

Building a junior faculty community to support inclusive teaching at the School of Public Health

Faculty Communities for Inclusive Teaching, 2017

Melissa Creary, Paul Fleming, Elizabeth King, Roshanak Mehdipanah



Project Overview

Navigating issues of diversity and inclusion in the classroom is fraught for many faculty but is especially challenging for junior faculty due to limited experience in the classroom, adjusting to a new university setting, and identifying the specific needs of UM students. Within public health, issues of health equity, identity-based (i.e. race, gender, class) health disparities, and structural disadvantages are commonly discussed and central to the themes of our courses. However, these issues of equity and disadvantaged populations are inherently political in nature and many junior faculty face uncertainty in how to lead such politically-charged discussions in the classroom. This proposed faculty group aims to address this issue. This project stemmed from a desire to:

1. **Increase junior faculty's confidence in leading discussions on health equity/inequities among diverse students**
2. **Build community among junior faculty in SPH to support each other in building a more equitable and inclusive SPH**

Key Insights / New Questions

We used the 2016-2017 year to discuss and process what would be needed to truly transform that way SPH junior faculty teach and mentor to be more inclusive. We identified the following key aspects:

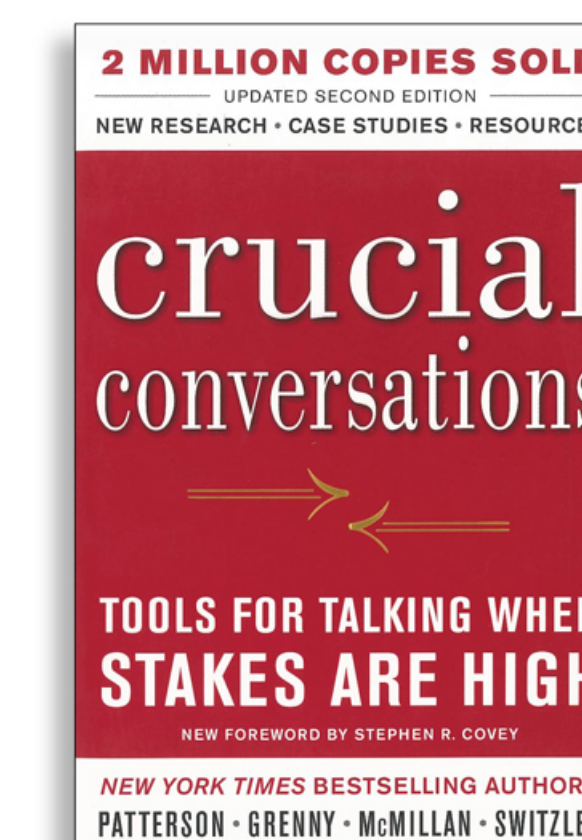
- To support inclusive teaching, junior faculty need to be supported in *all* aspects of their professional life.
- Enhancing inclusivity in the classroom will require fostering communication skills by faculty and by students.
- Setting the tone for new junior faculty is key. The CRLT Health Sciences Teaching Academy does any excellent job of emphasizing inclusive teaching and SPH could do a better job of onboarding to emphasize the importance of inclusive teaching at SPH.

We ended with the following 'lingering questions':

- What is the best way for junior faculty to get training and practice to have crucial conversations?
- How can we meaningfully create space for junior faculty at SPH to interact and share their best practices for inclusive teaching?
- How do we approach political inclusivity when some view points are deemed by some students as hateful?

Resources

- As part of our project, we read two books and had book club discussions with SPH junior faculty.
- *Crucial Conversations* provides tools to prepare for difficult dialogues and make it safe to talk about almost anything. We found this book to be helpful in processing our ideas about how to approach bringing up difficult topics in the classroom.
- *Written/Unwritten: Diversity and the Hidden Truths of Tenure* details the stories of faculty of color and their experiences navigating tenure processes. It provided a foundation for lively discussion of what type of support junior faculty at SPH need to succeed.



Participants

Melissa Creary, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor of Health Management and Policy



Paul Fleming, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor of Health Behavior & Health Education

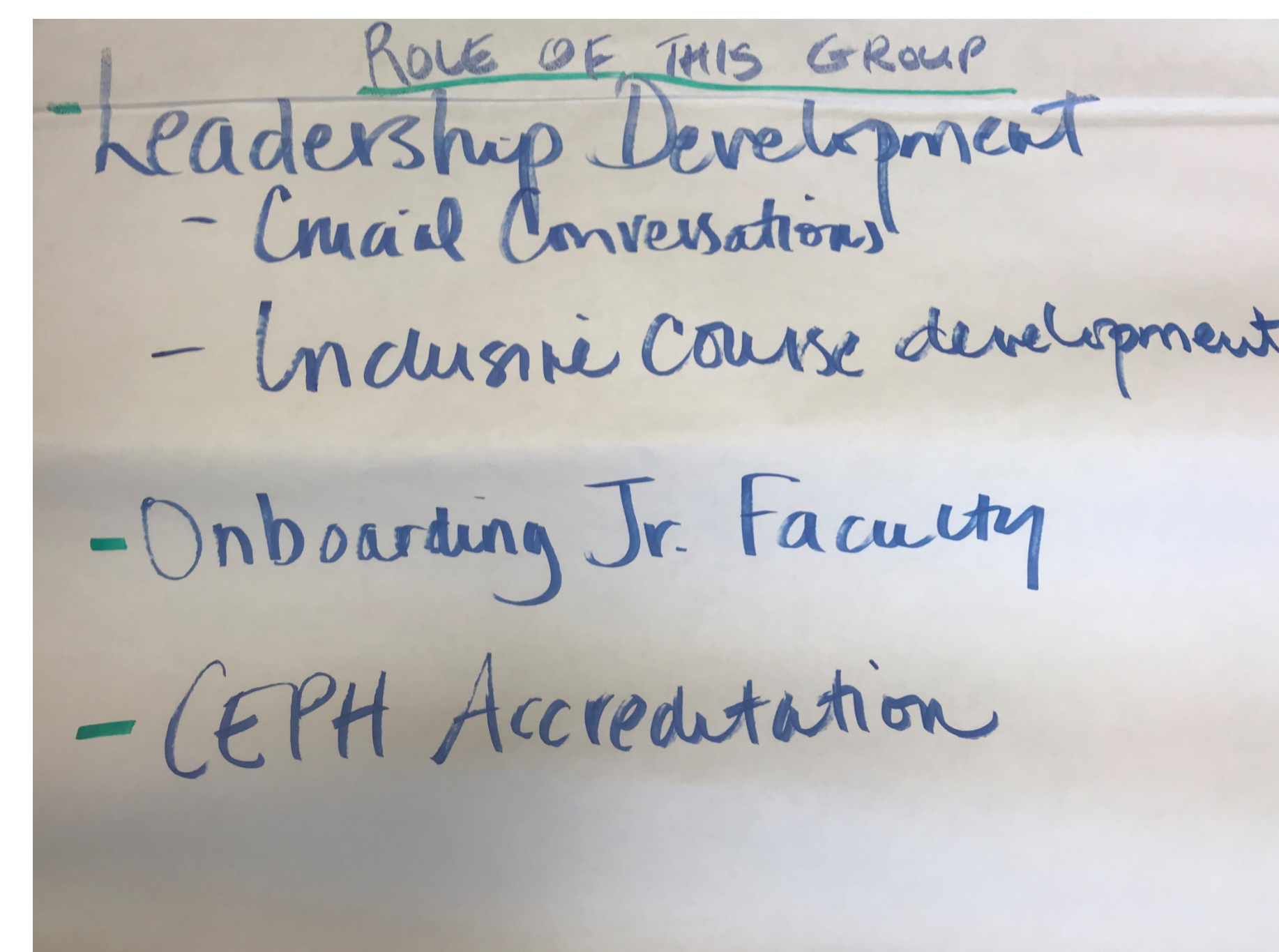
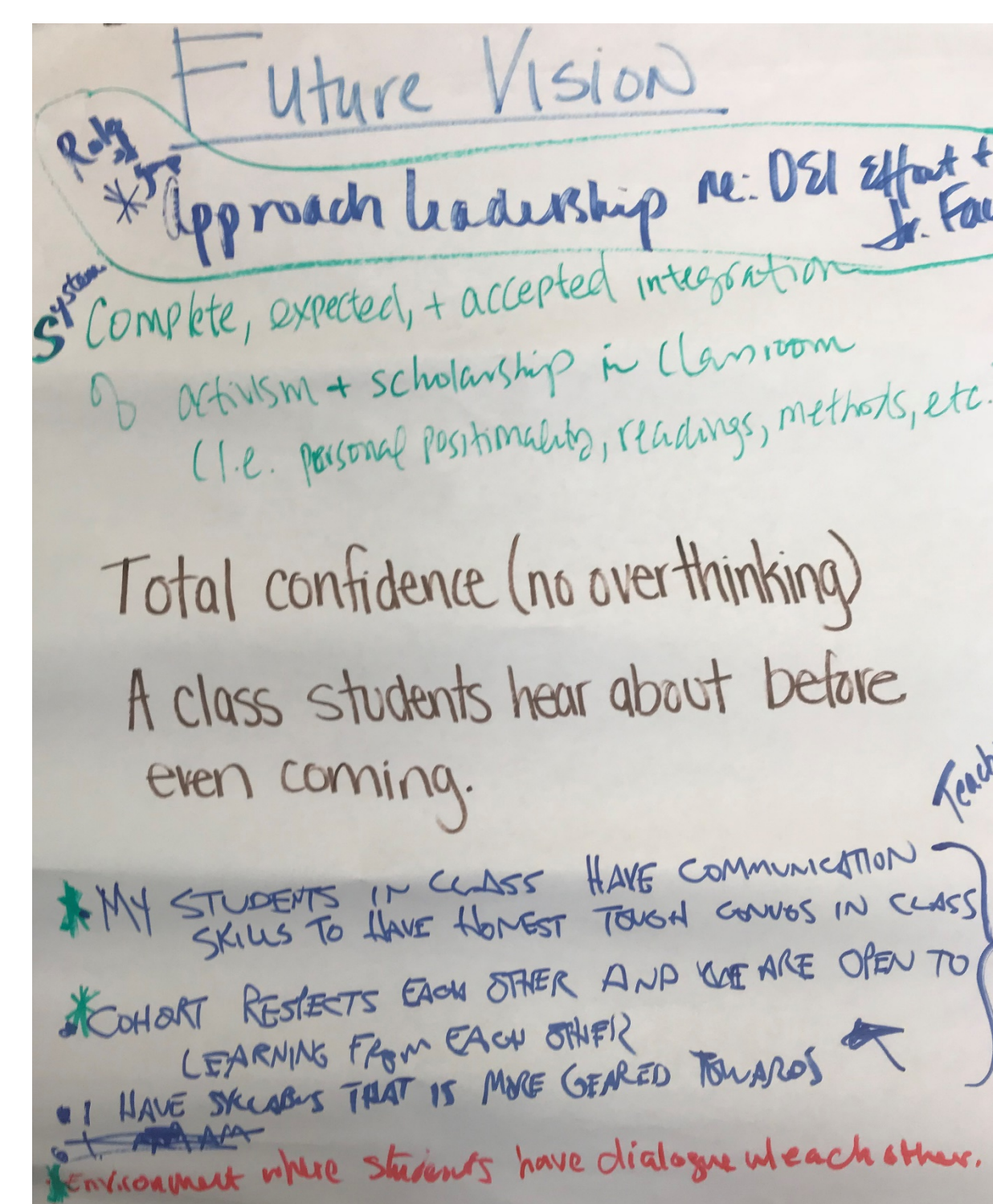
Roshanak Mehdipanah, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Health Behavior & Health Education



Elizabeth King, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor of Health Behavior & Health Education

Artifacts

Below are the products of a 'retreat' our group had to unpack what junior faculty needed to successfully engage students on sensitive topics and foster our own development as inclusive teachers.



Next Steps

- ❖ We applied for and were awarded the Vice Provost DE&I Innovation Grant to continue our activities which include:
- ❖ Invite two speakers related to inclusive pedagogy and host Junior Faculty DE&I Chats afterwards
- ❖ Work with CRLT DE&I consultants to tailor our training
- ❖ Identify a workshop to attend with a nationally reputable training organization
- ❖ Develop a Canvas site where junior faculty can connect and share resources
- ❖ Develop SPH-specific faculty toolkit