Editors' Note:
NECIT, CIT, and Teaching Transformations 2009

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Abstract: This introductory editors' note presents a brief history and statement of aims of the New England Center for Inclusive Teaching (NECIT), the Center for the Improvement of Teaching (CIT), and the overlap of the interests and contributions of the above with those of the mission of *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* and its annual *Teaching Transformations* series. The editors note that the first seven studies in the present issue were gathered through the conference activities of NECIT while the second series of articles emerged from the conversations and presentations at the annual CIT conference at UMass Boston. The journal editor and issue co-editors of this NECIT/CIT issue of *Human Architecture* sincerely appreciate the efforts made by the authors to share their work and findings with readers across New England, the nation, and (thanks to the internet) to a global audience of caring individuals, on- and off-campus, who have a common interest in advancing teaching and learning practices that transform the self and the world in favor of more just, inclusive, and participatory outcomes.

The second annual 2009 issue of *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge,* dedicated to the chronicling of representative experiences of teaching transformation in the New England area and elsewhere, brings to you selected proceedings of the annual conferences of the Center for the Improvement of Teaching (CIT) and the New England Center for Inclusive Teaching (NECIT). It has been a

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pleasure for the issue co-editors and the journal editor to collaborate in helping to disseminate papers that continue to reflect the diversity and richness of presentations at the CIT and NECIT annual conferences respectively organized by Vivian Zamel and Jay Dee and their colleagues.

In this editors' note, while welcoming the contributions to this issue, we intend to provide some brief background information about the two grassroots teaching improvement initiatives that CIT and NECIT have represented over the years, and how the journal *Human Architecture* has also found an overlapping common interest with the two UMass Boston initiatives in publishing their conference proceedings. While CIT is the older tradition emergent from UMass Boston, it may be interesting to read the histories of the two traditions backwards and begin with NECIT in order to gain an overall insight into the ongoing work of the two initiatives.

ABOUT NECIT

NECIT was established in 2003 as a consortium of colleges and universities committed to fostering innovative faculty development programs that link effective teaching to an understanding of student diversity. Inclusive teaching refers to pedagogical approaches that emphasize the unique skills, abilities, backgrounds, cultures, and experiences of students as frameworks to foster learning. Related curricula focus on infusing issues of diversity into a wide range of courses across disciplines. NECIT relies on a broad conceptualization of human diversity to include forms of difference associated with race, ethnicity, gender, age, social class, disability/ability status, sexual orientation, language background, culture, religion, and country of origin, as well as differences in learning styles and prior academic prep-

aration. NECIT seeks to disseminate inclusive pedagogical practices, support curriculum change initiatives, and advance the scholarship of inclusive teaching and learning.

Under the leadership of Esther Kingston-Mann, a faculty member at the University of Massachusetts Boston, NECIT received a planning grant from the Ford Foundation in 2003 to assess the feasibility of establishing a multi-institutional faculty development consortium. Then, in 2004, NECIT received a two-year grant from the Ford Foundation to implement the consortium plan. Along with the University of Massachusetts Boston (the lead institution), the participating institutions included two public universities (University of New Hampshire and the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth), one public comprehensive college (Rhode Island College), two private institutions (Lesley University and Emmanuel College), and two community colleges (Massasoit Community College and Middlesex Community College).

The primary activity associated with the grant was to convene semester-long faculty development seminars at each of the seven participating institutions. The seminar groups, which consisted of six to eight participants, received mentoring and consultation from faculty members at the University of Massachusetts Boston who had extensive experience with inclusive teaching initiatives through their work with the Center for the Improvement of Teaching (CIT). The relationship between CIT and the NECIT institutions, however, was not prescriptive. Each seminar group had the capacity to set its own agenda, and each group implemented its own campus change project to promote inclusive teaching. (See the Dee and Daly article in this issue for further descriptions of these change projects.)

NECIT convenes an annual conference, which showcases the scholarship of inclu-

sive teaching and learning. Initially, the conference provided a venue for faculty from the seven institutions that participated in the Ford Foundation grant to display the outcomes of their seminar work and change projects. Following the grant, the call for proposals was issued more widely, and the NECIT conference has attracted faculty and student presenters from more than two dozen institutions. At the sixth annual NECIT conference in October 2008, the editor of *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* distributed a call for submissions for a special issue to focus on scholarly research presented at NECIT conferences. The manuscripts published in this journal issue, and in particular those in the first part, reflect the broad range of scholarly interests represented within NECIT. The articles have important pedagogical and curricular implications, and they highlight student and faculty voices and perspectives regarding the need for and transformative potential of inclusive teaching and learning.

ABOUT CIT

CIT, which preceded NECIT by two decades, is a grassroots faculty-led organization committed to collaborative work on pedagogy across all disciplines and colleges. As stated in the official statement of purpose of CIT, from which most of the following information is drawn (see CIT's homepage at Http://www.cit.umb.edu for further information) CIT's mission since its 1983 founding has been to help faculty foster the learning of diverse students within a dynamic urban university environment like UMass Boston, with complex institutional expectations, changing communication technologies, and evolving concepts of academic knowledge and training. CIT has used sustained reflection and scholarship to promote more effective pedagogical practice, a high standard of

excellence in teaching, and an inclusive education that engages all students and promotes their academic success.

CIT's definition of inclusion is broad and highlights race, social class, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, and culture as well as differences in levels of skill, academic preparation and language background. CIT takes seriously the multiple ways that these factors intersect with each other and serve as assets for learning and teaching.

The hallmark and strength of CIT is an active network of faculty, staff, and students who regularly engage in critical reflection and dialogue that deepen and extend a culture of engaged learning, academic excellence, and curricular and pedagogical transformation at UMass Boston. CIT's regular programs include semester-long faculty seminars, public forums, student/faculty dialogues, annual conferences, faculty peer mentoring, and the encouragement of scholarship on diversity, learning and teaching.

Established in 1983, CIT's initial goal was to improve the quality of teaching within the College of Liberal Arts by drawing on the skills and wisdom of UMass Boston's faculty rather than outside experts. In 1989, The Center extended its activities to the university as a whole, and emphasized diversity and inclusion as key components in teaching and learning.

Since 1983 over 280 faculty across disciplines and from every college in the university have participated in intensive and collaborative faculty development seminars. These seminars consist of weekly meetings and an intensive pre-semester session, in which faculty from a range of disciplines and across colleges examine and interrogate issues relevant to teaching in an urban public institution such as UMass. The seminar in the fall usually focuses on a specific issue such as Linguistic Diversity in the Classroom, Teaching Students with Different Levels of Academic

Preparation, or Using Technology to Enhance Learning. The seminar in the spring for untenured and recently-tenured faculty provides opportunities for these faculty to work together on issues of teaching, learning and professional development.

CIT has sponsored over 200 forums since 1990. There are approximately three to four forums offered each semester. These forums are open to all faculty, student and staff members of the UMass Boston community. They provide opportunities to share perspectives, engage in dialogue, and to collaborate across disciplines about critical and timely issues. In addition to these events, CIT offers an on-going discussion group each semester that focuses on pedagogical issues related to race, class, gender, age, and sexuality. Finally, each semester CIT plans a student-faculty luncheon series that takes place over the course of three weeks, where students and teachers share their particular perspectives on issues of teaching and learning.

Since 1994, CIT has organized a January conference on Teaching for Transformation. The day-long conference includes presentations and workshops offered on a variety of issues that are critical to teaching and learning in a diverse, public institution of higher education. They provide opportunities for presenters across different educational institutions in the New England area and beyond to explore issues and share strategies that focus on inclusive teaching and curriculum change in college classrooms. While the conference presenters have included UMass faculty, staff, and students, CIT has extended the call for proposals to members of the larger Boston area college community. Several years ago, CIT for the first time extended the call for proposals to include presenters from educational institutions beyond UMass, thus expanding the offerings of the conference and bringing in an even greater off-campus audience. In addition to the annual January conferences, CIT has organized several other conferences focusing on issues of diversity as it relates to teaching. Two of these conferences, Diversity and Academic Standards and The Media's Message: Race, Representation and Higher Education were held at the John F. Kennedy Library.

In 2001, a volume titled *Achieving Against the Odds: How Academics Become Teachers of Diverse Students* (Temple University Press), was edited by two UMass Boston faculty, Esther Kingston-Mann and Tim Sieber. This collection includes chapters by faculty who have been involved in CIT and thus demonstrates the ways in which CIT's work has contributed to the teaching and learning of these UMass Boston faculty.

ABOUT HUMAN ARCHITECTURE'S TEACHING TRANSFORMATIONS SERIES

The inspiration behind the interplay of the interests of the journal *Human Architecture* and the traditions of CIT and NECIT goes back to 2003 when the journal's editor began teaching as a faculty at UMass Boston. Having been exposed to the innovative and critically self-reflective work of the UMass Boston faculty through reading the book *Achieving Against the Odds* (as introduced above) given as a gift to him by the CLA dean at the time, the editor's interest in pursuing the sociology of self-knowledge as an exercise in what C. Wright Mills called the "sociological imagination" inherently merged with the interests of the faculty, students, and staff involved in the CIT and NECIT educational initiatives at UMass Boston.

Jay Dee and Cheryl Daly identify in their contribution to this volume the most central and distinguishing defining features of NECIT, and one may readily argue also of CIT, as the three-fold concerns

with promoting pedagogical reflexivity, student learning empathy, and faculty agency. *Human Architecture* has been from its inception in 2002 dedicated to promoting a grassroots initiative in critical, sociologically informed, self-reflexivity with perceive openness to inviting and publishing student voices in its pages and celebrating creative and independent faculty initiatives and dialogues emergent from UMass Boston, New England, national, and international conversations about teaching and liberating social theory and practice. *Human Architecture* has also proactively sought the advancement of an alternative publishing praxis that seeks to transcend habituated and outmoded peer reviewing practices in favor of independent, and more flexible, creative, and intellectually reasoned principles and procedures of academic, scholarly publishing.

As noted in the first annual issue of *Human Architecture* dedicated to teaching improvement for excellence activities at UMass Boston, the common title chosen for these series, "Teaching Transformations" highlights a two-fold interest and commitment that the organizers and participants in the annual conferences have commonly shared. One is to advance teaching as a venue for transformative pedagogical and social practices that empower students, faculty, and communities on and off-campus in favor of a deeper recognition and respect for diversity, inclusion, and social justice. However, by choosing the title we would also like to emphasize that in order to meet the first goal above, it is also important and necessary to see teaching and one's habits and styles of teaching as fluid and dynamic, and not static and established, habitus. To advance transformative teaching (and learning), it is necessary to continually transform our own teaching and pedagogical approaches and help one another to do the same.

This second annual effort in disseminating the proceedings of now both the NECIT as well as the CIT's annual conferences in published form is meant to encourage contributors to further reflect on and enrich their presentations at the conference as well as to provide opportunities for those not attending the conference locally to benefit from its annual dialogues on teaching for transformation.

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