CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING
&
ADVISING MINORITIZED STUDENTS

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2020 WNY ADVISING CONFERENCE

WHO AM I?

- **Kara Michelle Oliver (Soon to be Perez!)**
- **Niagara University Opportunity Program (NUOP/HEOP)**
  - **Assistant Director (Academic Advisor)**
  - **Been with the NUOP program since 2017**
  - **Case Load of Students**
    - **30-35 students**

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To gain a better understanding about Creative Problem Solving (CPS).

- To collaborate and share best practices about student-centered advisement.

- To share areas of growth and opportunity in the advisement sector.

- To change the narrative of the "plight of minoritized students" (Especially those that are racially Minoritized.")

- To engage in the process; Actively.

"MINORITY" VS "MINORITIZED" WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

What are words that automatically come to your mind, when you think about the word "minority?"

Step 1: Text
KARAOLIVER339
To
37607

Step 2:
Answer as many times as
necessary.

WHY DO I USE THE WORD MINORITIZED?

- The Oxford dictionary defines minority as "A relatively small group of people, especially one commonly discriminated against in a community, society, or nation, differing from others in race, religion, language, or political persuasion: representatives of ethnic minorities" ("Minority", Oxford, 2020).

- The Merriam-Webster dictionary describes a minority as "group of people who are different from the larger group in a country, area, etc., in some way (such as race or religion" ("Minority", Merriam-Webster.com, 2020).

- The free online dictionary defines the word minority as, " A racial, religious, political, national, or other group thought to be different from the larger group of which it is a part. A group having little power or representation relative to other groups in society." (Minority, Free-Online Dictionary, 2020)

WHY DO I USE THE WORD MINORTIZED? (CON'T)

- These terms/definitions are extremely subjective.
- People are being forced into being Minoritized as these groupings are social constructs.
  - The word is dismissive and disparaging for people within a respective group.
    - Studies suggest that (White) women make between $0.80-$0.98 on the dollar a man makes at a comparable job. (PayScale, 2020)
    - However, according to the U.S. 2010 Census, women made up 50.4 percent of the population, this is slightly more than half, and the word minority implies less, or at least a smaller population. (Smith, Odyssey 2016)
  - Students who are considered minorities are given labels and forced into situations outside of hers/his/their control.

WHY DO I USE THE WORD MINORITIZED? (CON'T)

- An example:
  - "Kids of color represent a majority of the student body in 83 of the 100 largest cities" (Brownstein, R., & J., Boschma, 2016.)

  - These students cannot be minorities when they make up the majority of the school district.
    - These students, despite representing the population, are facing stigmas and prejudices. A minoritized student, is a student that because of circumstances outside of his or her control has to deal with issues of racism, ableism, and teachers presuming his or her competence. A student who is gay, transgender, Latino, or disabled is not automatically minoritized. In order to be minoritized a student who is a group that is different in race, religious creed, nation of origin, sexuality, or gender is only considered minoritized when the school system they are in enforces them to have less power, representation or rights of their fellow students. A student is minoritized when they are pushed to the side, and mistreated because of who they are. (I.E. Smith, 2016)

WHY DO I USE THE WORD MINORTIZED? (CON'T)

"[…] Consequently, racially minoritized students appear to be generally deficient in cultural capital, underprepared, at-risk for attrition, while the systemic structural inequities that contribute to uneven patterns of educational persistence and achievement are ignored. (Chavous et al., 2002; Rendon, Jalmo, & Nora, 2000.)

HOW DOES THIS CONNECT TO CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING?

"Given this situation, it is vital to construct an understanding of racially minoritized students that does not use a cultural deficit approach to transform higher education policy and practice to better ensure the successful matriculation and graduation of 'these students'." (Stewart, 2013)

The Reasons Why I Use a CPS Lens in my Advisement:

1. *I wanted to make my students feel empowered;*
2. *I wanted my students to gain a sense of self-efficacy & determination;*
3. *I wanted my students to have autonomy over their own educational experience.*

CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING : WHAT IS IT?

CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING : WHAT IS CPS?

- CPS is a proven method for approaching a problem or a challenge in an imaginative and innovative way.

- It helps people re-define the problems and opportunities they face, come up with new, innovative responses and solutions, and then take action. The tools and techniques used make the process fun, engaging, and collaborative.

WHY CPS?: (CONTINUED)

- CPS not only helps create better solutions, it creates a positive experience that helps speed the adoption of new ideas. Noted CPS educator and practitioner, Ruth Noller, PhD, (1975) described CPS as the sum of its parts:

  - *Creative* specifies elements of newness, innovation, and novelty.

  - *Problem* refers to any situation that presents a challenge, offers an opportunity, or represents a troubling concern.

  - *Solving* means devising ways to answer, to meet, or to satisfy a situation by changing self or situation.

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER:

"Problems are nothing but wake up calls for creativity."

-Gerard Gschwanter

CORE PRINCIPLES OF CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING:

CPS begins with two assumptions:

(It's okay to ASSume…In this case!)

MOOT

TWO ASSUMPTIONS:

1. *Everyone is creative!*

2. *Creative skills can be learned and enhanced!*

CORE PRINCIPLES OF CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING (CONTINUED)

- *Divergent and convergent thinking must be balanced.* Keys to creativity are learning ways to identify and balance expanding and contracting thinking (done separately) and knowing when to practice them.

- *Ask problems as questions.* Solutions are more readily invited and developed when challenges and problems are restated as open-ended questions with multiple possibilities. Such questions generate lots of rich information, while closed-ended questions tend to elicit confirmation or denial. Statements tend to generate limited or no response at all.

- *Defer or suspend judgment.* As Osborn learned in his early work on brainstorming, the instantaneous judgment in response to an idea shuts down idea generation. There is an appropriate and necessary time to apply judgment when converging.

- *Focus on "Yes, and …" rather than "No, but."* When generating information and ideas, language matters. "Yes, and" allows continuation and expansion, which is necessary in certain stages of CPS. The use of the word "but"—whether preceded by "yes" or "no"— closes down conversation, negating everything that has come before it.

DIVERGENT THINKING VS. CONVERGENT THINKING

(WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?)

- ***Divergent Thinking:*** Generating lots of ideas and options.

- ***Convergent Thinking:*** Evaluating ideas and options, and making decisions.

DIVERGENT THINKING

Divergent Thinking: Generating lots of ideas and options.

DIVERGENT THINKING GUIDELINES

Defer Judgment – Deferring judgment isn't the same as having no judgment. It just says, "hold off for a while." Avoid judging ideas as either bad or good in the divergent thinking phase. Deferring judgment is a key component to any successful problem-solving session. Without it, generating novel solutions becomes almost impossible.

Combine and Build – Use one idea as a springboard for another. Build, combine, and improve ideas.

Seek Wild Ideas – Stretch to create wild ideas. While these may not work directly, getting way outside the box allows the space needed to discover extraordinary ideas.

Go for Quantity – Take the time necessary and use the tools in this guide to generate a long list of potential options.

- *To make it easier to generate a long list, set a concrete goal such as at least 50 ideas in 7 minutes for groups or 30 ideas in 7 minutes if solo before going to the next step. This sharpens focus and prompts the changes the brain needs to get moving. It also supports "deferring judgment."*

CONVERGENT THINKING GUIDELINES

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CONVERGENT THINKING GUIDELINES

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- At certain points in the process, thinking and focus need to shift. To select the best of the divergent options, determine their potential value.

- In the convergent thinking process, choice is deliberate and conscious. Use the guidelines that follow when it's time to make decisions about the ideas generated by divergent thinking.

Be Deliberate – Allow decision-making the time and respect it requires. Avoid snap decisions or harsh judgments. Give every option a fair chance.

Check Your Objectives – Verify choices against objectives in each step. This is a reality check – are the choices on track?
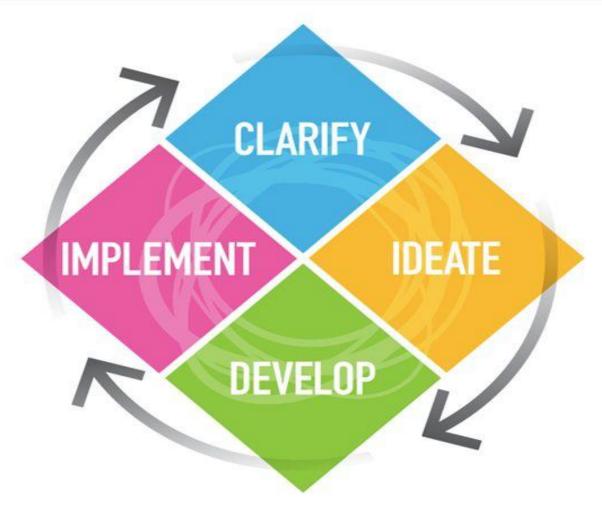
Improve Your Ideas – Not all ideas are workable solutions. Even promising ideas must be honed and strengthened. Take the time to improve ideas.

Be Affirmative – Even in convergence, it's important to first consider what's good about an idea and judge for the purpose of improving, rather than eliminating, ideas.

Consider Novelty – Do not dismiss novel or original ideas. Consider ways to tailor, rework, or tame.

The CPS Model

Based on the work of G.J. Puccio, M. Mance, M.C. Murdck, B. Miler, J. Vehar, R. Firestien, S. Thurber, D. Nielsen (2011)

STAGE	STEP	PURPOSE
CLARIFY	• Explore the vision	• Identify the goal or challenge
	• Gather the data	• Describe and generate data to enable a clear understanding of the challenge.
	• Formulate the challenge	• Sharpen awareness of the challenge and create Challenge questions that invite solutions.
IDEATE	• Explore Ideas	• Generate ideas that answer the challenge questions.
DEVELOP	• Formulate solutions	• To move from ideas to solutions. Evaluate, strengthen, and select solutions for best "fit."
IMPLEMENT	• Formulate a plan	• Explore acceptance and identify resources and actions that will support implementation of the selected solution(s).

FORCED CONNECTIONS ACTIVITY

- Forced connections are based on the brain's ability to link two disparate items -such as words, objects , feelings, and ideas- and then use the new language generated by the linkages to think through the problem. It is called Forced Connections because it relies on random external triggers that force people to make a connection between the problem at hand and the trigger. These triggers cause people to broaden their perspective.

- **<u>Step One:</u>** The facilitator is going to give you an object.
- **<u>Step Two:</u>** Take sometime to evaluate the object.
- **<u>Step Three:</u>** Start to make connections between the problem and the object that you have been given!

- Tips to remember !
  - No idea is stupid!
  - Your mind is a powerful tool, use it!
  - If you are unsure of something, that is okay!

KIARA SANTIAGO
A CASE STUDY

KIARA SANTIAGO
A CASE STUDY (CON'T)

- NUOP Junior (Class of 2021)
- Advisee since 2017
- Major 2017 (Biology)
- Major 2020 (Criminal Justice Forensics)
- GPA Before Creative Problem Solving (2017-2018)
  - Below a 2.0
- GPA after using a Creative Problem Solving Lens (2018-2019)
  - 2.5 (Spring, '19)
  - 3.9 achieving the highest GPA of her cohort and NUOP program. (Fall, '20)

KIARA SANTIAGO A CASE STUDY (CON'T)

- **Has creative problem solving helped you in your growth process as a student?**
  - If yes, how?
  - b. If no, how?

  - **Kiara** "Creative problem solving has indeed helped me in my growth process as a student and individual. It has allowed me to step away from the four walls of logical thinking and find other ways of solving a problem that my logical brain would have never thought of. With also being a college mentor to high school seniors for three years now, I am capable of showing my mentees that there are potentially multiple ways to solve a challenge/problem they may be facing than the one or two structural ways of solving something."

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QUESTIONS?/CONTACT

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