

37th Academic Chairpersons Conference, Feb. 5-7, 2020, Savannah, Georgia

Proposed Session:
Stranger in a Strange Land: Old Chair, New University

Primary presenter information and CV or short biographical sketch:

Juliet V. Spencer, Vagner Mendonça-Whitehead, and George A. King, Texas Woman's University

Juliet Spencer is Professor and Chair of Biology at Texas Woman's University. Prior to joining TWU, she was Professor of Biology at the University of San Francisco, where she served as Department Chair and Graduate Director. Dr. Spencer earned her B.S. in Biotechnology at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and her Ph.D. in Microbiology at the University of Virginia. She is a National Institutes of Health-funded investigator studying virus-host interactions, and she is the author of more than 25 peer reviewed scientific articles. She is passionate about teaching and tries to infect each student with her contagious enthusiasm for biological research.

Vagner Mendonça-Whitehead is Professor and Chair of Visual Arts at Texas Woman's University. Vagner Mendonça Whitehead's practice encompasses traditional and newer media art-making, curatorial projects and creative writings on visual culture. His artworks display accidental and forced intersections of personal experiences, histories, current events, geo-locations, languages, and found artifacts. Vagner has taught at Southern Illinois University – Carbondale (2001-2005), and Oakland University – Michigan (2005-2016), where he served as chair 2013-2016. He joined Texas Woman's University (TWU) in 2016 and has since served as chair of the Department of Visual Arts at Texas Woman's University. At TWU, Vagner aims to empower traditionally under-represented art students and scholars in higher education by providing inclusive and equitable spaces for making and learning.

George A. King is Professor and Director of the School of Health Promotion & Kinesiology at Texas Woman's University. Prior to joining TWU, he was Professor of Kinesiology at the University of Texas at El Paso, where he served six years as Graduate Coordinator, five years as Department Chair, and three years as Associate Dean. Dr. King was brought to TWU to merge two Departments forming a new School.

Title of presentation (10 words or less): Stranger in a Strange Land: Old Chair, New University

Abstract for the program book and website (25-50 words):

There are opportunities and challenges associated with appointing a chair from within and from outside the organization. This discussion will consider multiple aspects and focus on considerations for changing institutions to assume the chair position.

Keywords (no less than five): Educational Leadership, Communications, Adaptation, Transition, Cultural Inclusion

Presentation topic theme: Leadership and Management or Working with Faculty and Administration

Target audience: Chairs, chairs considering moving to another institution, deans who may be hiring in new chairs

Type of presentation: Interactive Workshop

Description of the session:

Many universities “hire in” new leadership to gain outside perspective and effect positive change, and there are opportunities and challenges associated with appointing a chair from within and from outside the organization. As seasoned chairs moving to a new university, Drs. Spencer, Mendonça-Whitehead, and King discuss the opportunities and challenges we faced navigating unknown (and sometimes shark infested) waters. Through our experiences and observations this session aims to share insights about establishing relationships, avoiding traps, and developing effective communications with both the faculty and the administration. We also discuss the importance of finding an ally, protecting your personal time, and becoming involved in a new community. Presenters will share their anecdotes of success and challenges, use interactive group activities to drive discussion, and open up the floor for the participants to share their experiences and ask questions. The goal is for participants to leave with list of questions to ask before diving into a new position and a tool-kit of strategies to handle (or how not to!) a variety of situations facing new chairs at new institutions.