving. Through real-life examples and evidence-based insights, this presentation empowers individuals to prioritize self-care, fostering mental, emotional, and physical well-being. The key message is clear: investing in oneself is an act of strength and self-compassion, contributing to a healthier, more balanced, and thriving life.

Serving Students In the In-Between (Dr. Jarrett Lujan & Dr. Sarah Schiffecker, Texas Tech University)
This session introduces ways for higher education institutions to empower and better serve students navigating the "in-between" spaces of intersecting identities. The speakers will share strategies to support marginalized student populations, including Hispanic, first-generation, undocumented, and international students, based on their research and professional expertise and experience. Concept like servingness, mattering, and identity borderlands will be introduced and practically applied to show how higher education can and needs to play a central role in navigating chaos while embracing hope.

Using Pedagogy of Care to Foster Belonging and Resilience in Personal and Professional Development Courses (Dr. Amy Collins-Warfield & Dr. Jennifer Wacek, University of Minnesota Rochester)
Research indicates that since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, college students feel more overwhelmed and exhibit less optimism. As educators who guide students to plan an individualized capstone program for their final semesters based on their career objectives, we have seen this anxiety firsthand. We intentionally chose to enact a pedagogy of care in our classroom. We will share how we supported our students as they navigated planning for their futures and moving forward with this fundamental component of their undergraduate degree. We will explicitly highlight how to connect this topic to an array of personal or professional development classes.

Roundtable Sessions:

Autoethnography and the Role of Identity: Employing Experiential Learning for Leading Authentic Teacher Education (Dr. Christopher Dignam, Governors State University)
This roundtable discussion utilizes autoenthography for exploring the experiences of the presenter as a former teacher, principal, and superintendent and how those pivotal roles contributed to shaping the researcher's current identity as a teacher educator in higher education. In tandem, an interplay between the presenter's own educational experiences as a first-generation learner growing up in an immigrant household are explored to examine how they shaped practice and contributed towards pedagogical identity as a teacher educator. This exploration includes autoenthographic reflections and practical strategies for providing supports for PK12 and higher education learners in developing a sense of belonging and resilience.

The Benefit of Promoting Student Interactions Around Meaning, Value, and Purpose (Dr. Ryan Erck, Gardner-Webb University)
Who am I, and what is my purpose? What is my role in society? What is the meaning of life and how am I of value in that story? These are examples of "deeper life" interaction prompts. By examining deeper life interactions (around meaning, value, and purpose), this session will highlight a recent article that demonstrates the value of such interactions in predicting student success. Additional subanalyses will be reviewed that demonstrate how deeper life interactions specifically benefit Students of Color. Discussion will include how campus leaders can creatively find ways to weave deeper life interactions into existing programs.

Exploring the Future of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Higher Education (Dr. Vivienne Felix & Dr. Terry Shoemaker, Washington and Jefferson College)
The U.S. higher education system continues to struggle to support its diverse student populations. The mounting pressures of students needing deeper college readiness support alongside limitations imposed upon diversity training or using race as a factor for admissions and employment, can stifle the spirit of inclusion institutions desire. Thus, competing pressures and shifting priorities prompt the question, "during challenging times, how do we create a

learning environment that fosters belonging, identify, inclusion, diversity, and equity?" This roundtable discussion will be used to probe the multiple lenses of diversity, and will foster strategies leading to an inclusive higher education environment.

Invisible Belonging: How Adjunct Faculty Create Belonging in Online Classes (India Cooley, Adler University & Dr. Sarah Smitherman Pratt, Baylor University)
The expansion of online programs in higher education has the potential to reach multicultural students across the United States and beyond. As a result, it is important that adjunct faculty are equipped to cultivate their online learning environments to ensure they are creating a sense of belonging for all students. Using the Community of Inquiry framework, I will discuss my research, which highlights the importance of educating this segment of faculty on establishing online classrooms that are engaging for multicultural students. My current research examines how online adjunct faculty create a well-rounded educational experience for their learners.