Cultivating the ART OF HOSTING *at the* UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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BACKGROUND

The Art of Hosting and Harvesting: Conversations that Matter is comprised of a collection of facilitation practices that are being used globally. As defined on one Art of Hosting website, "Hosting is an emerging set of practices for facilitating group conversations of all sizes, supported by principles that: maximize collective intelligence; welcome and listen to diverse viewpoints; maximize participation and civility; and transform conflict into creative cooperation." (http://artofhosting.ning.com/) These are based on the "four-fold practice." The four practices are:

- Being present (pre-sensing)
- Engaging in conversations (participating)
- Hosting conversations (contributing)
- Becoming a community of practice (co-creating)

The first practice, being present, refers to giving one's undivided attention to the task and people in the room. Engaging in conversations encourages one to slow down and think of conversation as an art, being curious but not judgmental. Hosting conversations involves leadership practices. It is the host's responsibility to create the "container" for the conversation by having a clear purpose, creating a powerful question, and planning for how to "harvest" what has been learned or discussed. The final practice, co-creating with others in a community of practice, involves practicing with others and sharing knowledge and experiences. (Please see Appendix A for a visual reference.)

The roots of the Art of Hosting were planted in the late 1980's by Toke Paludan Moeller, Monica Nissén and Jan Hein Nielsen of Denmark. They were feeling the need for a change in the way people connected to one another and approached complex issues. In 1991, they created a company where they would want to work. It would be a place where they could grow, and have permission to experiment. They felt very strongly that people needed to learn to co-create and build relationships and they sensed that people were becoming more conscious of what was going on in the world around them. As Toke Mueller said in an interview "it's a new renaissance...it's the dying of an age that's been going on for 5000 years...it's sensing the possibility, a return to nature, and connectedness." In his opinion, "the systems that we have created that are machine based are not working now" and people are seeking meaningfulness.

The first session that could be considered an Art of Hosting training was in San Francisco in 1998. Toke and others stayed up all night talking about assumptions for which to base the training on. In that first training, everything that is still core to the training happened. Included in this was exploring the host that was already embedded in human beings, doing the first "teach," having a world cafe, and teaching and drawing at the same time. On the third day of the training, the hosts had the participants start to practice and host. They felt the best gift they could give the participants was to have them co-create. The participants reported that there was initially chaos and then self-organizing happened.

At the same time, other people in other places had started doing similar things and the movement was born. In 2000 people from a variety of networks met in Europe for a six day session and, as Toke reported, they "became mates" and "took it to another level." In 2003 more formalized trainings began and over time experiments started happening in different places. Margaret Wheatley (author of "Walk Out Walk On"), Tuesday Ryan-Hart, Ann Linnea and Christina Baldwin were among the first to introduce Art of Hosting practices in the United States. In the spring of 2008, the Ohio State University held its first training and now has an established Art of Hosting community at the institution. Using

Art of Hosting techniques, Tuesday Ryan-Hart led an initiative in Columbus, Ohio to address issues of health care access, homelessness, and other social issues.

The first trainings in Minnesota were held in 2011 and since then, hundreds of Minnesotans have been trained in the Art of Hosting techniques. The first training designed for University of Minnesota faculty and staff was held in the summer of 2011. The on-campus sponsor of the training was the Center for Integrative Leadership, with collaboration from InCommons, a community-based initiative of the Bush Foundation. In January 2012, more than fifty members of the University community participated in a training sponsored by the College of Design. An additional training is scheduled for June 2012.

Today, the initiatiors' visions and hopes for the Art of Hosting are that it can help deal with complex issues and create the necessary connections in order for collaborations to occur. It's a reason for people to come together and come up with smarter ways for working and living together. It's also a way to bring back the four-fold practice.

Several core processes and activities are part of the Art of Hosting "toolbox." All of these techniques (as well as the Art of Hosting itself) are intended to be open-source and customizable. Following is a brief introduction to each:

World Café

A World Café consists of three rounds of questions. Participants are seated around tables with paper for the participants to write, doodle or draw on as they discuss the question that has been posed. Each round lasts for approximately 30 minutes and participants move to different tables for each round, with the exception of the table host, who leads the discussion and remains at the table for all rounds.

IMPROVING STUDENTS' GROUP WORK WITH WORLD CAFE

Henry, a faculty member with past facilitation experience, integrated Art of Hosting practices into one of his undergraduate classes. Students always finished up the semester with group projects, but Henry used World Café to help with topic selection and group formation. The 75 students in the class participated in table discussions were held around primary course topics, then identified their first and second choices for group projects. Nearly everyone got to work on a project that was their first or second choice. The group projects were better in quality than in previous years, and course evaluations revealed that students felt more engaged in that assignment. Henry felt that the World Café process helped break through previous negative experiences with group work.

Open Space Technology

In an Open Space Technology event, participants gather without a predetermined agenda. A call is made for topics for breakout sessions, which are nominated by participants. Participants may then look through the "marketplace" of ideas and choose a topic that interests them. At any time, a participant is free to employ the "rule of two feet," which states that a participant is not bound to any one session for its entirety. One may choose to leave and move to a different group as desired.

Circle

The circle is core to the Art of Hosting. A gathering conducted in an Art of Hosting manner will frequently begin with the participants sitting in a circle. The purpose of this is to create a level playing field, one in which every person is equal to all others.

Check-in/check-out

Checking in at the beginning of a meeting or event is designed to allow everyone to connect and focus on the task at hand. Check-ins can take many forms; participants can be asked to answer a question, share a personal artifact; or whatever else will meet the purpose of the meeting. Check-outs, at the end of the meeting, can take the same form and serve to close the meeting.

Harvesting

Harvesting is the gathering of the wisdom that has been shared at a meeting or event. There are many different ways to do a harvest; poetry, word clouds, posters, reports from table hosts. When planning for an Art of Hosting event, it is important to plan for the harvest.

Powerful questions

Powerful questions are fundamental to the Art of Hosting; many of the other techniques incorporate this concept. A powerful question is one that probes deeply, allows for rich discussion, and seeks wisdom and knowledge. Questions that begin with "how," "why," and "what if" are the most likely to achieve these goals.

Compassionate Listening

In a compassionate listening exercise, participants gather in groups of four. As each person tells a story or answers a question, the others in the group each listen for a specific theme; for example, facts, values, and feelings. The listeners serve a mirror to reflect back to the speaker what they heard, using the lens they were given. This activity can provide clarity for individuals and commonalities for those in the group.

Visual flow

Rather than having a set agenda, with times and topics set in detail, a visual flow sets the path for a meeting to follow. A flow is only limited by the creativity of the person creating it. It is a reminder of where we are going and where we have been.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry is the process of looking at what is working and what is good, rather than focusing on what is wrong or broken. It is a strengths-based approach.

GOALS

The overarching goal of our work is to develop recommendations for the effective implementation of Art of Hosting in a university setting. To achieve this goal, we set the following objectives:

• Understand the concepts and practices of the Art of Hosting and Harvesting conversations;

• Collect data on how and where the practices are being used within the University System;

• Evaluate the effectiveness of and barriers to those practices; and

• Develop recommendations for effective implementation in the University setting.

METHODOLOGY

We worked with faculty researchers Jodi Sandfort and Kathy Quick to develop our project methodology. Our approach is both qualitative and experiential, and involves three layers of interaction with Art of Hosting: conducting interviews, participating in the workshop, and our own individual Art of Hosting practices. Each layer complements the others to build a deeper research experience.

Interviews

We interviewed 23 individuals who participated in the summer 2011 "Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter" training at the University of Minnesota (see Appendix B, Description of Sample). Our goals for the interview process were to find out how participants were using the techniques they'd learned, as well as their general impression of the training and how it might work at the University of Minnesota.

An existing interview protocol being used by Kathy Quick and her participatory leadership research team was modified to address specific questions that we were interested in. In particular, we added questions about barriers to implementation that might be posed by the university culture, barriers within the model itself, and general impressions of Art of Hosting.

Interviews were conducted in person when possible between late January and late February 2012. The PEL team interviewers followed the interview protocol as a guide, made audio recordings of the interviews, and took notes. In team meetings during March and early April, each interviewer presented their interviews to the rest of the team. Team members not presenting each listened for different items, including how the Art of Hosting techniques were being used, barriers to implementation, opportunities for implementation, and miscellaneous pieces of insight. During April, we evaluated our notes from these sessions and identified themes that cut across multiple interviews.

Art of Hosting Workshop

In order to deepen our understanding of the Art of Hosting philosophy and techniques, each team member participated in an "Art of Participatory Leadership" workshop. Sponsored by the University

of Minnesota College of Design, this workshop was held over three days in January 2012 at an off-campus conference center. The workshop used an informal teaching style that invited attendees to participate in the teaching of techniques such as World Café, Open Space Technology, and Proaction Café. The hosting team for the workshop also covered the philosophy behind Art of Hosting, explaining concepts such as four-fold practice, the chaordic path, and the Cynefin framework. Our experiences with the workshop are described in Appendix D.

Individual Art of Hosting Practice

Although we are new to the Art of Hosting, we recognize that the skills and approaches taught require practice. Several of us have sought out additional opportunities to use the Art of Hosting techniques we learned. Mary served as a table host at a water quality event, while Terry was a table host for an event designed to promote collaboration between the University of Minnesota and Hennepin County. As a group, we served on the hosting team for a University of Minnesota Community of Practice event that shared the stories of how UMN faculty and staff are applying Art of Hosting. Meeting to craft the purpose for that event, hosting World Café tables, and engaging with other practitioners helped us understand the principles from the workshop in a deeper way. We also utilized Art of Hosting-inspired listening techniques to identify themes and main ideas in our interviews.

FINDINGS - HOW TECHNIQUES ARE BEING USED

Most participants reported using many of the techniques in both work and their personal lives. And although a wide range of techniques were reported being tried and/or utilized since the training (see Table 1), university staff seem to be utilizing a small number of the same techniques of Art of Hosting most often.

Table 1: List of techniques reported to being utilized when asked, "...let's focus on a project where you've purposely been trying to bring some or all of what you learned from the introduction to the Art of Hosting to shape your work" from the interview protocol.

Techniques Being Used	Mentions in Interviews
Listening (compassionate listening, listening with curiosity)	14
World Café	12
Harvesting (purposeful harvesting, using different techniques)	10
Circle (with artifact in center or talking piece)	7
Check in / Opening Activity	7
Open Space Technology	6
Hosting (table host, day host, hosted teams, hosting relationships)	6
Powerful Questions / Objective Reflective Intuitive Decisional (ORID) Process	5
Team building / Relationship Building	4
Strategic visioning (strategic planning and participation)	3
Planning for event purpose	3
Framing teaching	3
Visual flow	3

Checkout	2
Poem narrative	2
Chaordic path	2
ProAction Café	1
Consensus building	1
Conversations between departments	1
Evaluation	1
Walking meetings	1
Mates	1
Cynefin Framework	1
Divergence to Convergence	1
Groan Zone	1
Appreciative Inquiry	1
Community of Practice/Practitioners	1

Low Hanging Fruit

As seen in the table, the summer 2011 training participants have been using many different techniques, but there is a clear indication of what techniques are being used most often; listening practices, world cafe, check in, and harvesting. At the April 11, 2012 University of Minnesota Art of Hosting Community of Practice meeting, participants described these techniques as "low hanging fruit," because they are relatively easy to incorporate into existing work patterns.

Participants at the April gathering felt that some of the other techniques, while they can be extremely helpful, also tend to be very time consuming, both in terms of up-front costs and the actual time it takes to run a group through a technique. Some participants hesitated to bring some of the relationship-based techniques to their workplace. Conversations at that meeting expanded and focused on how to incorporate many of the other techniques into participants' work. The big question for many was "where do we go from here?"

CREATING A FRAMEWORK

Due to a lack of continuing education dollars, Laura was looking for a professional development opportunity that was low cost. Her position engages students with the broader community. Students reflect on what they learned through that community engagement; Laura had been using some of the Art of Hosting techniques to assist in that reflection. A colleague suggested that Laura attend the Art of Hosting training. She did and found it to be "something I could really sink my teeth into." (Cont.)

As Laura had been using Art of Hosting techniques with her students, it wasn't the techniques that got her attention, as much as how the techniques and practices were "framed." When working with students and staff in the past, talking about their experiences was difficult as there wasn't a framework in which to discuss those experiences. Art of Hosting provides that framework with things like the chaordic path stepping stones, 5 "breaths" of design, powerful questions, etc. The framework provided a context and vocabulary in which undergraduates can describe their experiences; basically the "why does this all matter." Laura was so motivated after the training, that she went back to her three colleagues and described some changes she wanted to make to their curriculum. The group "took a chance on me" and the changes were made. Learning circles were also incorporated as a pedagogical tool, with students assigned to listen for facts, deeper meaning, etc. This has increased the active listening capacity of students.

Laura did share that she does see some drawbacks to the process. She's not sure if the practices "resonate across identity groups." Most participants in her cohort were white, so she does wonder on how the practices work interculturally. She also wonders that because Art of Hosting was not developed by academics, there may be a legitimacy issue on campus; something that probably isn't an issue in other settings.

Stealth Hosting

As a group, we found it interesting that a while a number of participants were using many of the techniques, they were not identifying them as Art of Hosting techniques. This "stealth hosting" has been described by many as a way to incorporate the techniques into daily life without introducing the entire Art of Hosting framework. Participant interviews revealed that those who identified themselves with little to no positional power often employed stealth techniques.

For example, Janet described a weekly meeting that she attended as support staff to take minutes, where she incorporated harvesting techniques into her participation at the meeting. While the actual content of the meeting remained unchanged, her Art of Hosting technique dramatically improved the contents of the meeting minutes, making it easier and clearer to tell what was discussed and who was assigned action items.

STEALTH HOSTING

Christina works in a very busy environment with colleagues without a lot of free time to spare for meetings. "We're lucky if we get people for a half hour, so I have to structure conversations to be quick and effective." Formal meetings can sometimes be unproductive, as some people talk too much, some people never talk, and some people talk about nothing. This was a great environment to try something new.

In one meeting, Christina decided to try the Art of Hosting technique of using a talking stick. She designated a small item as the talking piece and let her colleagues know that "you can only ask questions or talk when you've got the talking piece." This technique can be helpful to slow a conversation down, make it more thoughtful, and increase meaningful participation.

It worked. Christina had been worried that her department might reject many Art of Hosting techniques as being unprofessional or unstructured. "They were receptive to it immediately. So some of the tools you can use without everybody knowing what they're used for." She heard afterwards that one participant said it was one of the best meetings she'd ever gone to.
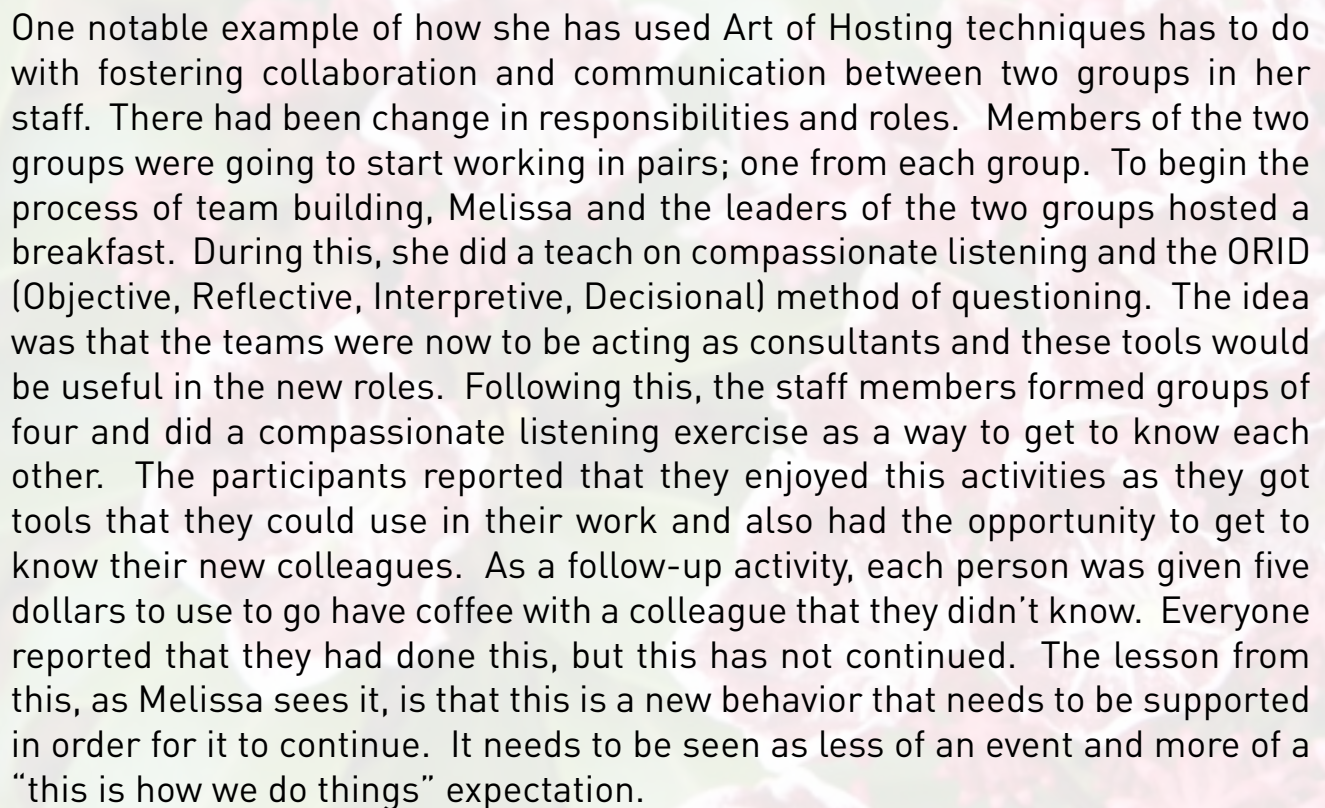
Practice

A major component of the four-fold practice (Appendix A) and a point made by a number of partici-pants is that Art of Hosting techniques need to be practiced in order to be sustained. At a Community of Practice meeting held in the Twin Cities in March 2012, Toke Mueller also spoke about this need, saying, "We learn from what we are learning as we practice (Art of Hosting Community of Practice meeting, March 24, 2012.)"

Several participants brought up the need to practice in their interviews, and mentioned how they have sought out opportunities to do so. Many University of Minnesota practitioners have served as table hosts for other events and participated in additional trainings. In addition, there has been interest in building an engaged community of practice group where participants can come together to practice techniques, create new understandings, build relationships, and share experiences.

CULTIVATING RELATIONSHIPS

Melissa has tried to sprinkle Art of Hosting into much of what she does on a daily basis. She now begins each staff meeting with a circle check-in and she uses a visual flow (agenda) in the place of a formal agenda for many meetings. (Cont.)

One notable example of how she has used Art of Hosting techniques has to do with fostering collaboration and communication between two groups in her staff. There had been change in responsibilities and roles. Members of the two groups were going to start working in pairs; one from each group. To begin the process of team building, Melissa and the leaders of the two groups hosted a breakfast. During this, she did a teach on compassionate listening and the ORID (Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, Decisional) method of questioning. The idea was that the teams were now to be acting as consultants and these tools would be useful in the new roles. Following this, the staff members formed groups of four and did a compassionate listening exercise as a way to get to know each other. The participants reported that they enjoyed this activities as they got tools that they could use in their work and also had the opportunity to get to know their new colleagues. As a follow-up activity, each person was given five dollars to use to go have coffee with a colleague that they didn't know. Everyone reported that they had done this, but this has not continued. The lesson from this, as Melissa sees it, is that this is a new behavior that needs to be supported in order for it to continue. It needs to be seen as less of an event and more of a "this is how we do things" expectation.

Conversations that Matter

One of the most beneficial components of Art of Hosting is the relationship building that occurs at the training and throughout the process. When everyone in the room is empowered to have an equal voice, barriers can fall and relationships start to form. Relationships with people with whom you are making decisions on a daily basis makes the tough conversations and decisions easier. When a group is faced with a particularly divisive issue, Art of Hosting techniques can diffuse the situation. Participants reported using Art of Hosting concepts in creating a new curriculum for an academic program, team-building in intensive courses, and tackling complex university-wide projects.

For example, InCommons gathered together community groups consisting of environmentalists, concerned citizens, and the farming community in a number of rural Minnesota locations. Attendees discussed water quality using World Cafe as a facilitation technique. Many of the Art of Hosting participants from the University of Minnesota were involved in these meetings as table hosts. Although people came to the meeting with different viewpoints and ideas, attendees reported that World Cafe allowed for conversations to take place in an environment of inquiry and curiosity, not of judgment and finality.

LETTING ALL VOICES BE HEARD

Robert has used the Art of Hosting both with his students and in the work he does in the community. Robert was part of the organizing team for a one day gathering to look look at sustainability in neighborhoods. As part of this event, he planned a World Cafe. The purpose, as he saw it, was discovery. He found that when people came together with no particular ends and means, but to learn from each other, that people who would not normally talk to each other did. It allowed people to come out of their silos and get to know each other around a topic that they shared an interest in. He also found that this technique served to minimize any one person's domination of a discussion. At community meetings there are often one or two voices who dominate and the world cafe format serves to level the playing field by giving all participants that chance to be heard, Robert believes. This was made clear during the harvest part of the event. As Robert said, "even the quiet people felt heard, and that was important." Robert also reported that prior to the Art of Hosting training he had done activities similar to a World Cafe, but as a result of the training, he has put more structure into the questions, took a more formal approach, has thought more about the size of a functional group.

With his students, Robert has used the Art of Hosting to help his students form teams in an intentional manner. The courses he teaches are very intensive; he refers to them as a "pressure cooker." Robert invited Jerry Nagel to help with the team building activities, which included exercises in compassionate listening and learning about the chaotic path.

FINDINGS - BARRIERS

One of the difficulties at the University of Minnesota is that many who have participated in the training have not had the opportunity to practice the techniques. There are many reasons for this: opportunity, time, willingness to put oneself "out there" as well as the issue with the language of Art of Hosting and the audience. During the course of our investigation, we wanted to pay close attention to any factors that could serve as barriers to implementing Art of Hosting techniques at the University of Minnesota. Some of these barriers are specific to a university culture and some are more tied to the basic methodologies. During the interviews, certain themes came up again and again:

Logistical Barriers

Cost and time spent in training. Our training session in January cost $500 each and required a time commitment of two and a half days. For a busy and money-conscious institution like the University, these factors can represent a significant hurdle for a lot of potential participants. These barriers may also serve to artificially limit participants to groups that already have institutional power.

Time spent in implementation. To be most effective, many Art of Hosting techniques require a substantial amount of time, not only during the actual activity, but also in the planning sessions. Participants and, in particular, hosts must be able to spare the time to get the most out of the experiences.

Lack of background resources. The Art of Hosting is still a young discipline, which can make the learning experience very exciting, but a little unfocused. There isn't yet a lot of literature, examples, or case studies. The website http://www.artofhosting.org/home/ is full of quotes and poems and metaphors, that seem to be organized in a very fluid/organic manner. This can help lead to a sense of community for those already initiated in the practice, but can be off-putting to a novice trying to learn about the basics. Without a lot of concrete materials, the layperson may rely too much on individual perceptions instead of learning about existing successes.

Multiple "types" of users. Because we interviewed approximately 90% of the summer 2011 cohort, we were able to see diversity in the group. Some people have thrown themselves into the spirit of the Art of Hosting and are fully engaged in learning more. Others were much more tentative about the experience of the training and haven't used much of what they learned. Several interviewees noted that the training and the techniques seem to be geared more towards extroverts than introverts. We should be mindful that individuals are at different places (and different stages of the four-fold practice) during the implementation process.

ART OF HOSTING ONLINE?

Martha, a senior faculty member, explored the use of Art of Hosting techniques in a graduate-level course. Her students participated in online discussions using the course management system Moodle. The class was broken into four groups to discuss course topics. Each group was assigned a host and a harvester. Initially, discussion increased, but it became clear that students could use some more training in how to serve as good hosts and harvesters, particularly in an online environment. How can Art of Hosting be modified to work online?

Cultural Barriers

Language and jargon.   Many interviewees raised concerns about the specific language used in the Art of the Hosting, using phrases such as "touchy feely" and "unprofessional." Many people also mentioned that the jargon makes much more sense after you've been immersed in the training, but the initial impact of the language should not be discounted. Especially when used in initial contacts, like the invitation to training, care should be taken not to alienate potential partners.

The University's hierarchical/bureaucratic structure. Several interviewees mentioned the personal nature of some of the methodologies, in particular the circle exercise of sharing an artifact and the compassionate listening. One participant mentioned that she would have to think carefully before using these techniques depending on the other people in the room. It takes a certain type of

bravery to become vulnerable in a room of strangers. It can feel much riskier to become vulnerable in a room of your peers or your boss.

The University's academic structure. Even while acknowledging that it was a stereotype, several participants mentioned that they wouldn't use Art of Hosting techniques in certain settings or with certain types of people. (For instance, with a group of engineers or in a meeting of time-conscious physicians.) Because the University is structured into distinct colleges with their own "flavor", this might make it tricky to introduce Art of Hosting evenly across campus. Similarly, several people mentioned that it might be difficult to get full participation from faculty members, both because faculty have more institutional power than staff, and also because the discipline is still in its infancy and not yet "proven."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the information gathered through our interviews, our research into Art of Hosting, and our own personal experiences with Art of Hosting and the University of Minnesota, we make the following recommendations:

1. Provide resources to improve understanding.

Art of Hosting can be a nebulous concept, and means different things to different people. Much of the informational material available online is vague and buried in flowery language. Many of the summer 2011 participants were unsure about what to expect from their workshop, and it took several concrete examples of Art of Hosting in use for our group to gain a working understanding of how the practices might be used at the University of Minnesota.

Fast-Track Action Items

- Compile written case studies that describe how Art of Hosting practices are being used at the University of Minnesota and in other higher education settings. Practical case studies offer a concrete way to grasp the concepts, and can give a taste of the different ways people interpret Art of Hosting.

- Bring together an annotated bibliography of significant books, websites, and articles that are significant to various areas of Art of Hosting. Several summer 2011 participants mentioned feeling overwhelmed by the number of books and resources shared during the workshops, and a bibliography with brief descriptions could make it easier for participants to seek out more information about practices and concepts that interest them.

Long-Term Considerations

- Many of the resources we recommend could be initially shared through the existing Posterous site, but Art of Hosting needs a permanent online home at the University of Minnesota. We recommend that the Center for Integrative Leadership create and maintain a central website to serve as a central repository of information for Art of Hosting activities at the University of Minnesota. The website should be easy to find and accessible by all.

- Write a general description of Art of Hosting that includes examples of how the practices might be used. Consider creating an Art of Hosting "elevator pitch" and 3-paragraph summary that could be used by practitioners as needed.

- Provide an Art of Hosting glossary.

2. Offer Art of Hosting experiences at multiple access points.

Different people use Art of Hosting in different ways. One individual may be interested in practicing with a group of mates and deepening his or her understanding of the four-fold practice, while another may just want to learn how to better engage his or her students by integrating World Cafe into the courses s/he teaches. A robust Art of Hosting community should be able to serve both types of practitioners and minimize the impression of an in-group and out-group.

Fast-Track Action Items

- Continue to support the development of the University of Minnesota Community of Practice group, allowing and encouraging Art of Hosting practitioners to share what they've been doing and support one another's understanding of the practice.

- Many participants report being turned off by what they perceived as the touchy-feely language and style of Art of Hosting. In future workshops and trainings, consider including some discussion of how the techniques might be successfully modified for audiences less comfortable with Art of Hosting jargon. What makes harvesting different than taking notes, for example? How possible is it to integrate the same concept without using the term "harvest?"

Long-Term Considerations

- Solicit ideas for and support a series of "taster" sessions that focus on using Art of Hosting concepts in teaching, research, and outreach. Sessions should be brief and give participants "just a taste" of what Art of Hosting can be, allowing the Art of Hosting concepts to spread more quickly throughout the University and creating interest in the full workshops.

3. Nurture and grow Art of Hosting at the University of Minnesota.

Art of Hosting has certainly taken root at the University of Minnesota, but must continue to grow in order to gain legitimacy and fulfill its transformative potential.

Fast-Track Action Items

- Develop an easily replicable presentation that could be brought to colleges, departments, and other University units to summarize Art of Hosting and help convince units to give Art of Hosting a try by sponsoring a workshop.

Long-Term Considerations

- Many participants mentioned that Art of Hosting must work within the power structure of the University in order to become truly effective and integrated into University culture. We recommend that the Art of Hosting community continue to seek faculty support and leadership. Buy-in from well-respected faculty members conveys a powerful message across the University. For better or worse, initiatives seen as a "staff thing" are often not taken seriously.

- Partner with an Art of Hosting representative within each college or major division. These representatives can serve as an information source and answer questions within their areas, as well as seek out ways to modify Art of Hosting for their particular areas and promote workshops and trainings that might be of interest to their faculty and staff.

- Examine logistical questions. Where is Art of Hosting's "home" within the university? Where will future funding and support come from? Does this function rest with the Center for Integrative Leadership, or somewhere else?

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

Wheatley, M. (2011). Walk Out, Walk On: A Learning Journey into Communities Daring to Live the Future Now. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2011.

Art of Hosting Community of Practice, Minnesota Humanities Center, St. Paul, MN. Saturday, March 24, 2012

University of Minnesota Community of Practice meeting, Walter Library, Minneapolis, MN. Wednesday, April 11, 2012.

University of Minnesota Community of Practice Posterous site: http://umnaoh.posterous.com. Anyone can contribute stories to the Posterous site by sending them to umnaoh@posterous.com.

University of Minnesota Community of Practice mailing list: umn-aoh@lists.umn.edu.

http://www.artofhosting.org/home/

http://artofhosting.ning.com/

http://theworldcafe.com

http://www.kcsdv.org/toolkit/AppreciativeInquiry.pdf

"The Story of Art of Hosting," http://vimeo.com/36755022

http://chriscorrigan.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

APPENDIX A: THE FOUR FOLD PRACTICE *[from the work of Chris Corrigan]*
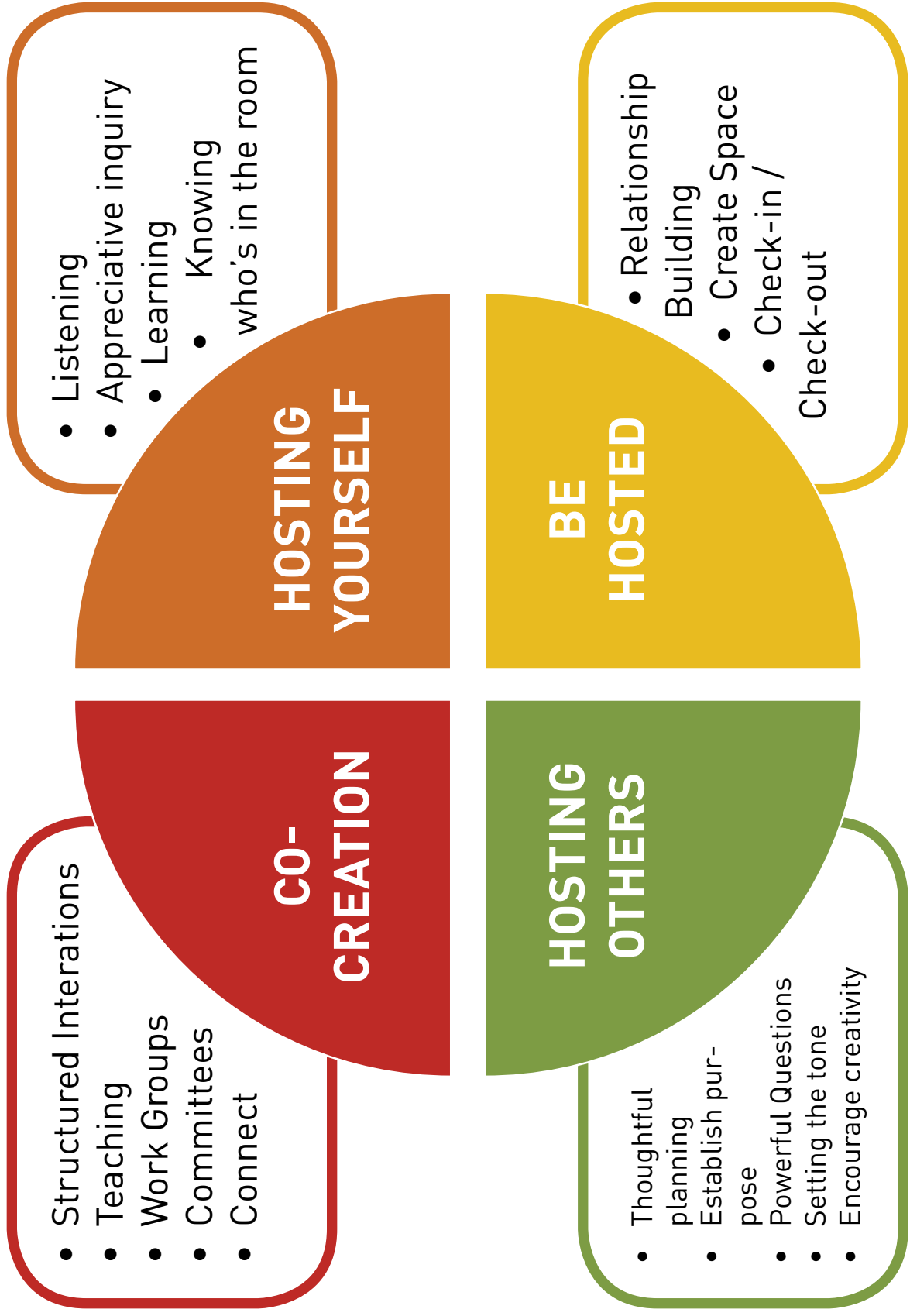
HOST YOURSELF
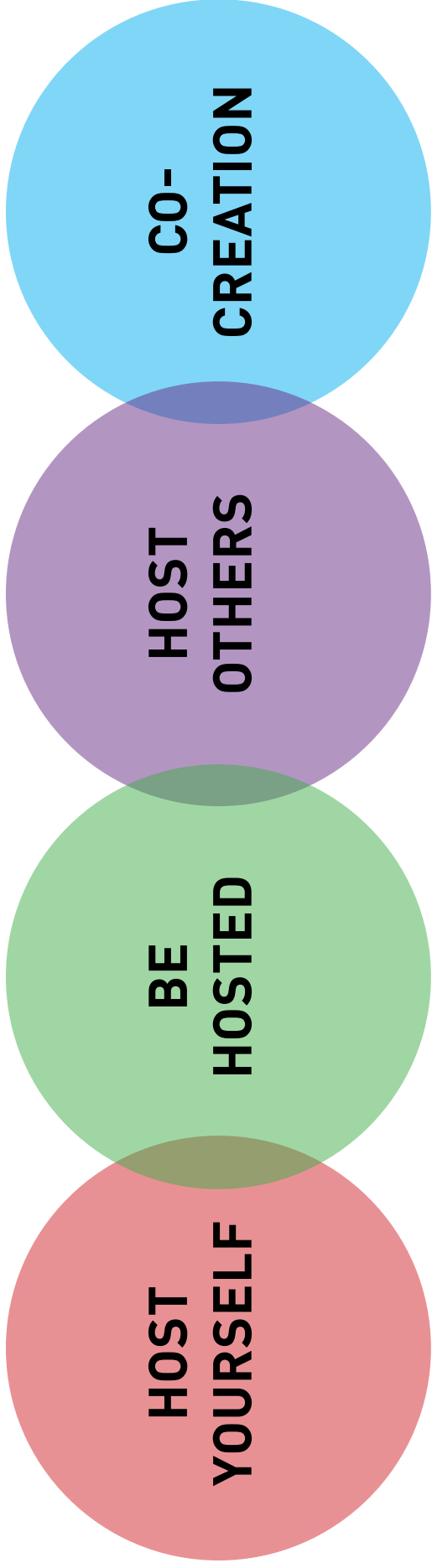
- Be present
- Be place based
- Sense what could be better
- Develop confidence
- Prepare for surprising outcomes
- Centering before entering
- Personal wellness: sleep, eat and hydrate
- Give yourself enough time
- Know your participants
- Remember that you are always a learner

BE HOSTED

- Connect people to purpose
- Learn and speak with a common language
- Listen and ask questions and be curious
- Take notes and connect to learning from elsewhere
- Realize that you don't need to know everything
- Celebrate and reinforce commonalities
- Ask good questions
- Empathize and synthesize
- Notice your projections on to other people
- Response-ability
- Act on your beliefs and values in a positive way
- Trust yourself

HOST OTHERS

- Create space for dialogue and for a community that cares.
- Bring together diversity for better innovation
- Make people comfortable and invite them to push their boundaries
- Invite respect
- Pay attention to logistics and the quality of space
- Create a space for invitation and learning, where disagreement is legitimate
- Work from common purpose
- Recognize and name the elephants in the room
- Be clear about the purpose of and the intended harvest of a conversation
- Provide the minimum structure to focus work while allowing for emergence
- Host people to enable them to engage in uncertain circumstances
- Level the playing field for wisdom

CO-CREATION

- Community of learners
- Create collaborative buy in
- Change must come from the margins of the system, sustained by a core that is willing to co-create
- Do activities that connect rather than prescribe answers
- Always plan with an eye to sustaining momentum
- Develop a close network of mates and work together
- Work with people and have fun with them too.
- Collect and share stories
- Collaborate with complimentary allies
- Seek inspiration across disciplines.

THE FOUR FOLD PRACTICE IN THE UNIVERSITY SETTING

HOSTING YOURSELF

- Listening
- Appreciative inquiry
- Learning
- Knowing who's in the room

BE HOSTED

- Relationship Building
- Create Space
- Check-in / Check-out

CO-CREATION

- Structured Interations
- Teaching
- Work Groups
- Committees
- Connect

HOSTING OTHERS

- Thoughtful planning
- Establish purpose
- Powerful Questions
- Setting the tone
- Encourage creativity

APPENDIX B: DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

Our interview sample consisted of 23 individuals who participated in the "Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter" training during the summer of 2011. Our sample was heavily female (n=16) and white (n=21). Nearly all of the interview subjects had some sort of graduate degree (n=21). Age was more distributed, with 12 subjects age 30-49, seven age 50-64, and two in each of the 18-39 and 65+ age groups.

All subjects were University of Minnesota employees at the time they participated in training. Eight were identified as administrators, four as faculty, four as outreach specialists, two as graduate assistants, two as researchers, two as teachers, and one as a consultant.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol: PEL Gold Team, Winter 2012

1. Can you tell me a little about your background of work? How did you come to your work?

2. Why did you choose to attend this training? How did you feel about it going in?

3. Thinking back to the Art of Hosting training in August, what activities or experiences do you remember most?

4a. Let's focus on a project where you've purposely been trying to bring some or all of what you learned from the introduction to the Art of Hosting to shape your work.

- Explain what's happened to date: what you have done, what has occurred
- Which parts of Art of Hosting are you using, and how and why? Prompt to discuss:
  - ◇ Holistic "hosting" design: purposive "invitation" into conversation, loose visual agendas, less formalized/structured materials and agenda
  - ◇ Particular techniques, including circle process, open space technology, World Cafe, Proaction Cafe, and Appreciative Inquiry
  - ◇ Harvesting - harvesting important nuggets from the conversation to help move the group forward
  - ◇ Worldview / paradigm of groups as living systems, in which change occurs along a chaordic path
  - ◇ Working together with one or more other facilitators in a team
- Why did you choose this approach for this project? (timing, setting, etc.)
- What are you trying to achieve through the Art of Hosting approach or these techniques? Does it seem to be working? What, if any, results have you seen?
- Is the group you are working with homogenous or heterogeneous (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, beliefs, geography, etc.?) How does the Art of Hosting approach or its techniques work with a heterogeneous group? Does it work?
- How do you think this would work in a multicultural university setting? (e.g. one with different understandings of authority and status within a group)

Go to Question 5.

4b. If you are not bringing these approaches into your work, what are the barriers? Prompts:

- Holistic "hosting" design: purposive "invitation" into conversation, loose visual agendas, less formalized/structured materials and agenda
- Particular techniques, including circle process, open space technology, World Cafe, Proaction Cafe, and Appreciative Inquiry
- Harvesting - harvesting important nuggets from the conversation to help move the group forward
- Worldview / paradigm of groups as living systems, in which change occurs along a chaordic path
- Working together with one or more other facilitators in a team

5a. Have you encountered any barriers to implementing Art of Hosting techniques at the University of Minnesota? Prompts:

- "Touchy-feely" language of Art of Hosting
- University culture
- Time and cost of training

5b. How do you think Art of Hosting might impact the University? Prompts:

- Collaborative work vs. independent work & "silos"

6. We discussed the principle of working together in facilitation. How has that been working?

- Have you worked with anyone from the training as a "mate?"
- If so, how did you find one another?
- If not, why not?

7. Is there project where you think these practices would not work? What about this context makes it so? What seem to be the major strengths and limitations of the Art of Hosting approach?

8. When you think about the "hosting" approach to gathering people together, what types of things might result (compared to traditional meetings / conferences)?

9. Are you bringing any of the Art of Hosting frameworks or techniques to other parts of your work or life, other than hosting community engagement conversations? If so, how? (examples include the way team/staff meetings are organized, doing "minutes" of events in a different way, decentering their authority in other aspects of their leadership roles to "host" rather than "facilitate," etc.)

10. The larger InCommons initiative had been in existence for several months when you participated in the training. Have you participated in other InCommons groups / trainings / events? Do you feel support for your practice from the larger InCommons initiative?

11. Have you used InCommons.org or other venues (events, etc.) to connect with other facilitators? Which venues have you used? Have you sought connections with other facilitators, and how has it worked out? If not, why not?

12. At the training, hosts shared books and referenced international community of practice. Have you sought out more information? If so, what have you learned? Has it been useful to shape your work?

13. Thank you for meeting with me. Is there anything I have not asked that you'd like to bring up?

APPENDIX D: SELF-INTERVIEWS

1. Can you tell me a little about your background of work? How did you come to your work?

MJ: I work at the Center for Teaching and Learning. My primary role is instructor in the International Teaching Assistant (ITA) program. In this program, we prepare current and prospective TAs for the university classroom. Our courses focus on language, teaching skills, and cross-cultural awareness. I also do some consulting and workshops with instructional staff and faculty on campus and coordinate our Teaching Enrichment Series. My background is in teaching English as a Second Language; I have a Master's Degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Langauges (TESOL). I taught in intensive English programs at several public and private institutions prior to coming to the University. I have been in my current position for 13 years.

CN: I work as an accountant and administrator for the Technological Leadership Institute in the College of Science and Engineering. My current work involves budget/finance, student services (financial aid, billing, etc), and a broad range of administrative functions. My undergraduate degree is in English and chemistry, but after college I spent three years working in student affairs (residential life, academic development/support, and career services) before switching to the financial track.

TJS: I'm a professional, paid leader of volunteers. I graduated college with a BA in Music Performance, with a Business Administration minor. My goal was to be able to perform in the evenings and have a paying job during the day. I achieved this within 3 months of graduation. After working for a corporation for 3 years, I decided I wanted to be able to work in an environment where my work served the greater good, not just those at the top of a corporation and it's share holders. So I began to explore non-profit organizations. I ended up at the Minnesota AIDS Project as an Administrative Assistant. I worked in different areas of the organization, including as a contract manager and then in the development department. I assisted the volunteer department from time-to-time and when a position opened there, I applied and was hired as the Buddy/Home Helper Coordinator. As these volunteers basically helped people living with HIV and AIDS with death and dying issues, I became quite aware that volunteers can do just about anything. After 3 years in this position, I became the Volunteer Program Manager, responsible for the organizations 1400 volunteers. From the MN AIDS Project I went to the MN Office of Citizenship and Volunteer Services. This was a State Office that acted as a volunteer center for the state, providing education and resources to leaders of volunteer programs. The office was closed by Governor Jesse Ventura and I went to Volunteers of America of Minnesota and worked for the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) as the West Metro Program Director. Due to financial reasons, the East, Central and West programs were merged, and I became Director of the Greater Twin Cities RSVP, responsible for an 12 county service area. The stress from this merger was extreme, and I was ready to move on after 3 years. That brought me to the University of MN Extension and the Master Gardener Program. Due to the passion of the master gardener volunteers, I feel like I've come full circle, as our master gardener volunteers are just as passionate as our HIV/AIDS volunteers were, and they can do anything!

BC: I am a librarian and director of a small library in the Carlson School of Management.

EF: I work in pre-award grant administration, which involves working with faculty members to help them prepare and submit research grant proposals, as well as develop their ideas and find funding opportunities. My background is in writing – my degrees are in English and journalism – but I worked in a grant administration office during grad school and developed a highly specialized set of skills in this area.

2. Why did you choose to attend this training? How did you feel about it going in?

MJ. I attended this training as a part of my experience in the University's President's Emerging Leaders (PEL) program. My team decided to learn more about the Art of Hosting and make recommendations for how it could "stick" at the University as our PEL project. I was a bit nervous going in to the training. The tone of the call letter felt dramatic and I had heard from others who had previously done the training that it was very "touchy-feely." I wasn't sure how comfortable I would be with this with complete strangers.

CN: My team chose to attend training as part of our research for our PEL project--the timing was almost perfect for our needs. Before the training, I was skeptical because of: 1. "touchy-feely" nature of AoH; 2. lack of definitions; and 3. the fact that my current job doesn't have many opportunities to act as a facilitator. I was intrigued because: 1. the concept of "making conversations more meaningful" really resonates with me--I get frustrated when people don't hear each other; and 2. some part of me really misses the "touchy-feeliness" from my Res Life days!

TJS: I was invited to the August training, but when I saw the words "hosting," I thought – "this is something I know how to do," so that, plus the cost of the training, made me decide not to pursue it. I attended the January training with my PEL group to explore what the Art of Hosting was all about -- I'm glad I did.

BC: I attended the training as part of a project that we are working on, as a team we thought it necessary to have this experience in order to understand what we were hearing from other participants and to experience it for ourselves. I was nervous, and very, very skeptical and cynical.

EF: I first heard about the training through my involvement in the President's Emerging Leaders (PEL) program, and attended as part of the PEL group project I am working with. Despite doing research and talking to a lot of people about Art of Hosting, I was having a hard time figuring out just what exactly it was. A lot of the materials I saw online seemed touchy-feely and hippie-ish to me, and I was worried that I wouldn't be comfortable or able to engage with others. I was committed to suspending my cynicism and going in with an open mind, but I was still nervous about what I was going to find.

3. Thinking back to the Art of Hosting training in January, what activities or experiences do you remember most?

MJ: The experiences I remember the most were the opening circle, the compassionate listening, and the groan zone demonstration.   I was uncomfortable during the opening circle. There was a lot of emotion that I wasn't expecting, especially at the beginning of the event. The compassionate listening exercise is the activity that stands out the most – people shared very personal stories with people they barely knew. Perhaps it is easier to do this with strangers. I remember the groan zone because it was fun and a clear illustration of the concept.

CN: 1. The sound of the chimes. 2. The opening circle, where several participants coincidentally brought items related to Paul Wellstone and where the room became more emotional the further around we went. 3. Susan Geller's poem/summary of the initial circle: this is an example of a har-

vest that feels very meaningful to me, if ephemeral. 4. Being struck by how beautiful the Flow was, even if it didn't seem very "practical" to my scientific eyes. 5. The actual teaching sessions don't resonate very much for me: the cafes kind of blend together. I remember most distinctly the things that didn't work: the Open Space market place made up of electrical tape that was too small for the pieces of paper, for instance.

TJS: A sinus infection! And I enjoyed the training despite that. Specific exercises that come to mind ar: harvesting (I harvested presenter stories;) the circle with our articles in the middle; the listening exercise; the Proaction Café – people worked on my question which was about taking AoH practices and applying them to traditional board settings.

BC: I was first surprised at the opening circle where participants opened up a lot more that I was expecting/comfortable with. I was frustrated with the selection process for Open Space technology where people were putting their ideas onto squares on a grid. It took a very long time and was very confusing and people were confused about what was expected of them. I enjoyed the listening exercise and both World and Proaction cafe.

EF: The check-in circle comes to mind first. It was interesting and engaging, but very, very long. I remember putting topics on the board for Open Space, and doing the listening exercise. I liked the World Café exercise, but remember thinking how awesome Proaction Café was, and how useful it might be.

4a. Let's focus on a project where you've purposely been trying to bring some or all of what you learned from the introduction to the Art of Hosting to shape your work.

MJ: I have tried to use several of the techniques in different aspects of my worklife. I introduced the circle check-in to begin our staff meetings. We haven't done this consistently, but when we have done it, we've learned more about what each of us is doing at work and there has been a greater exchange of ideas. I also introduced the ORID method in a professional development meeting of the ITA program staff. I chose this as I think it can help us prepare better discussion questions for our students. I plan to teach this method to my students in the fall as a way to help them better interact and be more successful with their students in the classroom and in office hours. I used the "Collabumentary" activity with several groups of students. This was a good fluency practice exercise for them and it gave them an opportunity to reflect on their language when they watched it back.   Finally, I've also introduced the "Compassionate Listening" exercise to my students. They are able to listen for fact, but listening for implied ideas, such as feelings and values, is much more difficult for them. This has helped them to develop in this area.

The staff group I have introduced this concept to is very homogeneous – all have advanced degrees, have travelled extensively, and share the same profession. My students, however, are very heterogeneous. They come from a variety of countries and are studying a variety of fields, from the humanities to the sciences. They are similar in terms of age – most are in their early to mid twenties.

I do think this can work in a multicultural university setting. In order to make it work, however, there needs to be buy-in. The purpose and intended outcomes of whatever activity need to be made clear so that it doesn't feel like time is being wasted. It's important when planning to use an Art of Hosting technique with a group that has different understandings of authority and status to consider that when introducing the activity and it may be necessary to give "permission" for people to step outside of their normal roles.

CN: I've used Art of Hosting primarily with my PEL team, specifically while planning and hosting the gathering in April, which involved a World Cafe. We have used visual flows for our internal weekly meetings and some of our team members are very skilled at asking good questions, which have facilitated successful discussions. We almost always start our meetings with a simple circle check-in. As the year has progressed, we've gotten comfortable sharing a lot more. This resonates with Chris Corrigan's thoughts about the power of "hanging out" as a way to grow a community. Our harvest is usually just taking notes. Our discussions process is free-flowing enough that I think we do make some valuable intuitive leaps. This organic conversation (process) feels like part of the harvest (process).

It made sense to attempt to incorporate our learning as we went--Art of Hosting needs to be practiced, and this was a very safe environment to practice. My team is already composed of good communicators, but Art of Hosting has given us some great tools to use (asking good questions, revisiting our purpose, etc). Our group is pretty homogeneous (and probably fairly representative of staff at the University). The Art of Hosting does disrupt the expected hierarchy at the U. I think it might work really well for a "special" event, like a department retreat or a strategic planning session, where are the participants are predisposed to play along for a shared purpose.

TJS: The best example is the use of a controlled World Café with Master Gardener vounte mentors. Traditionally, mentors meet together to discuss best practices. In the past we'd use a panel that would share their thoughts on the topic. This year I broke the group into 3 small groups. The overall question was "What does a Master Gardener Mentor in Hennepin County look like in 2012?" We had 3 questions used to help define this: What scares you about being a mentor? Why do you want to be a mentor? What has worked for you in being a mentor in the past? From these 3, 20-minute sessions we ended up with a "Best Practices" document that was shared with all mentors. Volunteers reported that this was "one of the best mentor trainings ever" and that they learned new things.

BC: I have been thinking a lot about relationship building and about check in/check out. We've starting doing a check in at a meeting I lead, and it has been successfull, but we don't use a targeted question.

My PEL group has been using visual flows for our meetings, it's fun, but not much different from a traditional agenda.

Harvesting is something I've been really thinking about, but it is still percolating.

Working with my PEL group and 2 folks from the Art of Hosting training to plan I did take part in a process of planning the the Art of Hosting University Community gathering which will hopefully turn into a Art of Hosting Community of Practice at the University.

We are trying to build relationships and see what folks at the U have been integrating into their work. The planning process seemed to work, we spent a fair amount of time working on purpose, which was helpful to clarify.

It seems as though the techniques seem to work well in other countries, but I do wonder how it would work with a bunch of different participants from different cultures all in the same room, with facilitators from yet another culture. My guess is that it would be difficult, especially if the hosts were of one culture and the participants we of others.

EF: We have explicitly been using some of the techniques in my PEL group – listening for different threads as we share our interviews, trying out visual flows instead of agendas in list format, working with a larger team of UMN people to design a community of practice gathering. This is all with people who have been through training and are familiar with the practices, though. In my "real life," I

have been less active. I often think that Art of Hosting approaches might improve meetings and other events, but have yet to deliberately use any of them.

4b. If you are not bringing these approaches into your work, what are the barriers?

BC: Most my barriers are self imposed, or that I really don't have time to do things. Much of what I do is working with faculty, so it's difficult to use these techniques with folks who are less open to them, or who abhor change or doing thing differently. I have been thinking a lot of how to integrate more of aoh into life/work. I find myself looking at things with a different lens, trying to see things more from a aoh perspective and/or seeing the techniques used all over the place.

EF: I don't feel like I have a lot of power in my current position – I am not generally the one that runs meetings or designs events. I work with time-pressed faculty members to achieve clear objectives, and I don't want to gain a reputation as someone who wastes time or is touchy-feely. This doesn't mean that I don't ever intend to incorporate Art of Hosting approaches into my work, but that the situations I find myself in aren't quite right. This goes along with a lot of my interviewees' advice to know your audience. I think I need to be a bit more mindful of things that I can do on my own – ie "hosting yourself," the first step of the four-fold practice.

5a. Have you encountered any barriers to implementing Art of Hosting techniques at the University of Minnesota?

MJ: The cost of the training certainly can be a barrier. Had it not been for the fund that each PEL team has, I would not have been able to attend this training. Language can also be an issue. I would never use the word "mate" in class as it would probably not be understood by my students (and if they did understand it, it would probably be the definition I don't want them to use!). As for University culture, again, I think that if you can get buy in by having a clear purpose and making modifications in the language so that people are comfortable with the techniques, it can be implemented.

CN: Aside from some residual eye-rolling, I now feel much more comfortable using the Art of Hosting jargon (with a few notable exceptions, like the word "mate" which still makes me feel a bit uncomfortable). I'm fortunate to have a great deal of support in my unit for professional development, so I was able to take the time and spend the money to go through the training. The overall time-commitment was still a little hard to squeeze in.

TJS: No, I'm pretty autonomous. However, I am trying to incorporate some AoH components into my monthly meetings with my leadership team. It's difficult due to the same structure having been used for years, plus my ability to plan the meetings thoughtfully – AoH takes more time and energy than a simple agendaed meeting.

BC: I am uncomfortable with the language and don't use much of it. I already can see how the U's culture might not be perceptive to this, but can see it working in some areas.

Time and cost will be an issue for many people at the U. There is talk about how will be the small guys who will push AofH out to the masses, but many of the "small guys" have no professional development $ to spend or no support from their managers to develop, which will make it difficult if not impossible.

I also have noticed a definite us/them tone. I've heard things like "well, they're doing world café, but they're doing it wrong." And, "They just don't understand." I also feel that AofH and other AofH events have an inclusively/exclusivity aspect to it.

EF: Part of the barriers I encounter are related to university culture and the established power structure between faculty and staff. Someone who perceives themselves as having lesser power in a given situation needs to be extremely confident in order to implement Art of Hosting approaches in a way that extends beyond themselves.

5b. How do you think Art of Hosting might impact the University?

MJ: I think the Art of Hosting can have the greatest impact at the University on a local (college/departmental) level. At an institution this large and decentralized, I don't know that large-scale transformation is possible.

CN: I think Art of Hosting has great potential to help the U. Here's a few examples: contract negotiations, teaching, formal study groups, resolving town/gown problems, Greek/non-Greek problems, athletics/academics problems, dysfunctional departments, big issues like changing the Grad School, merging colleges, advocating with the state, and telling the U's "story" to outside entities.

TJS: I think there's a lot of potential. It does permit you to get to know and understand your coworkers better.

BC: I think that the techniques could transform pockets of the university. I think it could have a huge impact on teaching, and could transform culture at the university. But it would need to be more accessible and go "viral" in order for that to happen.

EF: I think Art of Hosting has enormous potential in the university setting. All the trends in higher education are moving towards more collaboration and more interdisciplinary work, and I think Art of Hosting techniques and approaches can help people find common ground and generate ideas together in ways they don't usually practice. Because I work in the research field, I see a lot of application possibilities there, but the potential for changing meetings and engaging students is also huge.

6. We discussed the principle of working together in facilitation. How has that been working?

MJ: I worked with a member of the Summer 2011 cohort at the Owatonna gathering. I have also worked with others to facilitate the gathering in April 2012.

CN: Mainly through PEL. I think of Jodi Sandfort as a wonderful resource--I would be very excited for any chances to work with her in the future.

TJS: Our PEL team hosted a University team event – it was successful and fun to work with the group in a different capacity. I also participated as Table Host at an event sponsored by the Hennepin-University of MN Partnership.

BC: I've the pleasure of training with and working with PEL and Solid Gold and can say that we as a group have embraced each other as "mates, " but, due to my nature, I don't see anyone else as a mate.

EF: I have only worked with the others from my PEL group and the group putting together the UMN community of practice event. It has been tremendously helpful to be able to talk through Art of Hosting with my PEL group, and I feel like I am beginning to really understand the value of practicing these approaches and connecting with a group to evaluate and find new opportunities. I suspect that my PEL group will serve as "mates" for one another after our project is completed.

7. Is there project where you think these practices would not work? What about this context makes it so? What seem to be the major strengths and limitations of the Art of Hosting approach?

MJ: As others mentioned when I interviewed them, the majority of the Art of Hosting techniques are probably not going to work on a project that requires quick action. The strengths of the Art of Hosting approach are its focus on relationship building, deep discussions, and harvest. These techniques build community. Both process and product are important. The limitations, in my opinion, are some of the language and the fact that answers and solutions to the issues being discussed are not always immediate and our culture that likes quick answers.

CN: I would avoid very formal/hierarchical projects (Dean-level, Regents-level, etc). I think Art of Hosting works best in a flat setting where every voice appears to have the same weight. When there's a perceived power difference, I think participants might feel unwilling to fully participate in the conversation.

TJS: I think it depends on the area. If there is a culture of hierarchy, chances are it won't work. The strength is that everyone has a voice and can contribute.

EF: Because I'm working with faculty who examine and analyze for a living, I think it's important for groups to understand why the practices are being used and what the ultimate purpose is. I don't see this working well without any introduction or without a specific purpose in mind. I don't think it would work well in a setting with an extremely rigid hierarchy, or where people were afraid of retribution for expressing ideas outside of the norm.

8. When you think about the "hosting" approach to gathering people together, what types of things might result (compared to traditional meetings / conferences)?

MJ: I think there is likely to be more of a sense of community. I think there might be a greater flow of ideas because the approaches are structured so that everyone has a voice. In the end, I think more things might end up being done because relationships have been developed. I also hope that there would be more civility in dialog.

CN: More voices are heard (and in a better balance). We should have more productive meetings, since everyone will have some say in the process/agenda.

TJS: I think more can be gained using this approach. The ideas of all in the room are used, instead of just one indiviual's.

BC: The ability to have real conversations and hopefully more connections to people. I would hope that using aoh techniques would allow disparate viewpoints to be heard with respect. That says it all, real conversations, relationships and respect.

EF: Art of Hosting techniques and the "hosting" worldview offer the possibility to connect with people about something that interests both of you. I might attend a conference with someone who I could work with in the future, but I might never know about them if I didn't have the opportunity to talk with them about topics that matter to both of us. Traditional meetings and conferences don't provide a lot of opportunity for this type of engagement. "Networking" time is not enough.

9. Are you bringing any of the Art of Hosting frameworks or techniques to other parts of your work or life, other than hosting community engagement conversations? If so, how? (examples include the way team/staff meetings are organized, doing "minutes" of events in a different way, decentering their authority in other aspects of their leadership roles to "host" rather than "facilitate," etc.)

MJ: See above.

CN: I'm trying to be a better host to myself and I'm trying to stay more open to being hosted. In both my professional and personal life, this means saying "yes" more often.

TJS: I have been listening to the radio differently, especially when it comes to politicians and whether or not they are hosting others.

EF: Not really, although I see how I might do so in the future with church or school events.

10. The larger InCommons initiative had been in existence for several months when you participated in the training. Have you participated in other InCommons groups / trainings / events? Do you feel support for your practice from the larger InCommons initiative?

MJ: I attended the water quality gathering in Owatonna and served as a table host. I do feel that there is support from InCommons, but that many of the follow-up trainings are prohibitively expensive.

TJS: I have been unable to attend any additional events.

BC: I have not been able to attend additional InCommons events, time is an issue.

EF: I confess that I haven't looked much at InCommons, although I know the Bush Foundation is providing support for Art of Hosting trainings and engagement opportunities throughout the state. I feel that they are there if I need support, but that my need to work within university culture might make it difficult to truly connect.

11. Have you used InCommons.org or other venues (events, etc.) to connect with other facilitators? Which venues have you used? Have you sought connections with other facilitators, and how has it worked out? If not, why not?

MJ: I have not used the InCommons.org site. I haven't found it to be easy to navigate. I have "liked" InCommons on facebook and read the updates posted there. I haven't deliberately sought out connections with other facilitators, but would like to reconnect with those who are using the Art of Hosting techniques in their classrooms.

CN: To be honest, I feel a little overwhelmed by InCommons. The websites are very large and a bit disorganized (because of the organic nature). At our spring meeting and the Community of Practitioners meeting, I was pleased to recognize faces from earlier trainings. In general, because my role doesn't involve a traditional facilitation role, I've been hesitant to get too connected.

TJS: I set up an account, but have had problems figuring out the site. It's not very intuitive.

BC: I think the InCommons website is difficult to use, so I don't go there much. I am on the InCommons listserv.

EF: No. I don't really think of myself as a facilitator.

12. At the training, hosts shared books and referenced international community of practice. Have you sought out more information? If so, what have you learned? Has it been useful to shape your work?

MJ: I was very interested in the ORID technique and purchased the book "The Art of Focused Conversation" in order to learn more about this. I shared this technique with my colleagues and we brainstormed how we could use this with our students.   I plan to include a unit on this when I rework my syllabus for the class I'll be teaching in the fall.

CN: I have not followed through with many of these materials, though I've read some simple ones like the Wheatley text and done a fair bit of internet research as part of the PEL project.

TJS: I purchased the "Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making"by Sam Kaner,but haven't had the chance to spend much time with it.

BC: I've done some reading and research, Margaret Wheatley's book and website, Art of Hosting website, circle process books, for our PEL project.

EF: I have read pieces of Margaret Wheatley's work, but not much else.