

Title: Confronting the “Dark Side” of Higher Education Administration: Building Relational Capacity Among Academic Leaders

Presentation Theme: Servant Leadership

Presentation Type: Best Practice Presentation (50 minutes)

Abstract (25-50 words):

Unethical leadership exists in higher education and the purpose of this session is to present current research about “dark” organizational behavior, explain the impact of unethical leadership on populations in higher education (faculty, students), present central features of relational capacity, and model practices for academic leaders to build relational capacity.

Keywords: Five (5) keywords about your presentation. These are used to help participants search for sessions in the conference proceedings.

Relational Capacity, Incivility, Academic Leaders, Unethical Leadership, Empowering Leaders

Overview (300-500 words):

There are several dominant ethics-oriented leadership theories, and they provide valuable insight into aspirational forms of leadership. For example, “servant leadership emphasizes virtues such as trust and altruism (Greenleaf, 2002). “Dark Side” research has attempted to explicate why humans engage in destructive or “deviant” workplace behavior and provides a frame for uncovering the nuances of unethical leadership. One way of addressing these behaviors may be to bolster a leader’s relational capacity - relational capacity describes a leader’s ability to relate to the faculty in their academic units that includes interpersonal skills, such as humor, rapport, understanding, empathy, patience, respect, and trust.¹ Arguably, articulating the relational practices of administrators is critical for those leading academic units. As academic leaders, we must understand how to cultivate relational capacity. In this interactive session, participants will be presented with current research about “dark” organizational behavior, explained the impact of unethical leadership on populations (faculty, students, and staff), presented central features of relational capacity, and modeled practices for academic leaders to build relational capacity. This presentation will include advice related to leadership development, inclusive leadership, and implications for confronting the “dark side” of higher education administration.

Relevance of session to chairpersons:

Given the purpose of the conference, this session is relevant to all academic leaders. Newly appointed and experienced leaders will benefit from this presentation as the information presented will provide them information, guidance, and recommendations related to their position.

Presentation focus:

This presentation will focus on disseminating empirical evidence about relational capacity unique to academia and strategies for promotion. Participants will be able to experience the content through small group collaboration and demonstration of prevention strategies.

Recommendations for chairpersons:

Overall, the purpose of this session is twofold: (1) to provide new academic leaders with information, guidance, and recommendations for promoting relational capacity in their jobs and (2) to allow participants to work with each other to share experiences and practice promotion strategies.

How the audience will be involved:

Participants in the session will interact actively with the presenter and with one another during the presentation. Although formal information will be delivered, the presentation's general structure will enable continuing conversation. Participants will also be urged to collaborate with one another to discuss their personal insights and key ideas from the presentation.

ⁱ Jennifer A. Robinson. "A study of inspiring Australian music teachers" Masters Thesis, University of Sydney, Sydney Australia, 2015. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/2123/14158>