



Connect Collaborate Innovate

A Newsletter From The Provost's Office



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Provost

Resistance and (Re)imagining

This past Tuesday I attended a lecture entitled “Badass Ladies: Women and Resistance in the Nazi Concentration Camps.” The topic and the speaker were both so compelling. While thinking about this part of history may bring us to deep despair, the stories of resistance Dr. Paul Bartrop shared reminds us of the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. The cases discussed in the lecture demonstrated that resistance is not

always an outwardly aggressive act (although one specific case showed how a valiant woman used strategy to distract and then physically act against men that were trying to take her life). The stories about the forms of resistance expressed ranged from using record keeping to inform and save lives, to risking contact with resistance groups outside the camps, to secretly providing healthcare to other women and their children. Dr. Bartrop masterfully shared these

stories and observed how the women even demonstrated resistance by the simple act of choosing to fall in love in the camps. The point being that while Nazis did everything in their power to try to dehumanize the people they incarcerated, those being oppressed found big and small ways to realize their humanity. Many thanks to Jessica Russell, Catherine Gorman and all those involved in bringing this event to our community.

The lecture left me thinking about other acts of resistance that we engage in when we face adverse situations. For many, the onset of global pandemic was more than just an interruption to “the way we were.” It was a complete disruption to our way of engaging with the world, and the human suffering and loss of life has taken its toll on the human spirit. Every day, I see people in my home and work life struggling to navigate this reality and the emotional exhaustion that accompanies the struggle. There have been several days lately when I have had to admit to myself, “I am not well.” But despite these hard moments, I continue to have a positive

outlook and believe that collectively we humans can and will find solutions to the tough issues that face the globe and our nation. I am also heartened by the way we as an institution have resisted defeat at the hands of the obstacle posed by the pandemic. In every department we have found ways to maintain academic continuity, student services, and have maintained continuous operations thanks to the great minds and the dedication of the entire FSW family.

Hearing the stories from faculty of how they are utilizing new technologies to help students achieve learning objectives makes it clear to me that we are

moving into a new epoch of teaching and learning. There is a seduction to the idea that we will go back to “normal” next academic year, but what I think is sinking in for all of us is that some of the things we have adopted during the pandemic are here to stay. The Live Flex modality, for example, will outlive the pandemic as a way to have face-to-face synchronous instruction with the flexibility of attending remotely. Remote in this case may mean students sitting on more than one campus can have access to face-to-face instruction that may have been unavailable to them before the introduction of this modality. It also allows students to attend that

“ground” course from an off-campus location, allowing in some cases higher attendance and participation from students who would otherwise stay home when taking safety precautions due to illness. Across all programs and services, there is a spirit of “(re)imagining” what we do. On some level we are all figuring out how we will continue to achieve the College’s mission as we continue to evolve. Since March we have had collaborative work to figure out how to do this from remote and then from partially remote operations. As we move into the next phase, we need to shift our attention to observe and respond to what students value in our

practices, and what students choose in terms of course modalities, and ways to engage with our services. We need to (re)imagine our campuses and center to establish what remote service will continue and what visible face-to-face services will be the signature programs at each site. We need to (re)imagine spaces to be flexible and innovative for 21st Century teaching and learning, as well as operations, and we need to (re)imagine our work-life interactions to capitalize on the momentum of shared purpose, agility, and flexibility that has been engendered by our shared resistance to defeat at the hands of the pandemic. In the coming weeks all of the College's divisions will be inviting faculty and staff to provide input to how we will (re)imagine FSW. I look forward to engaging in this dialogue with all of you.

To inspire your thinking on

resistance and (re)imagining our evolving College as well as a better world, I hope that you continue to check out the College's events calendars to see the many inspiring and events and activities offered by Student Engagement, and the many active committees. Of note, the annual Dr. Talbot Spivak Holocaust Memorial Week that was scheduled for March 2020 was postponed due to the pandemic. In the face of adversity, we resist and persist and next week the Holocaust Memorial Week Committee has scheduled various virtual events through Zoom and YouTube Live. The Dr. Talbot Spivak Holocaust Memorial Week continues to be a signature event in southwest Florida and always lives up to the mission of honoring Holocaust victims and survivors, cultivating tolerance, and promoting awareness of modern-day genocide. Of all of the extra-curricular programs FSW offers, I believe this is

the most important. This fall's theme is "Remembering Kristallnacht." I encourage you to set aside time in your busy schedules to view one or more of the Holocaust Survivor Talks or Lectures. Visit

www.fsw.edu/holocaust/fall2020 to view the schedule of events.

Many thanks to the outstanding committee: Steven Bianco (co-chair), Sara Gottwalles (co-chair), and Rob Manauis (co-chair), Ingrid Fernandez, Rona Axelrod, Jennifer Baker, Bruno Baltodano, Stuart Brown, Steven Chase, Jill De Valk, Chloe Kolman, Alisha Lavender, JoAnn Lewin, Nathan Lewis, Lauren Madak, Brian Page, Jillian Patch, Dana Roes, Sandi Towers-Romero, Jennifer Young, Rebecca Fahrner, and Mark Herman.



While it is important to engage with the past, and to never forget past injustices, let us remember that we are living in a present moment that will be remembered in retrospective significance for the actions that were taken to resist adversity and injustice. I am humbled by those who rise to that challenge daily. I am inspired by the acts of heroism I see across professions, and by the ability of people of all ages and

backgrounds to speak truth to power, consequences be damned.

I have no doubt that as we continue to (re)imagine our college and our world we will embrace change, and learn from one another in our continued collaborative spirit. We will forgive each other when our disagreements lead to escalated emotions and unnecessary aggression. And I have hope that as

global changes continue to challenge the human spirit, we learn from the lessons of those who resisted in the past, and find the space inside of us that takes a high road in the face of potential conflict. We must recognize when it is time for a change, a time to hear and consider other voices. Let's choose to face the future with hope and with concern for all human beings as we (re)imagine a just and forward thinking community.



Eileen DeLuca holds Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Florida, a Master's of Arts degree in Applied Anthropology from the University of South Florida, a Master's of Science degree in Multicultural/Bilingual Education from the College of New Rochelle, and a Bachelor's of Science degree in English Education from the University of South Florida. She has a long and complicated history with the institution we call Florida SouthWestern State College and now sits in an office in the building where she once took classes and sat in the cafeteria as a student at Edison Community College.

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