

Presentation Script for

Human Elements in OER Work: Developing an Ethic of Hospitality and Care

Presented at VIVA's Open and Affordable Course Content Forum - October 13, 2023 Richmond, VA

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Slides, script, and survey instrument available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10919/116498>

SLIDE

I am Associate Professor and Assistant Director of Open Education and Scholarly Communication Librarian at the University Libraries at Virginia Tech.

This presentation reflects my personal perspective which is not necessarily the perspective of my employer, and it is somewhat personal. It's motivated by my Christian faith -- which calls me to love MY neighbor out of the love I have received from God. I won't be going in-depth on that in this presentation but if you'd like to talk later please reach out.

SLIDE

So, this is a presentation on hospitality and collaboration. I support faculty in the hard work of creating, adapting, adopting, and broadly sharing open educational resources. Open Educational Resources are freely available, openly-licensed learning resources in various formats -- some examples of our work are shown here. I direct a small team in which we meet with each of our collaborators every three weeks or so and work hard to create resources we can be proud of -- and which fit and are flexible enough for a wide range of students and student needs. WE BELIEVE THAT WHAT WE DO HAS REAL AND LASTING IMPACTS for students and for learning and WE BELIEVE THAT THIS IS WORK WORTH DOING.

SLIDE (hand raised)

HOW MANY OF YOU ARE WITH ME ON THIS -- because you are too a PROGRAM MANAGER, PROJECT MANAGER, AUTHOR, STUDENT or other person involved in these processes?

SLIDE (triangle)

As a project manager I understand the realities of the project management triangle . . .

- the quality of work is constrained by a project's **budget**, **deadlines**, and **scope**.
- And that that changes in one of these necessitate changes in one or more of the other constraints.

For example -- we can ADD to a project's scope, but only if we add more labor and time to the project. **Or**, we can finish more quickly, but if we don't reduce the scope or add more funding ... the quality will suffer.

[human factors]

And while I find this model of thinking very helpful --

SLIDE

it nearly completely excludes any messy human factors that affect project progress -- not to mention overlooking the intrinsic value of human relationships as important in and of themselves! Working with, learning from, and navigating relationships is one of the most important, rewarding -- and sometimes frustrating -- part of life and work. **If you are in education, you ALREADY KNOW what it is like to grow and be among growing HUMANS who have complex lives and face complex decisions. . .**

SLIDE (sheep)

The work of instilling new open educational practices is MESSY. It deals with HUMAN BEINGS who are moving in all different directions because they have different perspectives, life situations, limitations, incentives, and ideas about how to leverage their agency...

SLIDE (crumpled paper)

They do all sorts of unexpected things that were not part of the plan... but sometimes it's just life that interferes with getting things done.

SLIDE (baby)

Sometimes reasons for not getting things done are happy. New babies (our collaborators have had FOUR new babies in the last five years!), vacations, promotions, things that give new opportunities . . .

SLIDE (MRI)

Other times, they're personal or work things that at least temporarily threaten to deplete us. Illnesses - one's self or a loved one, additional work piled on without an increase in resources, or simply, burnout.

STORY: For example: a collaborator recently told us "I have a serious health issue. I don't know yet what the impacts will be but it will affect project timelines."

SLIDE (overwhelm)

STORY: Another collaborator was promoted to an administrative position and told me that the person hired to backfill their previous position had resigned -- so they would have overlapping responsibilities for at least 4-5 months. . . they were convinced that project timelines could remain as they were. (I had other ideas and we were able to come to a workable resolution.)

The tendency of many people is to always put work in first place and to feel badly about taking care of themselves. My colleague in reviewing this talk (thank you) said "why don't you say what you always say in consultations?": **"Please take care of yourself first. This project can wait."**

SLIDE (team)

So, while you think that **you're building a PROJECT -- you might be overlooking the fact that if you are collaborating *with people* -- YOU ARE ALSO BUILDING A TEAM of people.**

SLIDE (stages in team development)

And that not only LIFE happens . . . but it is NORMAL for conflict to occur at various stages in forming a team. (This is from Tuckman's Stages of Team Development) A team might begin by "politely tip toeing" around each other in the **Forming** stage ... but it is not surprising to encounter a clash of ideas and need to navigate differences in the **Storming** stage until there are some functional norms in the **Norming** stage and performance in the **Performing** stage... and the various field trips back to prior stages in the meantime.

SLIDE

So, in LIFE and in TEAMS there's a lot of space needed for an ethic of hospitality and care -- both for program or project leaders, and for collaborators. And, there are things we CAN do to:

[SLIDE: bulleted list of three]

- 1) Thrive in this work (even when it is challenging)
- 2) Set yourself (and others) up for success -- especially if you're leading a project
- 3) And to implement the things you learned in kindergarten that maybe are still hard to do as an adult

This is for others, but it is ALSO for ourselves. It contributes to HEALTHY practices that reduce the likelihood of burnout -- and it acknowledges our finitude and our search to find meaning in our lives.

And, maybe this is also a pep talk to myself -- and to others if you want to just listen in :)

[SLIDE: team hands]

As a program and project manager, I have a role and responsibility for people and projects.

[SLIDE: key]

I would like to invite you to think of the people you work with as a GUEST

Hospitality

- One we approach with respect and generosity
- One to who you provide the keys to:

[SLIDE: flowchart]

- how things work -- such as this OER process-creation flow chart which shows one way of sequencing planning, content development, feedback, and production during an OER-creation process. Explaining how things MIGHT work is helpful for people new to a process.

[SLIDE: services]

- We tell our guests what services are available to make projects easier and how to request them. Services like consultations, grants, collaborator-matching, production services...

[SLIDE: shopping]

- We'll tell them what we provide, and why they might have to find elsewhere -- not unlike directing a guest to the appropriate store when they need something you don't have.

[SLIDE: welcome mat]

Part of hospitality is also setting reasonable **expectations** of what we like -- and what we don't like. What our role is -- and what it isn't.

Our guests are expected to be

- i) responsible for their project
- ii) To plan and do the work

[SLIDE: talk with us/Communication]

They are also responsible to communicate with us

- iii) Let us know if something happens that affects their progress

- iv) We WANT our guests to tell us what they need and to have some degree of transparency regarding changes or unexpected things **AND WE WILL DO THE SAME when we have things come up.**

STORY I've had collaborators who've lost a project partner and struggled to find a replacement -- but have not informed me until months later. This experience is the primary reason I tell collaborators since to please keep the channels of communication open.

[SLIDE: Conversing on stairs]

We know that our guests have:

- Strong motivations for learning, social rewards, and creative expression
- They have private and public joys and
- Grievances and losses
 - b) We don't know what other people are going through -- and often times they won't tell us

[SLIDE]

And so, our response -- really the only thing that we can do -- is to ACT -- not just feel

[SLIDE]

- Be happy with those who are happy
- Express condolences and present with those who grieve - you'd love to fix it but cannot
- And in the meantime offer "sincere and specific thanks" and care with our words - especially when expressing differences

[SLIDE: Agreement]

A few things we've found helpful in initially setting up teams:

Agreement

We find that developing rapport and mutual agreement early in a project helps us tremendously. Building mutual understanding, mutual responsibility, clear roles & responsibilities, and a shared path forward greatly increase the potential that we can be successful and appreciative of each other -- whatever happens.

SLIDE:

Autonomy

We also find that respect for one another's autonomy is an important part of the culture we want to build. -- We aim to make it safe to disagree because it helps us understand and learn from each other. We respect each others' privacy, we are careful to observe professional boundaries, and we aim to make it safe to set limits and to say "no" -- sometimes it is awfully difficult to say "no" or to encounter a firm limit but being able to do so is a helpful reality check.

And, there is also a lot of joking, fun, and laughter within these constraints.

SLIDE [triangle]

So, I want to encourage you to consider human factors, and hospitality and care as important parts of whatever type of open education work you are involved in.

SLIDE [end]

Thank you for your time today.

I am available for any questions or comments.