The Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education

The Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (ACMHE) is a multidisciplinary professional academic association, established in 2008, with a membership of over 700 educators, staff, and administrators in higher education from the United States and abroad. The mission of the ACMHE is to advocate for contemplative practice in higher education; to encourage new forms of inquiry and imaginative thinking; and to educate active citizens who will support a more just and compassionate direction for society.

The Center established the ACMHE to address the growing momentum of the Center’s Academic Program after 10 years of administering fellowships and developing a community of contemplative educators, scholars, and administrators. Over the past six years, we have increased the resources and learning opportunities for the network, including a member website with exclusive resources, a searchable directory, free access and manuscript submission to the new Journal of Contemplative Inquiry, and discounts on events such as the annual summer sessions and national ACMHE conferences.

From 2013 to 2014, membership in the ACMHE doubled. An increasing number of members are using resources provided by CMind and the ACMHE to connect with others in their geographic region; some have hosted regional meetings or created virtual communities. We recognize the importance of fostering these regional connections and continue to seek ways to provide more support to these emerging groups.

The 2014 ACMHE Conference

Over the past five years, members of the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education have gathered at annual conferences to explore contemplative approaches in all aspects of post-secondary education and to share their questions and discoveries.

The 6th Annual Conference of the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education was held at the University of Washington in Seattle from October 10-12, 2014 and featured the theme, “Intention, Method, and Evaluation.” This was our first year at a new location for the conference, which was traditionally held in Amherst, MA. Our intention was to provide a larger venue for the conference, which has doubled in size over the past six years, and to move the conference to different regions of the US to help build the ACMHE community outside the Northeast.

Another positive change to the conference structure was the addition of “Home Groups” – small groups of 8-12 conference participants based on geographic region. Home Groups assembled several times throughout the conference to discuss new insights, questions, and plans for their own work in contemplative pedagogy. Some Home Groups continued to connect with one another after the conference, including one Pacific Northwest group that is holding a regional workshop in the spring of 2015.

“As always, I come away from these conferences hopeful for humanity and grateful for the web of wise individuals and institutions supporting us in our work. ACMHE has been so beneficial in my life, and I find myself throughout the year calling to mind the faces of particular individuals I have been touched by and drawing strength from their wisdom and kindness.”

John Baugher
Conference Theme

Faculty, staff, and administrators throughout higher education are employing contemplative practices for many reasons. These include sharpening attention; creating environments that enhance the well-being of all; addressing inclusion and access for all in support of the vibrant diversity of our institutions; deepening engagement and learning of subject matter; reflecting on and supporting meaning-making; considering the wider impacts of our actions; and ultimately supporting the development of a more just and compassionate society. Given the breadth and depth of these many intentions, the types of practices used are extremely diverse, and their assessment needs to be approached with great sensitivity. Assessment of practices designed to develop attention, for example, will be different from assessment of those practices designed to increase conceptual understanding or develop compassion and creativity.

The 6th Annual ACMHE Conference sought to investigate the relationship between the intentions of contemplative methods and their effectiveness.

Questions addressed at the conference included:

- How might the development and evaluation of these methods be guided by what has been discovered about the many ways we learn, the creation of meaning, and the development of meaningful assessment?
- How might contemplative practices inform new ways of evaluating effectiveness?

We encouraged presentations on relevant teaching, evaluation, and assessment methods used in other educational approaches that share contemplative pedagogy’s emphasis on awareness, experience, inquiry, and transformation (e.g., holistic education, transformative education, engaged pedagogy, Socratic questioning, feminist pedagogy, critical race theory).

We also encouraged presentations on the results of evidence-based studies throughout higher education that can challenge and deepen the use of contemplative practices inside and outside the classroom.

Conference Steering Committee

Heesoon Bai
Professor, Philosophy of Education, Simon Fraser University

Daniel Barbezat
Professor, Economics, Amherst College; Director, The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society

Oliver Hill
Professor, Experimental Psychology, Virginia State University

Renée A. Hill
Associate Professor, Philosophy, Virginia State University

Douglas K. Lindner
Associate Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Virginia Tech

Terry Murray
Associate Professor, Educational Studies, SUNY New Paltz

David Sable
Lecturer, Religious Studies, Saint Mary’s University

Genét Simone
Program Director & Senior Instructor, Woodring College of Education, Western Washington University

Linda Slakey
Professor and Dean Emerita, University of Massachusetts – Amherst

Conference Host: David Levy
Professor, Information School, University of Washington
Keynote Speaker

Peter Felten
Assistant Provost for Teaching and Learning, Executive Director of the Center for Engaged Learning and the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, and Associate Professor of History at Elon University

Keynote speech: “Toward mindful assessments: Inquiry in and as practice”

Selected Conference Presentations

Mindful Dissonance: Reframing Student “Resistance” to Learning about Oppression
Beth Berila, Director, Women’s Studies Program, Ethnic and Women’s Studies Department, St. Cloud State University
Jason Laker, Professor of Counselor Education, San Jose State University

Cyber-Contemplation: Teaching and Assessing Contemplative Practices in Online Classes
Jane Compson, Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, University of Washington at Tacoma

Eliciting Mindfulness through Poems of Witness
Sharan Strange, Senior Lecturer, English, Spelman College

Harnessing Neuroplasticity and Compassion in Academia: Tale of two courses
Amelia Barili, Senior Lecturer, Spanish and Portuguese, UC Berkeley

Healing the Healer: Contemplative Practices for Vulnerable Populations
Clyde Griffin, Jr., Professor, School for Human Services and Education, Metropolitan College Of New York
Natasha Johnson, Program Coordinator and Assistant Professor, Human Services, Metropolitan College Of New York
Lefki Lolis, Mental Health Counselor and Professor, Human Services, Metropolitan College Of New York

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