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Cultivating Academic Habits of Mind: Key Skills for Collegiate Success

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Panel Proposal: Fourth Annual Winthrop Conference on Teaching and Learning

Key Words: intellectual habits of mind; critical research; critical listening; critical reading

Cultivating Academic Habits of Mind: Key Skills for Collegiate Success

The value of a 21st-century college education comes from the expectation that college graduates are cognitively prepared to deal with complexity, change, and diversity through the application of transferable and practical skills such as written and oral communication and analytic problem-solving. Winthrop University's General Education Core, consisting of three specific courses completed by all students, provides a shared intellectual experience for students and equips them with powerful, college-level tools in critical reading, critical thinking, and academic writing. Moreover, the Core cultivates valuable academic habits of mind that are particularly valuable in a today's dynamic world where college graduates are expected to be intellectually engaged and intellectually curious, display intellectual humility, engage in critical analysis, and exhibit rhetorical awareness. These academic habits of mind are necessary for substantive, deep learning as students learn to engage in academic, professional, and social discourse, and these traits must be taught and reinforced in deliberate, intentional ways in the college classroom. This panel will highlight three key academic skills – critical research, critical listening, and critical reading – and will provide practical strategies to help students learn to cultivate academic habits of mind to become not only successful students, but also successful 21st-century citizens.

Kelly Richardson – “Academic Conversations: Research and Writing as Academic Discourse”

This presentation will focus on the concept of “academic discourse” as an “academic conversation.” Using Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* as a basis, the presentation will highlight the role that research skills play in developing students' sense of this conversational model. It will also provide research and writing strategies to help address difficulties students sometimes experience as they learn to develop their voices as informed, confident, and responsible participants in academic conversations.

Amanda Hiner – “Critical Listening: Normalizing the Concept and Practice of Civil Discourse”

Both civil discourse and substantive learning rely on the ability to listen critically and empathically. Drawing on both David Bohm's concept of communication and on Richard Paul's critical thinking framework, this presentation will identify the key traits of critical listeners and share practical strategies and tips to help students learn to listen critically in classrooms and conversations.

Katarina Moyon – “Critical Reading: Intellectual Engagement for Civil Discourse”

Critical reading provides the foundation for academic habits of mind. It gives the student confidence to become a participant in the academic community, thus also modeling becoming a thoughtful participant in the workplace. This presentation will focus on the role of critical reading in student academic engagement and discourse. It will introduce research showing the value of notetaking by hand, as well as information about critical reading tools. The presentation will also look at the conversation critical reading facilitates between the student and the author; the student and his peers; the student and the instructor; and the student with himself.