

CULTIVATING CHANGE IN THE ACADEMY

Practicing the Art of Hosting

Conversations that Matter within the
University of Minnesota



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Cultivating Change in the Academy: Practicing the Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter within the University of Minnesota

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Contributing Authors



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Kathie is the Program Director for the Hennepin-University Partnership, formed in 2005 to catalyze and support connections between Minnesota's largest unit of local government, Hennepin County, and the State's premier research institution, the University of Minnesota. Ms. Doty holds a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of St. Thomas, and has extensive experience in the areas of public policy, outreach and communications, including managing public works programs at Hennepin County.



Brittany Edwards

Brittany is a student in Organizational Leadership and Policy Development at the College of Education. She holds a Master in Public Policy with a concentration in Public and Nonprofit Leadership, and a minor in Program Evaluation. She is President of the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly.



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Susan is Associate to the Director of the Office of eLearning (OeL) in the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost. Her interests are strategic thinking, eLearning, collaboration among public institutions around online learning, and efficient use of resources for students.



Susan Geller

Susan has been leading major change initiatives at the University of Minnesota for more than 12 years using participatory engagement methods. She is a core team lead for the University of Minnesota Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter Community of Practitioners. She founded and led the Project and Change Management Collaborators, another community of practice at the University of Minnesota, from 2006–2009. Susan enjoys working in a learning community and finding new and better ways for us to work together.



Kevin Gerdes

Kevin is Director of the Masters of Public Affairs Program at the University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs. He served 33 years with the Minnesota National Guard, retiring in 2012 Deputy Commanding General of the 34th "Red Bull" Infantry Division, having completed a tour of duty in Iraq as Commander and returning to help establish Minnesota's "[Beyond the Yellow Ribbon](#)" reintegration program as a national model.



Brad Hokanson

Brad is a professor in Graphic Design at the University of Minnesota and serves as Associate Dean for Research and Outreach for the College of Design. He has a diverse academic record, including degrees in art, architecture, urban design, and received his Ph.D. in Instructional Technology.



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Brittany currently serves as a Graduate Assistant for the Hennepin-University Partnership, helping to facilitate meaningful connections and organizing forums. She recently graduated with her Master's Degree in Social Work from the University of Minnesota with a concentration in community practice and children and families.



Cristina Lopez

Cristina is an educational technology consultant in the Office of Information Technology, University of Minnesota. She support faculty and staff in the thoughtful integration of technology into teaching, learning and work through consultations, workshops and educational events.



Leah Lundquist

Leah currently serves as Program Manager for the University of Minnesota's Center for Integrative Leadership where she develops multimedia learning materials, hosts forums, and facilitates trainings focused on engaging diverse perspectives to address complex issues. She is drawn to the Art of Hosting as a way to shift the way individuals think about leadership and as a way to infuse more artful interactions into our day-to-day lives.



Kate Maple

Kate is Assistant Dean for Student Services for the College of Design. She first participated in Art of Hosting at the College of Design sponsored training in January 2012 and has used Art of Hosting techniques in numerous meetings and events within the College and in the community.



Jen Mein

Jen Mein is a consultant in the Organizational Effectiveness division of the Office of Human Resources, engaging and empowering individuals and teams to achieve their fullest potential through coaching, leading workshops, and hosting strategic conversations.



Wendy Morris

Wendy is a pioneering leadership educator, coach and consultant who works with organizations and change makers in North America and Asia. She is affiliated with two research and training centers at the University of Minnesota: The Center for Integrative Leadership, and The Center for Spirituality and Healing.



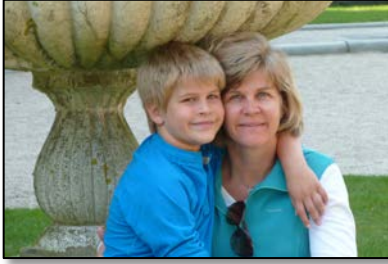
Kathy Quick

Kathy is an Assistant Professor at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. Her research, teaching, and service focus on organizing inclusive processes that enable the public and other stakeholders to contribute to addressing public problems.



Nick Rosencrans

Nick is a user experience (UX) analyst, facilitating activities to help uncover issues that are holding developers back from reaching their goals. Nick's graduate work at the University of Minnesota focused on scientific and technical communication as well as human factors. Now he puts those skills to use by helping designers identify issues that affect people and their experience with products.



Jodi Sandfort

Jodi is an Associate Professor at the University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs and the Chair of the School's Leadership and Management Area where she provides strategic direction to the MPA program and Center for Integrative Leadership.



Alfonso Sintjago

Alfonso is currently a PhD candidate in Comparative and International Development Education at the University of Minnesota where he is exploring how technology, by increasing openness and access, can help bring educational content to individuals in remote places and of limited means. His passion around technology-enhanced learning informs his contributions as Executive Vice President for the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly.



Virajita Singh

Virajita is a Senior Research Fellow and Adjunct Assistant Professor at the College of Design where she leads Design Thinking @ College of Design, a collaborative at the University of Minnesota that offers design thinking teaching, research and outreach across sectors, with a special focus on public interest design projects.



Marcela Sotela Odor

Marcela experienced the Master of Public Affairs program at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. She is passionate about multicultural interactions and unleashing the power of communities through participatory leadership rooted in deep community values.



Terry Straub

Terry is the Coordinator of the University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardener Program for Hennepin County. While his Bachelor Degree is in Music Performance, his passion is helping organizations engage volunteers effectively in their programs.



Karen Zentner Bacig

Karen is currently an instructor at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, and Founder and Consultant at Sabio Strategies. Karen's current interests include leadership development, the development of intercultural competence, and the convening of meaningful conversations.

Abstracts

Engaged Individual and Community Healing and Grieving, *Dave Dorman*

This story describes how Art of Hosting principles, philosophies, and strategies were applied while engaging the community that emerged around an individual health crisis and subsequent death. Particular attention is given to how the Four-Fold path surfaced as being foundational to healing and grieving.

Hosting a Leadership Development Cohort: We're Not in Kansas Anymore, *Dave Dorman*

This story describes how Art of Hosting practices were applied to leadership development for the 2013 cohort of the President's Excellence in Leadership program. A primary focus is given to the work of the design team who hosted a kickoff event for the cohort.

Getting Better Results at Events and Meetings, *Kathie Doty and Brittany Kellerman*

This story highlights how the Hennepin-University Partnership has implemented Art of Hosting techniques and strategies to improve their events and ongoing meetings by creating opportunities for more engaged and productive discussions.

Applying the Art of Hosting to an Open Governance Model, *Brittany Edwards & Alfonso Santjago*

This story captures how student leaders elected to the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA) perceive Art of Hosting as a radical practice for democratic governance and inclusive change. Two GAPSA leaders describe how they are putting the techniques into practice through forums with administrators to influence governance decisions at the University of Minnesota and also using the worldview to influence how they increase transparency and authentic leadership among graduate students.

Building the Case for Art of Hosting at the University of Minnesota, *Susan Engelmann*

This story captures how Art of Hosting has brought clarity to what a long-time University employee has experienced related to how change and leadership takes place in large, complex organizations. She describes how the Art of Hosting worldview around using intentional questions to get clarity around purpose has informed effective efforts at the University of Minnesota.

Collaborative Creation for Technology Implementation: The Portal Story, *Susan Geller*

A team designs a series of engagements that build on each other to create a shared vision of a new portal website. This story takes us from the first meeting of the leadership team to the end of the first phase of the project.

Trusting the Process, *Kevin Gerdes*

This story demonstrates the successful integration of The Art of Hosting Conversations That Matter (hereafter referred to as "Art of Hosting") techniques during a day-long workshop with diverse representatives who focused on redesigning services for elderly individuals who

become visually impaired. The use of a host team, opening and closing circle, Reflective Listening, and powerful questions in a World Café setting harvested important information.

Taking it on the Road, *Brad Hokanson*

Art of Hosting is a set of flexible technologies that can be used to plan, organize, and direct the other digital technological world. How the new technologies are used can be effectively planned and managed through the work of Hosting, as exemplified in these three examples of real world use.

Art of Hosting as a College-wide Change, *Brad Hokanson & Kate Maple*

The change encouraged by Art of Hosting in a college occurs on many levels, from within the single classroom to application and expectation within many meetings to addressing a large curricular change. This writing illustrates some of the effect of Art of Hosting in one college with a high percentage of trained practitioners.

Visual Facilitation Gallery Walk: Co-Learning Gathering at the University of Minnesota, *Cristina Lopez*

Part of the Art of Hosting practice is to co-learn with others in community. In 2012-13, the Art of Hosting community at the University of Minnesota hosted a visual facilitation workshop to support our co-learning around visual facilitation. This story shares our collective insights about visual facilitation and the Art of Hosting.

Beyond Presentations and Panels: Public Engagement Through Meaningful Conversation, *Leah Lundquist*

This story describes the impact intentionality around developing a hosting team, the invitation that is offered, constructing powerful questions and creatively sharing what emerges can have in fostering an authentic public engagement effort as a University partner.

A Training Not for Spectators, *Leah Lundquist & Jodi Sandfort*

This story captures both the spirit of the Art of Hosting training experience and describes what individuals at the University of Minnesota have been learning about introducing Art of Hosting within the academic context.

Leadership Journeys Lead to Hosting IT Community, *Jen Mein & Jen Bentrim*

Dozens of IT professionals have been trained in the Art of Hosting and become practitioners within the IT community, hosting hundreds of their colleagues in an respectful, inclusive, and authentic manner. Two such practitioners, Jen Mein and Jen Bentrim, share their leadership journeys in AoH and discuss how they host the IT community.

Open Space in the College of Liberal Arts, *Jen Mein*

On January 17, 2013 the College of Liberal Arts hosted 75 guests in an all-day Open Space Technology event to inform the creation of a web strategy that would advance the college and its programs. Using the eight breaths framework, this story walks through the process from the initial idea to design to harvest to reflection.

The First Forum for Leadership Educations: An Origin Story, *Wendy Morris*

One year before the first Art of Hosting training at the UMN, an innovative program at the Center for Integrative Leadership paves the way for Art of Hosting initiatives that follow. The story is told through non-linear flashbacks that bring the reader into the experience being described.

Hosting the Classroom, *Kathy Quick*

Being introduced to the Art of Hosting has fundamentally changed how I teach in ways that I can clearly discern. Being introduced to hosting has enhanced how I prepare my students to practice engagement, facilitation, and hosting. But it also helps me reflect on and advance not only my practice as a host, but also my practice as a teacher. The two are closely intertwined; I now regard the classroom as a hosting environment and have reoriented my role to being a host of professional learning.

Creating Meaningful Learning Communities: Applying Art of Hosting in Mid-Career Public Affairs Education, *Jodi Sandfort*

Art of Hosting has many implications for professional education. It provides a process for facilitating significant learning experiences, includes useful conceptual frameworks for group process and change processes, and aligns with constructivist pedagogy. This story explores all of these dimensions through the illustration of application in mid-career graduate education.

Experiencing the Forum for Leadership Educators, *Jodi Sandfort*

This story is a companion to Morris' "The Forum for Leadership Educators: An Origins Story" and describes the experience of participating in this hosted professional training program. The perspective here highlights the risks faculty and administrators feel when sponsoring hosted events for the first time, including the uncertainty of what might result.

The Art of Hosting Creativity and Innovation: Applying Design Thinking at the University of Minnesota, *Virajita Singh & Nick Rosencrans*

This story describes the application of design thinking to a stakeholder engagement phase of a University-wide technology redesign project. The authors argue that design thinking is an approach that fits with the evolving body of engagement techniques and frameworks currently associated with Art of Hosting.

CHANCE: Creating Community Through Collaboration, *Marcela Sotela Odor*

There is an important distinction to be made between working in the community and working in community. Though subtle in syntax, the real life application is vastly different. This is a story of how University of Minnesota students came together with community partners to collaborate in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood.

Enhancing Volunteer Engagement Using the Art of Hosting and Harvest Conversations Techniques, *Terry Straub*

The Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations practices are easily adapted to traditional volunteer programs. As today's volunteers want more from their volunteer experience, the practices can be used to engage volunteers differently, breathing new life into stagnant programs.

Discoveries of Faith, *Karen Zentner Bacig*

This story describes how Art of Hosting has not only emboldened an individual to take a professional risk and to shift the way she approaches her work from a place of control and sole responsibility to a focus on trusting and developing the collective leadership of all those involved with a project.

Preface

People gathering to discuss sex trafficking, redesign of state services for the blind, and a library for a refugee community. Classes using group discussions to probe more deeply into both readings and professional experience to change adults' awareness of themselves and improve their strategic actions. University-wide initiatives engaging diverse stakeholders to understand their needs and design effective information technology tools. Something is stirring at the University of Minnesota.

This book explores these stirrings, documenting the emerging applications of the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter (hereafter, "Art of Hosting") within a higher education institution. The stories showcase innovation and leadership within and across colleges, schools, departments, and classrooms. They offer insight into how unexpected and significant change *can* unfold, even in large public bureaucracies. They inspire us all to think about how slowing down at the right time to have focused conversations has the potential to change everything. These accounts offer hope.

Higher education in the 21st Century is at a crossroads. The transformation of society unleashed by the Internet is transforming all aspects of higher education. Courses are no longer 15-week experiences where campus bound students partake in professors' wisdom in classrooms but are designed in shorter and longer blocks at unconventional times using unconventional teaching strategies. Classes are "flipped" and free massive online open courses (MOOCs) are enrolling students from around the world. Research that was once locked in the ivory tower is accessible to all citizens through blogs and collaborative web-platforms. And University libraries now archive and index electronic sources, facilitating scholarly exchange at unprecedented speed. New platforms, such as electronic peer reviewed journals and eBooks (such as this one), are transforming academic publishing.

These new trends in the virtual world are accompanied by other challenges requiring effective face-to-face communication. Classrooms continue to welcome an increasingly diverse group of students into common spaces for shared learning. As college loans soar and employers increasingly value experience over credentials, students seek applied and community-engaged learning opportunities to hone what they have learned in the classroom. Many organizational tasks require traditional disciplinary and departmental silos be ignored to pursue more systemic action. Academic leaders are called to help communities face the [grand challenges](#) posed by a globalized world, which require new practices and [frameworks](#) to navigate change as well as more innovative and integrative solutions.

Universities must simultaneously transform every part of their operations to respond to these pressures and leaders are being called to look for ways of cultivating change in the academy. The editors of this book have joined others (Duin, Nater, & Anklesaria, 2012) to create a second volume from the University of Minnesota focused on this theme.

This book illustrates, both in the content it shares and how it was created, some ways the University of Minnesota is responding to these conditions using the energy generated by the participation of more than 175 faculty, staff, and students in the Art of Hosting. It documents an array of activities, involving personal, curricular, and tactical changes in classrooms, departments, and colleges. The stories show how application of the Art of Hosting approach alters how people do regular, everyday work—process personal loss, consult with organizations, teach, engage volunteers, convene community groups. Read together, the twenty-two chapters add up to a vision that real changes are occurring. And these stories are merely the tip of the iceberg; many colleagues expressed regret in not being able to contribute to this volume because of the quick production timeline and other commitments.

While the results are collectively significant, none were initiated in the President or Provost's office, nor were they associated with any strategic institutional initiative. Participants merely came to a [three-day Art of Hosting training](#) as individuals, eager to explore the way in which conversations could help to change our world. They left committed to making a difference. That is, in fact, the beauty and the deeper lesson the chapters offer for complex systems change. In a typical university endeavor, the leader-in-charge (department chair or other) gathers information, processes it, delegates tasks back to individuals or committees, and communicates a story of success to any supervisory administrator. These stories point to an alternative approach.

In these accounts, leadership is not determined by position or degree. Here, leadership is demonstrated by people playing a wide variety of roles. Whether they are Deans, students, faculty, or project coordinators, they stepped into leadership because they saw a need. In most cases, they deliberately decided to change their own teaching, management, or community engagement practice after experiencing something significant at an Art of Hosting training or gathering. They decided to make change from where they sit. In these actions we see demonstrated amazing abilities to cross the social and organizational boundaries that so often impede people in Universities from working effectively with each other. They sidestepped bureaucracy. Their stories are inspirational.



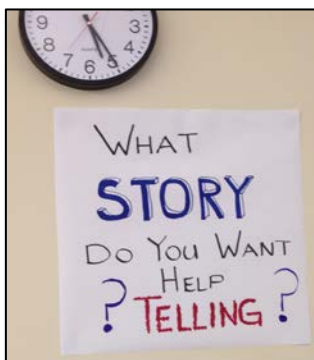
Design process for transforming public affairs education

However, they are not without risks. As these stories showcase, the Art of Hosting approach pushes the edges of professional norms. It evokes a particular language that, while enabling effective communication among hosts, can also sound odd to administrators or other decision makers. The foundational premise that effective problem resolution emerges from group engagement and insights, and pushes on conventional modes of management, particularly in hierarchical organizations. The value placed upon lived experience as a source of knowledge

challenges other models of expertise, such as objective analysis and structured research, present within Universities.

Yet, the Art of Hosting applications described in this volume are merely one iteration of an approach to complex systems change that is gaining traction as creative thinking and engagement are being brought to complex challenges (Holman, Devane, & Cady, 2007; Wheatley & Frieze, 2011). For example, many initiatives and events around the country are bringing in product and graphic designers to help with knotty grand problems (Brown, 2009; Wolfe Wood, 2013). Computer programmers are attending "hackathons" to develop new apps and information technology solutions to pressing community needs (Newsom, 2013). Corporations, nonprofits, and foundations, and even the federal government, use idea competitions and prizes to develop new products and to develop new solutions to persistent issues (Lui & Sandfort, 2011; Tapscott & Williams, 2008). There are more venues for citizens to engage in deliberative conversations with other than ever before (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009). And, although we may be bowling alone, we are also finding new ways to organize into community (Putnam, 2001; Putnam & Feldstein, 2004). These diverse examples, like the Art of Hosting applications at the University of Minnesota collected here, are using new practices and platforms to leverage collective insight. They are supporting emergent change, creating results that could not have been predicted when initiated.

As an eBook, this volume also showcases how academic publishing is changing in light of the new environment. It is open access, published under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 license, and readable through an array of electronic readers including iPad, Kindle, Nook, and Android-based tablets. There is a [companion website](#) allowing for ongoing interaction with the stories, themes, and ideas published in the book; set up in a blog format, readers are encouraged to add their comments and share particular chapters through this site. Authors also were invited to supplement their written descriptions with photography and video. (For more information about the overall book writing process that offers a radically different model of content creation and editing through application of the Art of Hosting practice to these tasks, see [Epilogue](#).)



Question asked at May 2013 story jam inviting people to author chapters

Using this Art of Hosting eBook approach, we were able to move from initial concept meeting to book publication in less than six months. Our actions were guided by the purpose we crafted in the first design meetings:

To make visible to others the practical application of collaborative leadership unleashed by the introduction of Art of Hosting practice at the University of Minnesota and inspire significant shifts in complex institutions.

We hope the product we have created fulfills this aim and acts as an invitation to be courageous in pursuing change from "where you sit." Higher education needs such courageous leadership to respond to challenges of this era.

Introduction

Within the historic buildings with marble columns, beige conference rooms, and traditional classrooms throughout the University of Minnesota campuses, there are people working differently. Chairs in circles, markers and table clothes on tables, agendas that are drawn out with pictures, signal something is different. But beyond those physical artifacts, the people invited into these spaces are entering into meaningful conversations around [powerful questions](#). The Art of Hosting is alive at the University of Minnesota and this eBook captures stories of how some of the faculty, staff, and students have been motivated to change how they work with each other, with diverse external communities, even how they understand themselves. From conversation to transformation, the Art of Hosting goes far beyond hospitality.

Some initial interview-based research revealed that University of Minnesota faculty, staff, and students trained in the Art of Hosting were using the approach to shape their work in a myriad of ways (Carrier, et al., 2012). The stories included in this volume effectively illustrate the breadth and depth of what is unfolding at the University of Minnesota, even if they are only a fraction of what is happening.

The Art of Hosting Approach

On the face of it, the Art of Hosting merely looks like a range of engagement [techniques](#) well recognized in the field of facilitation and participatory democracy (Sandfort, Stuber & Quick, 2012). [Peer circle process](#), [Open Space Technology](#), [World Café](#), and [appreciative inquiry](#) are all engagement [techniques](#) included in the three-day training; participants leave that training having either experienced or trained others in all these approaches.

Yet, more fundamentally, Art of Hosting also is a vehicle for leadership of emergent change in complex systems. It scales from the personal to the systemic, using personal practice, dialogue, facilitation, and co-creation of innovation. Read together, the chapters of this volume emphasize these dimensions quite explicitly. Art of Hosting is based on the assumptions that we humans have enormous untapped wisdom and resilience. And that sustainable solutions can be created when this wisdom is shared with each other. While this is a systems-based approach to change, there are a few unique dimensions that differentiate this approach from others (Holman, Devane & Cady, 2007; Wheatley & Frieze, 2011; Block, 2009).

First, the Art of Hosting brings a number of engagement [techniques](#) together. The [techniques](#) included in the toolkit are shared openly and freely by their developers, much as open source computer programmers have shared intellectual property to improve the internet. They also share [frameworks](#) that others have found effective for supporting change within complex human systems. In fact, the materials taught at the [three-day Art of Hosting training](#) are developed and shared by an international community of process experts who work together voluntarily. There is no organization representing the Art of Hosting brand or approach. This international community is held together by shared values, volunteer stewards, and web-based

communications platforms. The hosting model is used in a range of locations and sectors [around the world](#) to address problems in integrated, collaborative ways. For example, it has been used by a diverse group of community leaders in Columbus, Ohio, to re-envision health care, higher education, business networks, and social services in that community, as well by the European Union Commission, and by communities of practitioners in Canada, Greece, and Zimbabwe, among other places (Wheatley & Freize, 2011).

Secondly, the engagement [techniques](#) (such as [World Café](#), [circle](#), or [Open Space Technology](#)) are applied through practical [frameworks](#) that help support the actual implementation in engagement processes. For example, some [frameworks](#) assist with design, helping facilitators think holistically, including paying attention to needs, purpose and principles, and invitation, in addition to mere meeting logistics and agendas. Other [frameworks](#) stress the importance of “[harvesting](#)” of information, insight, and decisions made in gatherings. [Harvesting](#) enables collective meaning making through the creation of tangible artifacts to synthesize and document what was accomplished. It can take many forms: personal journaling, visual artifacts (such as photographs, drawings, collages), videos, song, as well as more conventional formal proceedings. Still other [frameworks](#) assist facilitators in understanding the ambiguity of group process, the [divergence/convergence](#) among people that often happens within group meetings.

Thirdly, the [techniques](#) and practical [frameworks](#) are taught through intensive three-day workshops. Structured as an experiential learning practicum, the workshop engages participants in just-in-time learning. While each workshop covers similar topics, the design of each particular offering is unique and crafted by a hosting team the day before the three-day session begins. This team collectively implements the training without formal leaders. As a result, from the opening activities, participants experience a community of equals. There are no leaders who command space or convey expertise; rather, the workshop focuses on creating experiences for learning the various engagement [techniques](#) and practice [frameworks](#). After receiving coaching and support from hosting team members, participants teach [techniques](#) to the larger group. Thus, by design, the workshop invites practicing the content, coaching through uncertainty, and learning by doing. Because participation is voluntary and structure decentralized, the workshop experience actually simulates a self-organizing, complex adaptive system often found in community change efforts. In fact, all of these elements explicitly focus on acquainting participants with deeper experience with participatory engagement processes and understanding of how order arises out of chaos within complex social systems (Holman, 2010; Wheatley, 2006; Sandfort, et al., 2012; Success Works, 2011). See chapter in this volume by [Lundquist and Sandfort](#) for more detailed description of the training process.

At the core of the Art of Hosting is the [Four-Fold Practice](#). As it suggests, a practice means regularly engaging in an activity—often with discipline—to maintain or build on a skill. The first fold is hosting yourself, being mindful and attentive to caring for yourself so you can be present and go into difficult conversations in a grounded way. The second fold is being hosted, to practice and participate in conversations with a sense of curiosity by listening deeply. The third fold is hosting others in conversation by calling the question, inviting others, creating the container for authentic engagement, and sense making. The fourth fold is being part of a

community of practice that co-creates while learning together to build relationships and skills; as noted below and throughout the chapters, this dimension of the practice is being to good use in the University of Minnesota [community of practitioners](#). As we practice the [Four-Fold Practice](#), we learn individually, learn together, become a community that learns, and a community that integrates learning. It is this working, learning, and sharing with each other that is the foundational concept in the Art of Hosting approach that is reflected in how the work took root at the University of Minnesota.



Representation of Four-Fold Practice: A Core Art of Hosting Framework

The Art of Hosting at the University of Minnesota

In 2009, then-University President Robert Bruininks sponsored an innovative design process with the [Bush Foundation](#) to consider how the University might better support the effectiveness of community-based leadership throughout Minnesota. The resulting initiative, InCommons, which operated from 2010–2013, focused on connecting individuals so they could find and share credible tools, knowledge, and resources to solve community problems (Sandfort & Bloomberg, 2012). Although Minnesota's land grant tradition is well established, with a robust [Leadership and Civic Engagement](#) division in the Extension Service and an [Office of Public Engagement](#), the mere size and scope of the University creates barriers for authentic engagement with citizen groups.

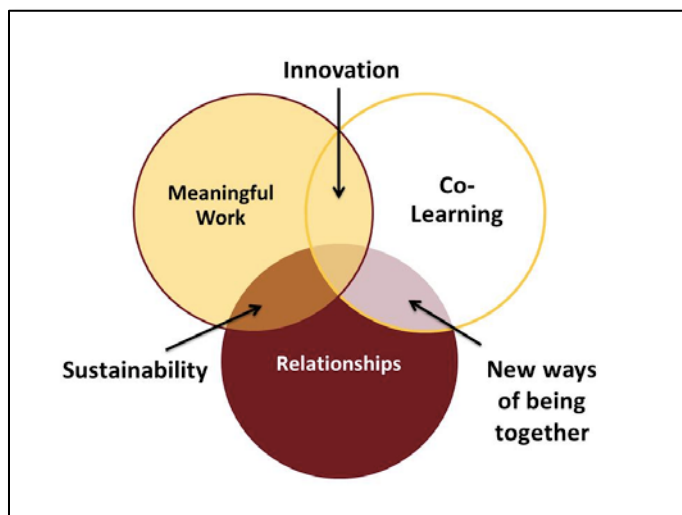
The University's Center for Integrative Leadership ([CIL](#)) was an operational partner of InCommons and, in the spirit of the initiative, focused attention on building capacity within the University for effective and widespread community engagement. CIL leaders, along with a handful of University of Minnesota faculty and staff, were trained in the first [three-day Art of Hosting training workshop](#) with other participant from Minnesota sponsored by the Bush

Foundation in January 2011. The success of the training inspired CIL and other units on campus to initiate the training program for members of the University across its four campuses (see Table below). To date, more than 175 people working for the University, including faculty, students, teaching, research, administrative staff, and collegiate deans are trained.

University of Minnesota (UMN) Participants in Art of Hosting Trainings

Training Sponsor	Date	Number of UMN Participants
InCommons	January or April 2011	8
Center for Integrative Leadership	July and August 2011	34, plus 7 UMN hosts
College of Design	January 2012	36, plus 5 UMN hosts
Center for Integrative Leadership	June 2012	44, plus 5 UMN hosts
Center for Integrative Leadership	June 2013	42, plus 7 UMN hosts
InCommons and Luther Seminary	October 2011 and March, April, December 2012	13
Total		177

Perceiving the potential of these practices to help advance the work of both faculty and staff across the University, two individuals trained in Summer 2011—Susan Geller and Jen Mein—began to explore models for supporting Art of Hosting practitioners across the University beyond the three-day training. Through conversations with individuals who participate in Art of Hosting throughout the world and those who had advanced a community of hosting practitioners at The Ohio State University, they learned about the enclosed [community of practice model](#).



Art of Hosting Community of Practice Model

Applying this approach to the University shaped their next decisions. It seemed likely the community could be sustained, yet remain nimble, if structured through a shared leadership model where three individuals would share a commitment to serving as core stewards for the community of practice for one year. In the inaugural year, Susan and Jen were joined as stewards by Leah Lundquist of the CIL.

In June 2012, the three issued an invitation to all those who had been trained to join in determining an overarching purpose and designing networking (online and in-person), co-learning, and practice opportunities for the community. All those who had been trained were added to an email distribution list and would receive communications about these opportunities to engage with the [community of practitioners](#), unless they opted out.

Fifteen individuals responded to that invitation and gathered together for two hours to action plan, resulting in smaller teams that continued to work on articulating an overarching purpose for the community, determining an online communications strategy, designing learning opportunities, mobilizing smaller affinity groups for more specific topics of interest (e.g., book club) and exploring the possibility of using hosting practices in service of an issue that was in need of a high level of engagement across the University. The group's purpose was defined:

The University of Minnesota Art of Hosting Community of Practice fosters collaborative practices and dynamic learning to address emerging and complex challenges.

In the first year of the community of practice's existence [a Google site](#), [a Facebook page](#), and [a community blog](#) were created to connect anyone interested in participatory engagement practices at the University with this emerging community. Two co-learning gatherings were held—one focused on [visual facilitation](#) and another focused on the application of art of hosting in teaching. A monthly book club was initiated, focused on exploring books related to participatory facilitation and engagement. And, a particular hosting technique—the [World Café](#)—was incorporated into the launch of a University-wide effort to design a [unified online portal](#) for all faculty, staff, and students.

Documenting What is Resulting

Beyond this community-wide activity, other individuals were incorporating Art of Hosting into their personal lives, teaching, research, and community engagement work at the University. During February 2013, a design team assembled to consider how to best document the range of activities, creatively and authentically practicing storycatching (Baldwin, 2005). What resulted is this eBook, documenting the acts of leadership across the University of Minnesota—both bold and more subtle, professional and more personal—that have resulted from the training and [community of practitioners](#). As a result of the collaborative authoring and editing process, new relationships were formed and existing relationships strengthened among design team members across the University.

What is evident in these stories is that Art of Hosting is empowering us to make the leap from conversation to transformation and wise action. Individuals are growing leadership through reflection and practice. Hosts and hosting teams are being intentional in planning gatherings that are happening in meeting rooms, classrooms, and community spaces in ways that allow relationships to deepen, curiosity and creativity to flourish, and collective wisdom to surface. Participants in hosted conversations are moved from a place of habitual jumping into solutions to experiencing a process that generates deeper understanding and more connected collaborative engagement. People are being invited to participate in authentic ways and more voices are being heard and appreciated, leading to work and learning that is sustainable.

We hope this eBook will not only cultivate change in the University of Minnesota and other higher education institutions, but provide new insights relevant to the international Art of Hosting community. Practicing the Art of Hosting within a professional, complex bureaucratic environment is very different than practicing it within grassroots community organizations. While the University provides a ripe context for these [techniques](#) and [frameworks](#) to take root as staff, faculty, and students help the institution adapt, the terminology and practices must be adapted to be adopted by individuals trained to be analytical and incentivized to excel individually. As Art of Hosting continues to evolve, and be applied in diverse contexts, the stories here offer initial [harvesting](#) of what is being learned in this academic application.

While we have organized the volume into five substantive parts, the eBook hyperlinking capacity allows readers to move through the pieces along a number of different paths. So follow your interests.

Part One focuses on [Personal Transformation](#). These stories capture a foundational idea of the Art of Hosting approach—personal reflection, analysis, and engagement is essential for fueling change. When engaging in hosting practice, people learn about themselves, their communities, and the assets contained within both.

Part Two focuses on a key dimension of Universities' work, [Teaching and Training](#). The stories in this section showcase Art of Hosting as providing pedagogical tools and substantive content for engaging students and professionals.

Part Three considers another vital dimension of a land grant university's work, [Community Change](#), showcasing diverse settings where the University is now enabling Minnesotans to be better together through conversations that change hearts and seed action.

Finally, Parts Four and Five examine how hosting is changing how the organization, itself, is managed and run internally. By considering applications to [Organizational Change](#) at the departmental or collegiate levels, these essays illuminate how conversations change organizational culture in powerful ways. Part Five documents systemic-wide applications focused on [Institutional Effectiveness](#) where Hosting has enabled significant numbers of people to engage in developing more effective solutions to pressing institutional problems.

The [*Epilogue*](#) recounts how this eBook was created.

Finally, an [*Appendix*](#) provides quick definitions of some of the Art of Hosting [techniques](#) and [frameworks](#) used by authors throughout the book, as well as references to published and web-based materials for readers interested in learning more.

We hope this collection of stories will further pique the curiosity of many; from University administrators, faculty, and staff to leadership trainers, engagement specialists, and Art of Hosting practitioners globally. We believe this is only the start of a meaningful conversation about how we approach personal and institutional change within the academy and beyond.

Personal reflection is required before personal transformation occurs, but individual reflection alone is rarely sufficient. Art of Hosting asks us to participate fully, at a deep level, in a collective learning process. This process is built on deep listening to the stories and experiences of others. When those stories are offered in a group setting, they inspire us to learn both from our small failures and our successes. We are encouraged to enter a collective space that demands that we "groan" and struggle with ideas that are foreign, unexpected, and emerging. As we do so, we are stimulated to withdraw and reflect upon how the collective experience has changed us. The chapters in this section address the consequences of that process.

- [Englemann's story](#) explains that Art of Hosting is not only a method, but also a "way of being and acting." For Englemann, Art of Hosting provides coherence and terminology to better express the theories of both personal and institutional change that she had come to know as true through a lifetime of working at the University.
- [Zentner Bacig's story](#) illustrates that the real journey begins when we're not sure what to do or which way to go. A new direction in her career and her approach to working with others led Zentner Bacig to rethink what it means to take responsibility, and to appreciate more deeply the capacities of individuals, groups, and organizations.
- [Mein and Bentrim](#), two information technology professionals, recount how they were able to find their leadership voices and feel more equipped to step into new roles through Art of Hosting. From new positions of leadership and in collaboration with others, they influenced a reorganization and culture shift across the entire IT community at the University.
- [Dorman](#) shares the deeply personal story of facing the death of his lifetime partner. The Art of Hosting worldview led him to consider how an individual attends to her or his personal needs while realizing the importance of the broader relational ecosystem.

The courage in these accounts is an inspiration to all of us for how to incorporate significant changes into our sense of our work and worth.

Building the Case for Art of Hosting at the University of Minnesota

Susan Engelmann

In my work at the University of Minnesota, I have been in many different positions during the past 40 years: home economics education, 4-H youth development, community economic development, organizational and leadership development, program management, strategic planning, administrative leadership, and eLearning strategic development. To be a positive force for institutional change, I consulted many different institutes, [frameworks](#), and authors including Borich (1975), Diamond (1994), Jaworski (1998), Kanter (1990), Palmer (1994), Senge (1990), and Wheatley (1994).

I am motivated to write this chapter, though, because for the first time I have found something that brings it all together with a common language. The Art of Hosting Conversations That Matter (hereafter referred to as “Art of Hosting”) synthesizes key guiding principles and emerging methodologies for effective ways to address complex issues. As stated in the training workbook:

There is an emerging group of methodologies for facilitating conversation in groups of all sizes, supported by principles that help maximize collective intelligence, integrate and utilize diversity and minimize or transform conflict. Processes facilitated in this way tend to result in collective clarity and wise action, which is sustainable, providing workable solutions to the most complex problems. The approach ensures that stakeholders buy into the process (because they participate in the design and the process is by definition transparent) and make ongoing feedback, learning and course correction a natural and efficient part of life. (Center for Integrative Leadership, 2012)

In May 2012, my first exposure to the Art of Hosting came as I participated in [Open Space Technology](#) when the Office of Information Technology, hosted an event to get stakeholder input for mobile technology at the University of Minnesota. What piqued my interest was the way the Art of Hosting facilitators brought diverse people throughout the University as stakeholders to problem solve what mobile technology might look like in the future at the University. Through that experience I attended the Art of Hosting training in June 2012, sponsored by the Center for Integrative Leadership. The session brought together University faculty, staff, students, and administrators to find new ways to address complex issues for the University. There was no accident that I reconnected and made new connections with key people at the University. One of the guiding principles for Art of Hosting is that “the right people are in the room.” The training was exceptional because it was designed and implemented for the participants to put the Art of Hosting into practice immediately in both their personal and professional lives. So many times training occurs and there is no evidence of using it in your daily life.

Since that training, I have been part of designing, participating, and observing the effective use of Art of Hosting. [Susan Geller’s work](#) on using Art of Hosting proactively on a high-impact, high-profile, University-wide initiative affirmed that the Art of Hosting can impact the launch and

implementation of a major University initiative. Laura Bloomberg, Associate Dean of the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, uses Art of Hosting in several of her classes to help students address complex issues as a part of their student experience. [Jodi Sandfort](#) and [Kathy Quick](#) have brought together Art of Hosting practitioners for seminars, so we can better learn from their in-depth research.

It was at one of these meetings that I happened to connect with one of the other participants in the June 2012 training. She asked me, “Have you had a chance to use the Art of Hosting in the last six months since our training?” As I struggled to find words to answer, I realized that, in fact, the Art of Hosting is not an event, a plan, a best practice, but rather a way of being to address complex challenges. I responded, “Well yes, I try to use Art of Hosting every day in my work at the University and, in fact, attempt to use in in my personal life with my family and my friends, as well.”

The Art of Hosting needs to be sincere in its intention and engagement. When Art of Hosting is used as a pretense as a way of using people’s input for their own gain, it not only does not work, but also creates cynicism for using the Art of Hosting. People using Art of Hosting need be clear about the purpose and share the [harvest](#) results. Using these key questions can guide this process.

What? So what? Now what?

This is a well-used and successful model to assist you in designing the reflection activities. Although you can derive learning from each question, focusing on all three will provide broader insights and keep participants from getting stuck on only the facts or just the feelings.

- **What?** (Reporting what happened, objectively.) Without judgment or interpretation, participants describe in detail the facts and event(s) of the experience. What happened? What did you observe? What issue is being addressed or population is being served? What were the results of the project? What events or critical incidents occurred? What was of particular notice? How did you feel about that? Let’s hear from someone who had a different reaction.
- **So What?** (What did you learn? What difference did the event make?) Participants discuss their feelings, ideas and analysis of the service experience. Questions can also be focused on the meaning or importance of the activity to the various stakeholders:
 - **The Participant:** Did you learn a new skill or clarify an interest? Did you hear, smell, feel anything that surprised you? What feelings or thoughts seem most strong today? How is your experience different from what you expected? What struck you about that? How was that significant? What impacts the way you view the situation/experience? (What lens are you viewing from?) What do the critical incidents mean to you? How did you respond to them? What did you like/dislike about the experience?
 - **The Recipient:** Did the service empower the recipient to become more self-sufficient? What did you learn about the people/community that we served? What might impact the recipient’s views or experience of the project?

- **The Community:** What are some of the pressing needs/issues in the community? How does this project address those needs? How, specifically, has the community benefited? What is the least impact you can imagine for the project? With unlimited creativity, what is the most impact on the community that you can imagine?
- **The Group:** In what ways did the group work well together? What does that suggest to you about the group? How might the group have accomplished its task more effectively? In what ways did others help you today (and vice versa)? How were decisions made? Were everybody's ideas listened to?
- **Now What?** (How will they think or act in the future as a result of this experience?) Participants consider broader implications of the service experience and apply learning. Be aware to strike a balance between realistic, reachable goals and openness to spontaneity and change. Questions include: What seem to be the root causes of the issue/problem addressed? What kinds of activities are currently taking place in the community related to this project? What contributes to the success of projects like this? What hinders success? What learning occurred for you in this experience? How can you apply this learning? What would you like to learn more about, related to this project or issue? What follow-up is needed to address any challenges or difficulties? What information can you share with your peers or community volunteers? If you were in charge of the project, what would you do to improve it? If you could do the project again, what would you do differently? What would complete the service?

These types of questions not only help create an environment for people's voices to be heard, but bring together ideas to solve real problems. "What? So what? Now what?" provide a realistic and practical way to clarify the issues and move the initiative forward. The Art of Hosting inspires those who lead to engage in interactive, meaningful ways to bring together people from diverse perspectives to tackle challenges they care about for greater causes.

Discoveries of Faith

Karen Zentner Bacig

*Three years into a new professional adventure and just one year beyond my training in *The Art of Hosting Conversations That Matter* (hereafter referred to as “Art of Hosting”), I find myself reflecting on what I’ve learned—about myself, about my reframed view of organizations, and, ultimately, about the way in which these ongoing revelations are helping me to re-imagine how I show up and engage with people and with organizations, through the lens of Art of Hosting practices.*

A Leap of Faith

Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In 2009, the time had come for me to make a fairly major professional leap. I had agonized over such a leap for quite some time, not quite knowing how to go about taking the next step or where it might lead. I was emotionally drained, restless, and certain that my passions and talents could be put to better use. After months of trying to see if I could create a shift “in place” in order to engage some of these passions and talents, I found myself with tears streaming down my face in a restaurant during an anniversary dinner with my husband. I was unhappy and I felt stuck! Five simple words in the form of a question from my husband initiated a journey I had not even been able to see as a possibility: “Why don’t you just leave?”

What? How could I leave? Where would I go? What would I do? While we were finally in a place in our lives where this option was financially viable, I could, at first, barely fathom taking such a step. As someone who has always needed to have a pretty clear sense of where I am going and how I am going to get there while controlling every step of the way, having the faith to, as Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “...tak[e] the first step even when [I couldn’t] see the whole staircase,” was daunting to say the least. But, leap I did and in March 2010 I was officially unemployed.

After embarking on a new professional journey, which brought me joy through a diverse array of teaching and consulting projects, I found myself in a circle in June 2012 with 49 other University of Minnesota colleagues, about to embark on three days of Art of Hosting training. I was vaguely familiar with the Art of Hosting, as well as some of the core practices, and very excited to embark on a deeper exploration during the coming days in the company of good colleagues.

The Real Journey

*It may be that when we no longer know what to do,
we have come to our real work
... when we no longer know which way to go,*

we have begun our real journey. Wendell Berry

I have engaged in a lot of reflection in the time since my [three-day Art of Hosting training](#) in June of 2012. In particular, what I reflect on is how *I* have changed and how my internal shift has changed my practice, both as a teacher and as a consultant. Whatever I may have learned about people and organizations during more than twenty-five plus of education and work, my “go to” mode has predominantly been to think that I could—if I just worked hard enough, knew enough, and “kept at it” long enough—control outcomes. This need to control led me to feel deeply responsible *for* outcomes rather than responsible *to* outcomes. To feel responsible *for* people—their feelings, their work, their performance—rather than *to* them.

As I have reflected on this need for control and the futility of its pursuit, what I have learned from so many of the Art of Hosting practices, and particularly about the need to host myself, has been fundamental to my shift from taking or feeling responsibility *for* to my sense of responsibility *to*—to purpose and to people. The notion that people have the capacity to organize in purposeful ways and that my job as a consultant, as a teacher, or in any professional capacity might be to create conditions in which the work that needs to emerge in service to a particular purpose can do so, is not one I have come by easily.

I have wondered a lot about how my need to control has impacted my colleagues throughout the years (not to mention those in my personal life, but that’s a different chapter). So many of the Art of Hosting practices invite us to have a deep level of faith in the capacities of individuals, groups, and organizations and in the wisdom that emerges when the conditions are fostered that allow this intelligence to surface. How many times did colleagues, or those to whom I was supposed to be providing supervision or guidance, feel empowered to find their own solutions or believe that they had the capacity to do the work their way, because of my guidance? I fear it is likely that many times, because I stayed too close to the actual work, I often unintentionally communicated a lack of faith in others’ ability or stifled creative solutions that could have emerged had I shown up in a different kind of way.

Showing up differently might have come in the form of well-crafted questions I could have asked, about the work itself or about what was happening for the person doing it that was making him or her feel alive. Instead, many of those meetings were a micro-level accounting of a to-do list that did not leave me feeling very satisfied. I can almost certainly conclude did not leave my colleagues feeling fulfilled either.

There are many reasons for my coming to the proverbial fork in the road in 2009. My real journey began, as Wendell Berry notes, when I realized that I wasn’t sure what to do or which way to go. As I reflect on what I’ve learned about myself and on the ways in which the core practices of the Art of Hosting have helped me to think differently about work and the nature of organizations, I now believe that part of what I needed was a fundamental shift in my worldview about *my* role in the work of organizations.

New Discoveries

Mistakes...are the portals of discovery. James Joyce

“Mistakes” may not be the best way to characterize what I see when I reflect on the past; I certainly was doing the best I knew how to do in the moment, just as we all do. However, I have learned a tremendous amount about my own practice and its limitations. I now find tremendous value in my consulting and teaching work using many of the Art of Hosting practices that I was first introduced to in my training. Perhaps the most profound outcome has been a genuine, fundamental shift in two primary ways: how I view organizations and, thus, how I view my role in them; and how I view the importance of hosting one’s self.

While certainly not a new idea, to practice one’s work from the perspective that complex organizations are [living systems](#) has, in turn, flipped on its head my own understanding and belief about my role as a consultant. Organizations viewed as [living systems](#) have, according to the *Art of Hosting Workbook* (Center for Integrative Leadership, June 2012), at least the following qualities:

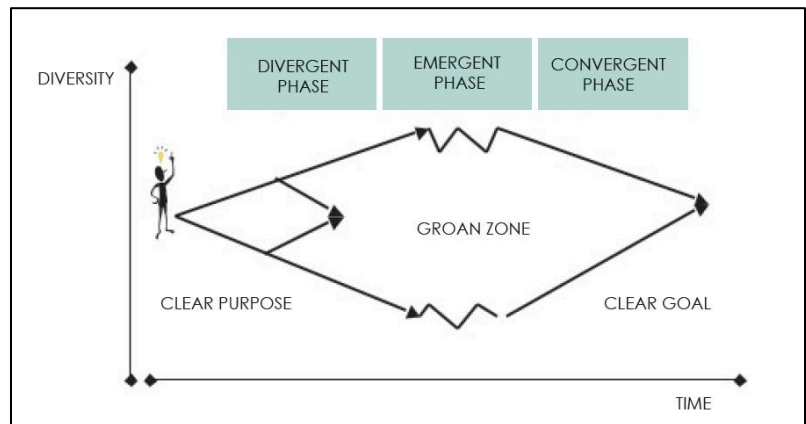
- A living system accepts only its own solutions—we only support those things we are part of creating.
- A living system pays attention only to that which is meaningful to it here and now.
- In nature, a living system participates in the development of its neighbor—an isolated system is doomed.
- Nature, and all of nature, including ourselves, is in constant change (without “change management”).
- Nature seeks diversity. New relations open up to new possibilities. It is not a question of survival of the fittest—but everything that is fit—as many species as possible. Diversity increases our chance of survival.
- Experimentation opens up to what is possible here and now. Nature is not intent on finding perfect solutions, but workable solutions. “Life is intent on finding what works, not what is right.”
- All the answers do not exist “out there”—we must sometimes experiment to find out what works.
- A living system cannot be steered or controlled—it can only be teased, nudged, titillated to see things differently.
- A system changes when its perception of itself changes.
- Who we are together is always different and more than whom we are alone. Our range of creative expression increases as we join with others. New relationships create new capacities.
- We (human beings) are capable of self-organizing, given the right conditions.
- Self-organization shifts to a higher order (p.10).

An early consulting job reflects the shift I began to make in integrating this framework into my roles with organizations. In a two-year project, prior to my Art of Hosting training, I began my work as I always had—in charge and feeling full responsibility *for* the work that the organization

wanted to accomplish. The first year’s work seemed to meet many good milestones and overall, people seemed happy with how the work was progressing. However, at the end of the first year, people in many key leadership positions left and suddenly there were new positional leaders with responsibility for the project’s work. While they had been involved tangentially in the project in the first year, they were now directly involved.

One of these individuals who had key responsibilities related to the work said to me, “Oh, I am so glad you are going to work with us again this year so that I don’t have to worry about this project and you can just take care of it.” The “old Karen” might have relished this comment, seeing it as a reflection of how indispensable I was or how well I was doing my work. The emerging “new Karen,” after my Art of Hosting training, was mindful of all of the lessons I was learning. I needed to stop and reflect on my own potential responses to this comment and, when I did so, I realized that I needed to give the work back to the individual and, by extension, the organization. My role as the consultant was, as I saw it, to be responsible *to* the larger purpose of the work, rather than *for* the work.

As the project proceeded into the second year, it felt as if it stalled out. In the midst of what felt like running in circles, as the same conversations, objections, and resistance to the work from many corners of the organization surfaced again and again, I reflected on the phases of “[divergence, emergence, and convergence](#),” and particularly on the idea of the “groan zone.” It occurred to me that during the first year’s work, with the previous leadership team, we had worked through these three phases and that those doing the work were ready to move forward with solutions. With a new leadership team, we had moved back into another [divergence/convergence](#) cycle and throughout the second year of the project we truly were deeply into the groan zone. It was uncomfortable for many, including me; there was a lot of tension, and it was not clear that we would find our way to convergence.



Phases of “Divergence, Emergence, and Convergence”

Holding the tension through this uncomfortable period, I found it helpful to revisit many of the [living systems](#) principles mentioned above. When tempted to “take control,” I reflected on what I knew: I could not impose my own solutions for moving forward onto this organization, even though it might make me feel more in charge and productive. This process was not about me—those involved with the project had to find their own way so that when I left, they owned the solutions that they had generated together. It would be too easy to dismiss something that someone from the outside had created, so I remained steadfast in my role as coach, guide, and

host to the process. I also knew that those involved would only engage in work that they found meaningful, so many of my conversations during the second year were in search of what would make the work matter to those closest to it. I also encouraged the organization develop a willingness to try and experiment with various approaches, so that they would learn from the data they collected. Each step would provide them with evidence of what was working and what was not, allowing them to move forward incrementally.

As my contract for the second year ended, I believe much was still emerging and the organization was still in the throes of the “groan zone.” I think the “old Karen” would have felt that leaving the project at this phase was failure; the “new(er) Karen,” though challenged by a nagging feeling of failure, felt that the organization was where it needed to be, and only could be, and that when the conditions were right, convergence on a path forward would emerge. It was not without a lot of reflection and soul searching that I was able to embrace this perspective!

Recently, I was reminded by a colleague of an article entitled “Soul Work in Organizations,” that reflects on many of these same qualities of [living systems](#) (Mirvis, 1997). To think about organizations as [living systems](#) has helped me fundamentally shift how I show up in my work and enact my role as “consultant” and “teacher.” I have to trust people and their capacity to do the work they need to do, when they are ready and able to do it; I do not have to have all of the answers or “The Answer,” but instead need to allow the path, the plan, or the learning to emerge from the collective deliberation and knowing within the group. And I have to be genuinely okay with not being the authority but rather the host.

A significant reason I have been able to make these shifts, both personally and professionally, has come from my reliance on, as well as active engagement with, the [Art of Hosting community of practitioners](#) at the University of Minnesota. Having colleagues from whom I can draw support, strength, ideas, and feedback has been significant in its power to help me be better as a consultant and a teacher—my “outer game.” I also have been able to shift how I see the drawing of this support, so that I now see it as a strength rather than a weakness. This shift requires what I am coming to understand as something author and researcher Brené Brown (2012) calls “engaging with vulnerability.” Not something I have historically embraced!

Recently, as I was working on a project and struggling to come up with [powerful questions](#), I called on others from the University’s [community of practitioners](#) and they engaged with me in thoughtful conversation, allowing me to be deeply listened to and gain different perspective. This engagement allowed me to conceive of possible questions I had not previously considered that were so much richer and deeper than where I had started. Taking these new draft questions back to my clients resulted in wonderful, rich discussions, and, ultimately, questions *they* created based on the rich seeds planted because of the support of my colleagues. While previously I might have seen the fact that I sought input from others as a sign that I wasn’t “good enough” at my work, I now felt stronger because I was willing to reach out, seek input, and listen deeply to other perspectives, ultimately providing my clients with richer possibilities than I could have had I decided to “go it alone.”

The Road Less Traveled

Two roads diverged in a wood and I—I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference. Robert Frost

I am recognizing that this Art of Hosting road is one that is foreign to many, and even suspect for some. For me, however, the ability to host others and help to foster conditions that promote authentic engagement with one another; to embrace, or at least tolerate, ambiguity, uncertainty, and struggle; and to believe that the solution to whatever needs to be solved, addressed, or discovered lies within the wisdom of those who care most deeply about the issue or question at hand, has meant that I not only have to trust others and their capacities, but perhaps even more importantly I need to trust myself in this new way of working. I have to be able to hold the uncertainty and the fear, the hope and the anticipation, and not succumb to old habits of wanting to fix, to answer, to own, or to go it alone. This road is a new one for me; a road that has, until recently, been rarely traveled. It is, fundamentally, a radically different way to think about the capacity of organizations and individuals, and how to support conditions that allow them to do their best work.

To be sure, Art of Hosting practices are not the only way forward—just because one has a hammer does not mean everything is a nail, and there are certainly plenty of other “practices” that have their time and place. What I do know, however, is that no matter what set of “tools” are deemed to be the most appropriate or effective for a given purpose, the *how* of the way in which I show up to do my work is most certainly different because of my very intentional engagement with Art of Hosting practices and the Art of Hosting [community of practitioners](#) at the University. Choosing this path at this point in my journey has, as Frost said, “...made all the difference.”

Leadership Journeys Lead to Hosting an IT Community

Jen Bentrim and Jen Mein

Introduction

Our story is about how we—two technology professionals at the University of Minnesota—found deeper meaning in our work, began seeing “community” in a new way, and developed an appreciation for self-organizing human systems after we were introduced to The Art of Hosting Conversations That Matter (hereafter referred to as “Art of Hosting”). With some courageous first steps, we began to incorporate Art of Hosting [techniques](#) in meetings with our own teams and, after a while, we began hosting the broader Information Technology community. We are both active members of the University of Minnesota Art of Hosting [community of practitioners](#) and multiple IT Communities of Practice. Art of Hosting has shaped our leadership and perspective of community and we carry the Art of Hosting [frameworks](#) with us as we work within the IT@UMN community. We believe that the passion and leadership of individuals like us has caused a ripple effect that is seen and felt broadly among the nearly 1,400 IT professionals and beyond. In this chapter, we will share some of the steps we took in our leadership journeys that led us to host the IT community.

About IT Communities of Practice

Jen Bentrim is the current leader of the IT@UMN Community Task Force stewarding the whole IT community. Jen Mein is a host/facilitator providing support to the IT [communities of practice](#) to ensure gatherings are engaging and productive.

At the University, there is a massive push for operational excellence in a decentralized IT environment. In this context, there is a significant effort to build community among IT professionals to support greater alignment among our many distributed units. The spirit of openness and authentic engagement is palpable. Staff from across the system are connecting, building relationships, and working together to advance key strategies for the institution. This is the outcome of an open, inclusive [community of practice](#) approach to leading change. In place of traditional committees and advisory boards where a small group of individuals represent their units, everyone is invited to contribute their unique perspective within a “culture of we.” Some communities of practice are seeded to implement IT strategic initiatives and others are more grassroots-oriented, peer networks self organizing around various IT functions, such as web technology, help desk support, and academic technologies tools. Each community has a stated purpose. For example, the [community of practice](#) focused on IT Leadership has the purpose “to engage the entire information technology community in learning, relationship building, and purposeful work so we can mobilize around strategies that advance higher education and the University of Minnesota.” A typical [community of practice](#) convenes its members once a month, drawing 30–80 people in a physical space and more in a synchronous online environment. They also self-organize into small working groups that meet between

community meetings, creating opportunities for staff to step into leadership roles, and contribute toward a collective outcome that moves initiatives forward.

Jen Mein's Story

From Associate IT Director in the College of Liberal Arts to Host for the IT community at the University of Minnesota, this has been a journey of personal transformation and authentic leadership in action. The catalyst for this career transition was a combination of having a significant change occur within my collegiate IT organization and my participation in the 2011–12 MOR Associates IT Leadership Program at the University of Minnesota. My supervisor of fifteen years had accepted a position at another institution, prompting me to ask myself if I was interested in climbing the IT leadership ladder and pursuing an IT Director/Chief Information Officer (CIO) position. The question of what I wanted to do and whom I wanted to be going forward was one I grappled with for a few weeks before coming to the conclusion that I did not want to pursue the CIO career path. Thus, I ventured out to discover, “If not that... then what?”

I have often struggled with confidence issues and finding my own voice, but have been very comfortable playing a supportive leadership role behind the scenes. When it came to standing up or speaking in front of people, I was often a ball of quivering nerves. So when it came time for me to write out professional development goals during my leadership development program experience, I created goals around finding my voice, building confidence in myself, and generating a stronger presence. I went to the 360-degree feedback evaluations I had received during the previous decade, noting that listening, relationship building, and fostering trust were among my top perceived leadership strengths. I wondered how I could leverage those strengths to help push myself to stand up and speak up more. I was fortunate to be in this moment of inquiry just as an announcement came across a university listserv about an Art of Hosting training opportunity offered by the Center for Integrative Leadership. Seeing facilitation as a skill set that would build upon my natural abilities and help me grow in the areas I wanted to develop, I signed up. That one step opened a door to a whole new me. It sounds cliché to say but my Art of Hosting learning experience truly was a catalyst for personal transformation.

I remember after the first day of the training, I had a call with my coach from the leadership program and described the training as a little different and strange, but I liked it. I liked it a lot! I went into the experience with no expectations and left with so much, including wonderful bonds of friendship and a real deep sense of yearning for purpose and meaning in my work. I was so inspired by stories of those who attended the training with me because many of them were hosting a diverse array of communities in really meaningful ways—empowering immigrant populations, inspiring youth, and creating space for people to grow into their full potential. I left thinking, “I want to do that. I want to find a way to make a difference in people’s lives in real ways.” I confess my first thought was that was only possible outside my current position and career in IT, but that was fleeting. I quickly resolved to approach my work as an IT leader as if I were a community developer/organizer. Having worked within the College of Liberal Arts Office of Information Technology (CLA-OIT) for 15 years, that was my home away from home, rich with meaningful relationships. I cared deeply about my colleagues working in

IT and I wanted our community as a whole to achieve its fullest potential. I left my Art of Hosting training experience with an intention to host my organization and the broader university community in a way that invites others to connect on a human level, and find meaning and purpose in their work too.

I developed an unquenchable thirst to learn, filling up a small bookshelf with books about [community](#), [participatory decision making](#), [visual meetings](#), [emotional intelligence](#), [integrative leadership](#) and more. I took advantage of local training opportunities to deepen my Art of Hosting knowledge in [harvesting](#) and storytelling, attended [Technology of Participation](#) (Institute of Cultural Affairs) training sessions to learn more facilitation methods, intentionally sought out coaches/mentors, and actively engaged in a community of hosting practitioners. I benefitted greatly from being in an environment that allowed my intention to host my organization to take root, where I had support to begin my practice of applying what I was learning; in that practice, I grew and transformed myself and invited others to step into a new way of working. I spoke up more and spoke from the heart, even when I was trembling on the inside. I was vulnerable with my peers and my staff, disclosing my hopes and fears, as I tried leading differently. It did not take long before our meetings in CLA-OIT started to change.

In the summer of 2011, I designed and facilitated a dozen sessions that brought small groups of CLA-OIT staff together to review trends and forces impacting higher education, and explore strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats. That was followed by a larger group session that explored specific actions we needed to take to best position our organization to meet the needs of our college. Then, teams within the organization worked on developing short-term and long-term goals. Finally, everyone was brought together in a large active learning classroom along with special guests from around the college and broader university community. The atmosphere of that gathering was fun, energizing, and informative. Each team presented (creatively, I might add) their goals and then people engaged in meaningful conversations around key organizational-wide strategic themes. I shared what we were doing in CLA with colleagues in other IT organizations on campus, and soon I was accepting offers to come and help teams in the [College of Science and Engineering](#), [College of Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources](#), and [Humphrey School of Public Affairs](#). Eventually, I was also playing a supportive role in gatherings of the IT Leadership [community of practitioners](#).

One of my fondest memories of practicing Art of Hosting was when two team leads and I co-hosted a breakfast and [Reflective Listening](#) session with a dozen staff who were in roles that were shifting away from fixing problems to roles focused on managing relationships, providing proactive support, and partnering with others to understand complex situations. In groups of four, they went off to private spaces and each person took a turn sharing a personal story, listening for facts, listening for emotions, and listening for values. During the [Reflective Listening](#) activity, the listeners say nothing while the storyteller is sharing a story; instead, they only reflect back what they heard after the story had concluded. After a while, we all gathered together and debriefed the experience and discussed what it was like to listen in this way and how listening can help them in their new roles. The result was greater awareness of listening strengths and preferences; relationships among the staff were also strengthened. Our morning

concluded with me giving each person in the room \$5 of my own money with an invitation for them to invite someone in the room whom they would like to get to know better out for coffee to have a meaningful conversation and continue to building upon their working relationships.

Since the summer of 2011, I have continued to deepen my practice as an Art of Hosting practitioner and it is starting to settle into my bones, integrated into the way I see and interact in the world. I continue to host myself, reflecting on who I am, what gifts I have to offer, and how I can serve the great work to be done in community at the University. I show up more and I show up differently, when I am being hosted in conversation. I ask questions and am intentional about setting conditions for people to show up in their own way and engage in important work. I contribute and foster communities of practice that foster relationships, meaningful work, and learning. Every moment is an opportunity to practice the Art of Hosting.

I recently made a big leap. I left my career in information technology as an Associate IT Director position and stepped into a new career in organizational development, serving the broader IT community. My daily work involves designing and facilitating meetings, retreats, workshops, and providing support to individuals and teams that are living in a time of great change. My life has been enriched by what I have learned, by the many opportunities I have had to practice, and by my participation in a wonderful community of Art of Hosting practitioners, both at the University of Minnesota and globally.

Jen Bentrim's Story

Communication. It is a challenge for many, if not most, IT professionals. Though I pride myself on my ability to translate technical speak into basic English, I have been working on improving my communication effectiveness to provide exceptional customer service. My introduction to the Art of Hosting began in the fall of 2011 while I was participating in the [2011–12 President's Emerging Leaders Cohort \(PEL\)](#) at the University of Minnesota. My eyes were opened to new leadership styles and methods. My own preference for engaging people in decision-making and being a participatory leader was validated. It was refreshing to be apart of a leadership cohort that was very open to doing things differently.

Throughout my PEL experience, our small group meetings began and ended using the [circle](#) method, we captured photos of our visual notes, having learned and worked to [enhance our visual facilitation skills](#), attended [consensus workshops](#) with sponsors, and engaged key stakeholders in conversations to ensure that the product we were working to provide would meet a relevant need. After PEL, I participated in a [University of Minnesota Art of Hosting training](#) offered by the Center for Integrative Leadership. It was an enriching experience. The opportunity to collaborate with so many people across the University was phenomenal. I truly enjoyed every moment of the [three-day training](#), expanding my awareness of other areas of the University and being provided with tools for hosting others in conversations. I especially appreciated learning about [harvesting](#) and how allowing one's self time to reflect on meetings is essential. Having tools to affirm some of what I was doing in my work areas already enticed me to want to learn and incorporate more of these methodologies.

Upon completing the Art of Hosting training, I incorporated some of the tools and [techniques](#) into my day-to-day existence. I began to host myself so I could be more present—blocking out distractions when staff or clients stop in to see me in my office and contributing more during meetings. I have found that I am more focused and I have made a concentrated effort to incorporate [appreciative inquiry](#) into conversations. Instead of just listening to my staff talk about interpersonal issues that they were having with colleagues or finding a solution to a complex system, I began to ask questions—to find out whether there were experiences in the past where communications were better or where they had run into any similar systems issue—helping them more readily focus on positive outcomes.

Meanwhile, there has been a great increase in efforts to engage IT staff in conversations in efforts to build community and to advance IT objectives. Myself and others within the IT community have facilitated conversations mostly using portions of the [Pro Action Café](#) methodology. There is greater attention to [harvesting](#) the ideas that have been generated to move us forward toward our next steps. [World Café](#) and [Open Space Technology](#) have also been used with larger groups. Specifically, an IT@UMN event designed with [Open Space Technology](#) principles attracted more than 600 people across two campuses to organize around topics suggested by community members, ranging from videogames to MOOCs (massive open online courses) to server virtualization. It has been inspiring to witness many IT professionals who have been learning Art of Hosting and other participatory methods leading and participating in meetings differently. Little by little, we all have begun to “host” more meetings, rather than “run” meetings. The way IT staff are communicating with each other is changing. We seem to be connecting with each other rather than just talking at each other. We are engaging in respectful conversations, actively making an effort to hear each other and listen rather than make assumptions.

This journey of discovery has been interesting. I have been given new tools for communicating with people and yet I have also found that I was practicing some aspects of Art of Hosting all along. Knowing the terminology and [techniques](#) has helped me be more cognizant of how I engage with and listen to others. I am reminded that my perceptions are only one of many. Bringing these methods for engagement into the IT Communities of Practice, being more present in conversations that I participate in and more intentional in the conversations that I host, has been very fulfilling. I believe that the overarching theme of the Art of Hosting is respectful communication. It is a mindset with terminology and methodology that allows a respectful space for people to share ideas freely without fear and more easily move a shared vision forward to a common end. I am still new to it and am looking forward to more opportunities to practice what I am learning from the group of wonderful people who make up this community.

Conclusion

Dozens of IT professionals at the University of Minnesota have participated in Art of Hosting trainings and through various engagements, and hundreds have experienced being hosted in

meaningful conversations. During a time of significant, fast-paced change with external pressures to be more efficient, it has also been a time of coming together for the IT community at the University. We are fostering a culture where IT professionals feel connected to something bigger and feel empowered to contribute to the co-creation of a shared future. Individuals like us are stepping up with courage and creativity to host meaningful conversations. Like a raindrop upon the ocean, we have created a little ripple of change that is moving across our IT community and into other communities within our institution. For us, our journeys have only just begun. Each day brings opportunities to practice hosting ourselves, sharing ideas, creating space for authentic engagement, and creating a community that co-creates solutions to complex issues facing our institution.

Engaged Individual and Community Healing and Grieving

Dave Dorman

Introduction

Elsewhere in this collaborative effort, you will experience powerful stories about how members of the University of Minnesota Art of Hosting [community of practitioners](#) have hosted conversations that matter in the [classroom](#), as part of [organizational effectiveness](#), and through our [community engagement](#) efforts.

This story is a little different and quite personal. It is no less the story of how I hosted myself, my spouse Marcy, and our family, friends, and community during Marcy's brain injury, her amazing two-week recovery, followed by a second brain injury that led to her passing.

In The Art of Hosting Conversations That Matter (hereafter referred to as "Art of Hosting") we practice [Reflective Listening](#) where four people tell a story while the other three take turns listening for facts, feelings, and values. I am telling this story and inviting you to "listen" for feelings and values. The facts of the story are pretty simple.

On January 14, 2012, Marcy had a debilitating stroke. After making steady progress for two weeks, which the medical staff called amazing, Marcy had a second more severe stroke. With little subsequent progress, Marcy was moved to comfort care on February 8th and passed away on February 15th.

I hadn't expected to be applying Art of Hosting in this way. But the timing of life sometimes isn't what you expect.

I attended my first Art of Hosting training during the summer of 2011 and had applied some of what was emerging for me in my [work with leadership development](#). I was especially intrigued by designing more seminar elements that tapped collective wisdom and storytelling rather than focusing on more traditional talking head content. But the real power of the Art of Hosting approach came for me when I was faced with this very difficult situation. The principles, philosophies, and strategies embedded in Art of Hosting became very helpful and comforting for me.

Applying Art of Hosting to a Health Crisis

On day one of Marcy's stroke, several things became readily apparent to me. First, a very bad thing happened to an extremely good person. I wanted to as quickly as possible try to find some way to have something positive come from this.

Second, I was receiving multiple offers from friends and family wanting to help in some way. In typical Midwestern fashion, I was inundated with food that I couldn't possibly eat. I needed to

come up with some things for people to do and decided our CaringBridge site could be a venue for hosting conversations about Marcy while also engaging our community in her healing and encouraging our community to become engaged in the broader community. I began to think of this as *engaged individual and community healing*. I'm probably not the first to think of such a thing, but all of this was new to me, so I was plowing new ground in real time.

CaringBridge as a Hosting Tool

I'd like to share two [CaringBridge](#) journal entries that seemed to really resonate with folks:

Entry One (Jan. 16):

Dear Friends and Family,

The outpouring of good wishes and notes of grace for Marcy and me from our friends and family have touched me to my core. The acts of kindness exhibited have nurtured and sometimes produced tears of gratitude. As just one small example, some anonymous person shoveled our walks and driveway. The positive energy being put out into the universe for Marcy I know is being felt. The presencing exhibited during visits surely enriches Marcy's healing. Food, errands, and deep helpful conversations provided to me are nourishing all parts of my being.

Through conversations, emails, phone calls, and caring bridge entries, it is quite apparent that the Community of Marcy is offering to help. This will be long because I have to provide some context. I want you all to know what has been important to Marcy recently.

Here are some suggestions for what you can do:

1. Donate

It would not be appropriate to list the organizations I mentioned in the CaringBridge entry. Suffice it to say that they were important to Marcy.

2. Volunteer

Lots of you volunteer currently, so please keep it up. If you are not volunteering now, there is incredible need in your community. For those of you in the Twin Cities, here is a great [site](#) that lists opportunities, including one-time events. You may want to volunteer for something and send that energy to Marcy.

3. Sing

Marcy loves sing-a-longs. Lately she has been singing almost weekly with four women; it is a passion of hers. Wherever you are, think about singing a song for Marcy. As the song says, "Don't worry that it's not good enough for anywhere else to hear ... just sing—sing a song."

4. Listen

Some college friends of mine and their spouses have been having a Winterfest get together during most December/Januarys going back to 1980. In January 2010, we each shared our Top 10 songs of all time. (*In the Caring Bridge entry I shared Marcy's Top 10.*) Consider going on YouTube and listening to one of Marcy's songs. If you only picked one, pick "Dona Nobis Pacem," which means "Grant Us Peace" in Latin.

5. Eat soup

Last week Marcy was starting to prepare for a Soup Luck (pot luck with soup) that we are hosting this Saturday January 20 at 5:00. It's still happening, but it's been moved to the Regions Hospital in downtown St. Paul—same day, same time. If you can't come or you're not in the metro area, have some soup on Saturday and do a soup toast to Marcy.

6. Be kind

Perform an act of kindness for someone.

Marcy's positive energy towards others needs to be directed inward for a while now, so we all need to do what we can to fill the gap in the meantime."

Entry Two (Jan. 24):

Two months from today (March 24) will be Marcy's 48th birthday. I'd like your help in co-creating a surprise birthday present for her.

In the early '90s, in the early part of our relationship, an important song for Marcy and me was *Thousand Cranes* by the group Hiroshima. Coincidentally, the song has been on our radars the last several months.

An ancient Japanese legend promises that anyone who folds a thousand origami cranes will be granted a wish by a crane, such as long life or recovery from illness or injury. You can read more about the legend by Googling Thousand Cranes. It is also a novel.

There are two ways you can participate in the project:

1. A year ago around Valentine's Day, for five days, I sent a photo to Marcy of cranes—a building crane, TV character Frasier Crane, White Sox pitcher Jesse Crain, Poet Hart Crane, and a woman craning her neck. I stopped because I thought it was getting old. If you choose, please download a photo or photos of anything having to do with a crane (the bird, characters, people, etc.) from Google Images, Yahoo Images, or anywhere else on the Internet and post it to a website I've created. This is a private website and in order to access it, you will need me to enter your email address to the site.
2. Some of you may want to make an origami crane. Once your crane or cranes are made, place it against a piece of paper (the crane and paper should be different

colors for the best contrast) and write your name on it. If you have a digital camera or smart phone, take a picture of it (or them if you make multiple cranes) and post it to the website above or email it to me and I will do it. Get kids involved. They can learn about the legend and have fun making cranes.

We may not get to 1,000 crane images, but we will have a lot. My niece Linda is a photographer and will turn the images into Marcy's birthday present.

As always, in addition to doing this nice thing for Marcy, please think about also doing an additional act of kindness for someone else.

I've heard from people, especially those not in the Twin Cities that they have appreciated my suggestions for how to engage in Marcy's healing.

Thank you for considering Marcy's 1K Cranes.

Well, we reached our 1,000-crane goal and here is the co-created memorial unveiled at the May 5th service that celebrated Marcy.



MARCY

*May your heart always be joyful
and your song always be sung...*

- Bob Dylan

Living The Four-Fold Practice

In early 2012, I was fairly new to the Art of Hosting practice, but as I reflect back, it's quite obvious that I was living the [Four-Fold Practice](#).

1. It was quite important and necessary for me to **be fully present** during Marcy's time in the hospital. Most importantly, I needed to host the hospital staff so they could care for Marcy while balancing that with hosting friends and family who visited. This may not be right for others, but I was able to host myself because I was hosting others. I'm not sure I would have received what I needed if I was totally focused on self-hosting. The tension of hosting Marcy, myself, and others was exactly what I needed. The hosting I was doing then has helped me come out on the other side of losing Marcy in a better place than where I would be if I had not hosted the way I did. The grieving journey takes place every day in different ways, but is grounded in the hosting foundation I built during those most intense times.
2. Being cognizant of the **conversations** I was having **with others** (that participation in everything that was going on) was so cathartic for me. I never felt so lucid and "on my game" in my life, as I was during that time between Marcy's first stroke and her memorial service.
3. By **prompting conversations** and asking people to **contribute** in various ways through the CaringBridge site, our community grew and became engaged in ways I never would have guessed. For example, during the early days of Marcy's hospital stay, when we wanted to have her breathing apparatus removed, I asked people to focus on the miracle of their own breathing...and they did.
4. By **co-creating** the crane art project and the engagement focus I used to host our community, one result was that I heard from a number of people who made some pretty profound changes in their own lives based on what they were learning, feeling, and experiencing during this journey. My original hope to have something good happen from this awful thing bore fruit. Because I ended up with so many cranes, the good will has extended as I offer cranes frequently as a presence for holding the center of [circles](#) in which I participate. Plus, I give away a lot of cranes as an offering of peace and health.

A key ingredient during this entire time was owning the elephant in the room—our incredibly vulnerable state. My goal in engaging our community during Marcy's illness was to have an even better community for her to re-enter following the recovery I wished for her to have. She is not physically present to experience it, but I can say unequivocally, that the community built during Marcy's illness and passing become more well-knit and engaged during that time and, with some dissipation, remains. As we say in Art of Hosting, we are in indeed better together. If only we would find ways to make this happen more in celebration than in crisis.

Next Steps?

I think we have seen how hosting can be helpful in finding solutions at the global, national, regional, state, community and institutional level, but it is has been interesting to me to consider how building community based on concern for one individual can be done. I'd be

interested in working with others to see how we can help individuals and their communities of caring apply Art of Hosting patterns and methodologies to life-altering health issues like cancer and heart disease, as well as impactful life events like divorce and job loss.

At any given time, there are individual University of Minnesota students, faculty, and staff who are experiencing life-altering events they would not choose (as there are around the globe). Let's tap our collective wisdom to see how hosting conversations that matter can help individuals and their supporting communities during these times of personal crisis. This is a different calling than the important work already being done to address broad societal ills like economic inequality and all of our -isms.

Conclusion

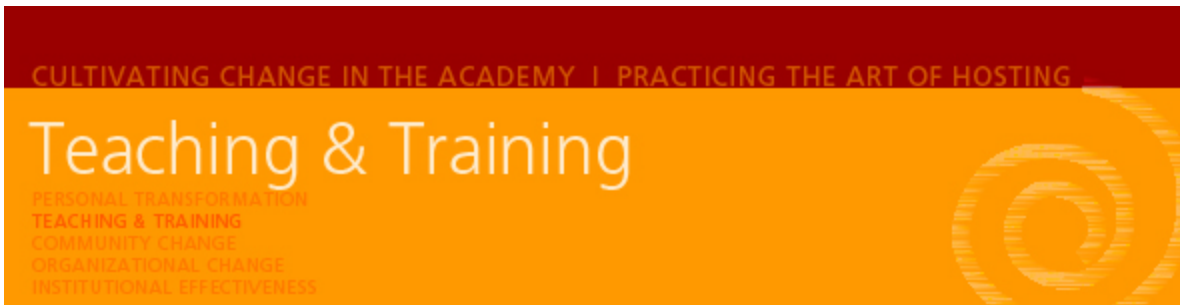
I have many memories of the support I've received since Marcy's first stroke, but none more powerful than the day I came back to work for a few days in between Marcy's second stroke and her passing and saw this crane mobile and large folded crane in my cube that was created by my colleagues. Workplaces can have an incredibly positive impact on the hosting of employees during their times of personal crisis.



Cranes from the Community Art Project



Cranes from the Workplace Art Project



Teaching & Training

Teaching is at the core of any University's mission. While stereotypes abound about old-fashioned professors who teach through didactic lecture, there are many innovations in teaching occurring in higher education. Active learning projects, multi-media case studies and simulations, collaborative writing assignments...these and many other [techniques](#) are being used as faculty experiment with new pedagogical methods. Yet, there are not many venues for sharing about this teaching practice or the lessons learned from implementation. The chapters in this section provide this type of reflection among a few of the teachers and trainers applying Art of Hosting to their classrooms and programs.

These accounts are significant. Research on the science of teaching and learning provides evidence that experience and social interactions are essential for significant learning. If people are stimulated and slightly uncomfortable as they stretch to master new material in a supportive environment, significantly learning can occur (Caine & Caine, 2001; Gibson, 2003). Emotional and motivational shifts can occur, even causing alterations to the neural structure of the brain (Caine & Caine, 2011; Sheckely, 2006). *How* learning occurs is very significant in shaping *what* content is learned.

In fact, each chapter in this section showcases the interrelation of content and process. While knowledge about the topic being taught is necessary, content expertise is insufficient for creating significant learning experience. Process expertise, which attends to the means of engagement, of how individuals and group develop, is also essential. With this understanding, these authors emphasize the importance of what are conventionally understood to be small details: arrangements of rooms, visual appeal, food, material artifacts. When aligned with the desired outcomes, these elements can reinforce the content and motivate students to learn it differently.

All of the authors also talk about their teaching as a practice, something that they try to improve over time. Learning is a dance between teachers and students. If students don't accept what teachers offer, interrogate and engage with it, little learning occurs. As a result, the invitations these teachers make to their students are significant. Each cultivates student engagement through relationships in the class and training room.

- [Quick's story](#) recounts how Art of Hosting changed how she developed a new course in citizen engagement, and altered her own sense of herself as an instructor across all of her teaching responsibilities.
- [Sandfort's story](#) describes a program focused on mid-career professionals that draws upon the Art of Hosting approach to inform both what is taught and how it is taught. In videos that supplement this text, students share their own assessment of the effectiveness of this approach.
- [Morris' story](#), with [Sandfort's enhancement](#), emphasizes how foreign a hosting approach to training seemed when it was first introduced at the University of Minnesota. In the 2009 Forum for Leadership Educators, Morris introduced these practices and revealed the types of significant learning that can result. This path, though, was not without risks. Through both stories, we learn more about the risks and benefits felt by these authors.
- [Lopez and Dorman](#) describe a training focused on improving hosting skills. A key element of the Art of Hosting [Four-Fold Practice](#) is co-learning with others; in this account, skilled graphic facilitators shared their "tricks of the trade" with others.
- [Lundquist and Sandfort](#) describe the three-day Art of Hosting training. Unlike conventional trainings, it provides experience hosting (with supportive coaching), operating as an immersive practicum. All authors in this volume, and others in the University's [community of practitioners](#), experienced this type of introduction to the approach.

A new understanding of pedagogy will emerge as other teachers and trainers continue to bring what they've learned from Art of Hosting into their classrooms. We hope this section contributes to that growing discussion in higher education, given what we are learning at the University of Minnesota.

Hosting the Classroom

Kathy Quick

Being introduced to the Art of Hosting has fundamentally changed how I teach in ways that I can clearly discern. Being introduced to hosting has enhanced how I prepare my students to practice engagement, facilitation, and hosting. But it also helps me reflect on and advance not only my practice as a host, but also my practice as a teacher. The two are closely intertwined; I now regard the classroom as a hosting environment and have reoriented my role to being a host of professional learning.

Teaching Students to Host

I first experienced The Art of Hosting Conversations That Matter (hereafter referred to as “Art of Hosting”) in January 2011, when I took part in the first training workshop in Minnesota as a participant observer interested in researching deliberative, democratic practices. That workshop occurred less than two weeks before I was to start teaching a semester-long class on organizing public engagement processes at the [Humphrey School of Public Affairs](#). I’d prepared the class carefully, as I’d just finished my PhD and joined the University of Minnesota faculty. Public engagement is my area of research specialization and I was excited to be teaching the material to master’s students for the first time.

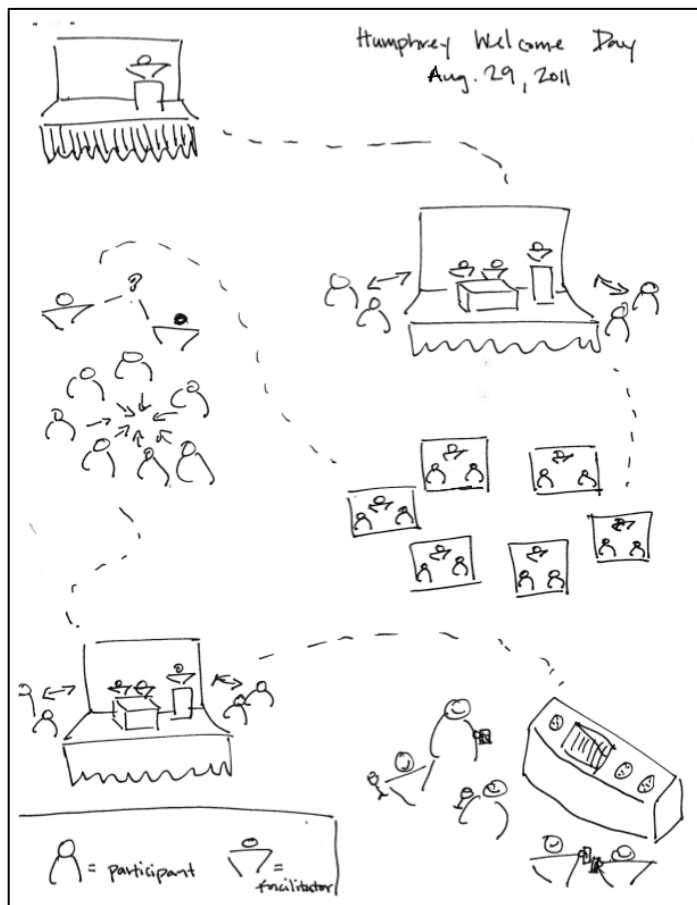
Being introduced to hosting fundamentally changed how I teach that class—and more importantly, how I now teach in general—in at least three ways. At the most basic level, it led me to include some new content in the class, for example to teach my students the basics of the [World Café](#) technique for meetings, or the concept of the [Chaordic Path](#), or to have them practice creating visual agendas.

It’s not these [techniques](#) or ideas per se that marked a fundamental change in my teaching. I’ve participated in a research project in which we’ve studied closely what it is that hosting practitioners learn and do (Quick and Sandfort, 2013). Like many of the people we’ve interviewed, I found that the [techniques](#) or concepts taught in hosting workshops are neither completely new to me nor indispensable to hosting. More importantly is how I have re-oriented myself to teaching generally, namely by re-envisioning the course as a practicum in engagement. Another element of this is how Art of Hosting has given me awareness to de-center my authority in the classroom. These transformations have gone well beyond this class to the stance that I now bring to teaching in general.

Teaching One Another

The Art of Hosting training workshop is an immersive experience. Participants learn to host by both training their peers in the methods (with the support of a coach) and experience being hosted by others. This helped me imagine how to turn my class into an experiential practicum in which we practice and evaluate engagement approaches by using the classroom as an

engagement laboratory. Having been trained in interactive, teaching methods through the Pedagogical Fellows program at the University of California, Irvine, I was committed to creating an experiential, active classroom. But until I took the hosting workshop, I had envisioned myself in a kind of heroic facilitator role in which it was my job to set up and run the exercises, trying to draw students in. The hosting workshop opened my eyes to options for having the students lead the exercises and to the potential value it would add: it avoids the fatigue (for students and me) of always having me in the facilitator role; it give students more facilitation experience; and, most significantly, it multiplies the knowledge and learning in the classroom by bringing all of their perspectives, as well as my own, into the mix.



Hosting process design for Humphrey School of Public Affairs student orientation produced by student Micah Intermill

I have students facilitate in teams, at least twice per semester (one of our weekly discussions of readings, concepts, and cases, and another for an immersive exercise). Non-facilitating students also actively engage in the exercises. I meet with the facilitation team one week in advance to introduce them to the practice they'll be using, brainstorm with them about using it, and build a relationship so that they can use me as a sounding board as they develop their plans for the session. My goal is that through the experience they become more reflective, adaptable practitioners. The facilitation practice is worth 15% of their grade. But what I evaluate them is not their performance per se, or how well the class responded, since one of the lessons we repeatedly emphasize is that facilitators are never close to being in control of the dynamics in an engaged setting. Instead, I assess the reflective analytical skill. I motivate

them to be thoughtful in their preparation, prepare them to anticipate where things may take an unintended turn and how they may respond, and praise them for their ability to be "on the balcony" (Heifetz and Linsky, 2004) to read the room and adjust accordingly. Teamwork and reflective analysis is also key. One of their assignments is to prepare a short memo, as a team, on what they did and how it went. In addition, each facilitation team uses a short feedback form to provide the next facilitation team with information about how it felt to be a participant (to make that experience more visible to the facilitators) and suggest what could be retained or changed in their approach.

The participating students have an active role in processing and honing the practices as well. We debrief each practice afterwards, considering questions such as: “What work does this practice do, and not do?” “How does it feel to be a participant, and to be a facilitator?” “In what contexts would this work well or badly, or what engagement ‘problems’ does it create or address?” We reserve a few minutes at the end for me to add my own perspectives, situate the exercise in the context of common engagement problems (e.g., power differences, information bottlenecks, time constraints) and tie it in with other themes and experiences in the class.

Even with a rotating group of facilitators, it’s challenging to sustain an active experiential learning environment throughout 15 weeks. We work with that dynamic by picking up topical issues. A large part of my role is working with the facilitation team to identify those issues. Not surprisingly, it’s never been a problem to come up with a topic for engagement. For example, each year we do a design charrette to re-imagine a physical space in the Humphrey School of Public Affairs for which there are opportunities, resources, and management support for some small-scale renovations. We learn the [World Café](#) technique by using it to consider what was at stake for public engagement in the controversial consultation process on whether to allow wolf trapping in Minnesota. When bringing in guest practitioners to speak to the class, we use an exercise in how to design a deliberative process in which multi-directional exchange and the discovery of new ideas and knowledge can occur for all parties.



Hosting the classroom creates a more dynamic and democratic experience

From Teacher to Host

The third transformation in my teaching has been subtler and more profound. I’ve rethought my role, moving from a traditional teaching stance to a hosting stance, and have slowly realized that it involves a de-centering of my authority. I don’t abandon my authority in the classroom, which would be neither desirable nor possible. I’m fully cognizant of it and frequently activate it. But I specifically avoid activating it in commonplace ways.

For example, while I do have specialized expertise in public engagement, I don’t enact that as having unique primacy in the classroom. In other words, I do not trade on my expertise to create distinction and barriers for exchanging other kinds of knowledge important for becoming an effective practitioner. My research reveals that the embodied experience of trying out

practices, emotions (e.g., hope, exclusion, being silenced, excitement, boredom), and rational cognitive processes are indelible parts of democratic experience.

I also narrate the kinds of process and environment responsibilities that I have for holding the integrity of the classroom. I tell people that I will be an ally or intervene if they or I have a sense that they are not safe in a dialogue. I do this both to model and enact my hosting role, to make it visible and be accountable, as well as open to question and challenge. For example, approximately once each semester, when I get a sense that my students are overwhelmed with fatigue and stress, I observe that publicly. I remind them that my first interest is their learning and suggest that we need to cultivate spaciousness in order to learn well. I explain I am consequently going to slow down our pace, remove a few readings for the week, or do something else to refresh our energy. Or when I've been in classrooms where the energy is dragging, or where I am simply doing too much of the work, filling in ideas or playing a heroic facilitator role, I call it out. We pause, talk about the problem, and I ask the students to step up to make the environment more conducive to their learning. Not surprisingly, they respond well to being hosted in that way, and generally reciprocate by bringing a heightened level of attentiveness and generosity to helping one another learn.

I also help to build their community, not only through traditional co-facilitation teams and feedback mechanisms, but also through other hosting moves to create an inviting environment. We begin the class with a [circle](#) process in which I ask each person to share what calls him or her to be here. We conclude the class with an [appreciative inquiry](#) exercise in which they work, confidentially in small triads, to reflect on what skills and capacities they have as a facilitator and what they can continue to build. In some cases, those relationships continue; the first cohort I taught, all now graduated, still gather for happy hours periodically, to have fun, check in, and help one another. The experience of the class has inspired half-dozen students to make hosting a core part of how they do their work in a variety of domains, even though they initially enrolled in the class because it was required for their degree program or merely offered at a convenient time.

Reflections

As the syllabus for my public participation class says, the learning objective of “becoming competent in facilitating and participating in public” occurs in large part through “processing our own work as a community of co-learners.” As a new faculty member, I first thought it was a risky strategy. I feared that students or other faculty might think I was acting too young or naïve, didn't know enough, lacked confidence, or felt ambivalent about leaving my student role. I worried that if I didn't lecture enough, they might not realize how much work I was in fact doing in other ways, and that it would translate into damaging teaching evaluations. But I tried it nonetheless, because at the core I was convinced that a hosting stance would be better than a traditional teaching stance for accomplishing my primary interest in the classroom, which is that my students learn as much as possible. As it turns out, my concerns were unfounded and, so far, it has worked very well. Since they do facilitation in the classroom and share the responsibility, I have found the co-learning paradigm useful. When I have the sense that I'm not

learning much, it becomes fairly clear that the students are not either. (Certainly what I am learning is often different in nature, and often more incremental than what they are learning, but when I am open to enabling my own discovery and momentum, I am indeed better attuned to enabling theirs.)

That said, I've learned there are useful limits on how far I de-center my role. My students consistently want me to lecture more, even as I have increased how much content I provide with each class. They want the benefit of my expertise and unique perspective, and I have still not quite found the sweet spot for how much of the content to provide. The size of the group and length of course also seems significant; it is easier to have immersive, experiential learning with a group of 20 or more students in a semester-long class. Otherwise, the immersive practice experiences begin to feel stale, less like authentic ways of doing work (e.g., debating views on "stand your ground" laws) and more like "exercises" for the sake of exercises. Finally, I've learned that, when coaching students to prepare them for their leadership roles in peer-to-peer teaching, it's extremely helpful for me to pre-set a standard, weekly time for those meetings. Otherwise, the logistics of organizing those coaching sessions take so much time that it detracts from the energy we have to putting into making sure they are well prepared to lead a good session.

Creating Meaningful Learning Communities: Applying Art of Hosting in Mid-Career Public Affairs Education

*Jodi Sandfort**

Students begin to trickle into the room, some visibly surprised to see it arranged differently than the conventional theatre-style classroom. Tables are clustered in the front, but there are also thirty-five chairs circled around a centerpiece of flowers, wicker baskets, bright cloths, and books. As the room fills slowly, some students walk around the room, looking at the brilliantly colored quotes about leadership sprinkled on the walls; others pick up the books from the center and realize they are the required readings listed on the introductory materials received two weeks ago. Some help themselves to morning snacks and hot coffee, enjoy the jazz music playing, or share worries with others about their ability to "come back to school" after all of these years. When a light bell rings, the instructors invite them to join each other in a [circle](#) for introductions.

Such is the beginning of the mid-career Cohort in Public Affairs Leadership at the University of Minnesota, a class built to encourage active learning among today's professionals rather than evoking the traditional "sage on the stage" model of higher education. The course is designed to achieve a number of learning objectives: understand leadership theories and strategies; conduct public policy analysis and develop viable solutions; master several data analysis methods. Students gather for a one-week program launch in the summer and return monthly for two full-day face-to-face sessions over the next nine months. In this hybrid course, they also interact online, studying policy analysis, basic quantitative analytics, and leadership through discussion forums, small group assignments, and action learning projects. The resulting 12 credits can be used for a graduate certificate in public affairs leadership or as the core, required courses for the Humphrey School of Public Affairs [Master in Public Affairs \(MPA\)](#) degree.



The hosted classroom creates a more inviting and inspiring environment

All students have ten or more years of work experience; they represent a broad array of political perspectives and come from diverse parts of the globe. Some work in corporate finance, lead IT start-up firms, or work in small law practices. Others do political advocacy for nonprofit causes or lead research departments in large, public agencies. Some have held elected office and many are parents. They turn to public affairs because of a yearning they have to do more, offer more, be a more potent force of change in the world. As instructors, our opportunity is to leverage the talents and motivations of these professionals and push them to

build new knowledge and skills. Our use of The Art of Hosting Conversations That Matter (hereafter referred to as “Art of Hosting”) [techniques](#) enables us to deliver on this promise.

In this chapter, I include three brief videos to directly share student and instructor voices about how the Art of Hosting approach influences the classroom. However, I also want to offer my own description and analysis of how I, as designer of and an instructor in the cohort, try to holistically apply Art of Hosting. We certainly use Art of Hosting [techniques](#) to create an active learning classroom, as the methods enable deep classroom around our diverse content. However, given our topic of public affairs leadership, we also teach the Art of Hosting [frameworks](#), as one set of models for understanding group dynamics, planning processes, and systems change. Even more significantly, the theories underpinning Art of Hosting inform our overall course design and implementation.

Experiencing the Techniques

One important dimension of the Art of Hosting is the engagement [techniques](#) focused on inviting diverse perspectives to be heard and supporting dialogue. Research reveals these types of social interactions are essential for learning (National Research Council, 2000; Fink, 2003; Thomas & Brown, 2011). Talking with others, posing questions, exploring intuition, and providing evidence creates more engagement among students and allows them to more deeply integrate content into their understanding. In fact, neuroscientists are increasingly documenting that this type of social process alters the functioning of the brain, allowing learning to be accelerated (Cozolino & Sprokay, 2006; Zull, 2011).

As those familiar with facilitation models will note, most Art of Hosting engagement [techniques](#) are available through other independent sources; yet, through training and my own use of the methods in other projects, I have developed more insight about the strengths and weaknesses of various [techniques](#). Along with other course instructors, we use this knowledge to creatively design particular class sessions.

For example, in the classroom, [World Café](#) can be applied to dense or extensive readings. By engaging in a series of small-group conversations focused on relevant questions from the readings, students develop new insight about written materials and apply new concepts and theories to daily problems or common concerns. Peer [circle](#) is used in the course to start and end each class session. This technique both helps students prepare for deeper learning in community and reflects the instructors’ philosophy that leadership can be offered from every chair. When used in the classroom, [Open Space Technology](#) enables students to translate ideas stimulated from cases or readings into other settings, like work challenges or avenues for professional growth. We encourage students to use some of these engagement [techniques](#) in their workplace or community, providing written materials to reinforce what they have experienced in class.

In the cohort, while we draw upon other pedagogies, such as case studies, videos, didactic, and interactive lectures (both face-to-face and virtually), the Art of Hosting engagement [techniques](#)

provide a manageable number that can be deployed easily to facilitate interactive learning around any particular content. Students appreciate the diversity of approaches and see explicitly how the methods contribute to building their leadership skills, enriching their understanding of others, and deepening their learning experiences.

[Click here](#) to hear four students from different walks of life talk about how his or her experience in the interactive classroom impacts their learning.

Teaching Useful Frameworks

The Art of Hosting approach includes explicit [frameworks](#) developed by the international [community of practitioners](#) about group dynamics and systems change (Sandfort, Stuber & Quick, 2012). These conceptual models provide concise descriptions of dynamics that are often elusive.

For example, when people gather to discuss issues and decide subsequent action, there is a recognizable pattern in the process—many divergent ideas are offered, the group goes through a period of indecision and strife, and then often experience convergence on the most appropriate action. This pattern, termed in the Art of Hosting model as [divergence/convergence](#), resembles other formal theories of group dynamics, yet is presented in a simple, almost intuitive way easy for mid-career professionals to recall when they face challenging group situations. Similarly, Art of Hosting is particularly well suited for tasks where groups need to share information to better understand a complex system and decide, collectively, how to respond to it. One framework shared, the [Cynefin framework](#), differentiates between simple, complicated, complex, and chaotic systems. Again, while there are other models representing similar ideas, the Art of Hosting version enables mid-career professionals to access language to characterize diverse systems. This heuristic allows for analysis, helping them to better match their interventions to the problem at hand.

In the course, we present an array of [frameworks](#) relevant to statistical analysis, policy analysis, and leadership. Seeing and understanding patterns is a well-known dimension of professional education, essential to developing expertise (National Research Council, 2000; Shulman, 2005). We share Art of Hosting [frameworks](#) as substantive content in the course because of how they help clarify patterns in an array of situations confronting public affairs leaders.

Employing the Art of Hosting “Worldview”

There are many ways Art of Hosting significantly influences how we implement this course, orienting us toward practices that enable significant learning. As implied by its name, the Art of Hosting approach emphasizes the significance of creating a welcoming and inclusive environment through attention to space, food, visual stimulation, and artistic expression. In the Cohort, we attend to those details, providing visually enriched power points, flowers to brighten the room, and snacks for daylong sessions. We also provide materials that support the

learning experience of students, by making large paper, markers, and other communications tools available during activities.

[Click here](#) to hear a student talk more about her understanding of the importance of these details.

Art of Hosting is built upon fundamental assumptions about change in individuals, groups, organizations and [systems](#). Rather than being controlled, Art of Hosting posits that significant change comes as a response to an authentic invitation to engage in reflection, dialogue, and analysis. This awareness helps remind us that while our work as instructors involves providing our expertise, structuring activities, and assessing performance, we are more fundamentally engaged in something more significant—inviting people to develop their core, their unique potential to provide leadership on important public affairs challenges.

The approach also highlights how all individuals can claim expertise. Applied in this course, it alters how we shape face-to-face classroom time and rules of online engagement. For example, we invite students to share responsibility for creating the learning community, asking them to volunteer to host the opening and closing of class sessions. Some are invited to teach their peers specific content in skill-training sessions, called “Knowledge Camps,” during monthly meetings. Facilitated by our course-management software, Moodle, we also invite students to bring relevant content into the course, reflecting our expectations that learning about policy analysis and leadership accumulates throughout the nine-month program from many “real world” applications. Reflecting on these adjustments, one of the co-instructors concludes, “It fundamentally challenges the role of student and instructor, and what is supposed to happen in the classroom environment. It enables students to engage each other and the materials at a depth that comes alive for them...It breeds an environment where they can be a learning community.”

Finally, central to the Art of Hosting worldview is the [Four-Fold Practice](#) that stresses the importance of self-care, participation, and community learning as essential elements to hosting others. Our instructor team routinely considers the application of these ideas to our teaching practice. We hold each other accountable for our own self-care, recognizing that it takes considerable intellect and stamina to teach the two-day monthly sessions. We also must work closely together as a team, stepping up to support each other when needed. This helps ensure content and processes are aligned to create a high-quality experience for students. We participate as learners in course reading discussions and check-in [circles](#), as well as openly sharing our significant learning about teaching in this environment with each other.

This intentional application of the [Four-Fold Practice](#) fundamentally shifts the teaching experience. We have moved from being solitary teachers to working together on a collective creation. We have stopped focusing our attention only on content to rather considering the subtle ways content and process inter-relate in significant learning environments. These shifts are certainly important in shaping this particular course focused on public affairs and policy

leadership. But it has significance for many disciplines and suggests a pathway for changing how teaching is practiced throughout higher education.

[Click here](#) to hear one of the instructors reflect on how this worldview has shifted her own teaching practice.

Implications of Hosting for Higher Education

It was important for me to share this story and analysis of our application of Art of Hosting to graduate education because of how directly it has altered my teaching philosophy and practice. A range of engagement [techniques](#) that easily improve the social interaction of classroom learning supports my colleagues and me. We draw upon practical [frameworks](#) to assist students in understanding complex situations to enable wise action. We also pay closer attention to our own roles in a learning community. As scholars of public affairs, this work is central to our need to provide meaningful experiences for citizens charged now with reshaping the practice of democracy (Palmer, 2011).

I hope sharing this account inspires others to consider how modest alterations in our teaching methods and worldview can create significant results. By laying down the old model of the brilliant professor able to transform lives with an astute and perfectly paced lecture, we open up new options for innovation. The 21st century classroom offers an array of methods for creating significant learning experiences. Supported by the process expertise of the Art of Hosting community, instructors can create new ways to engage the diverse learners seeking the transformation of mind and action that becomes possible when higher education is effectively applied to that task.

The First Forum for Leadership Educators: An Origin Story

Wendy Morris*

Saturday September 26, 2009

University of Minnesota Carlson School of Management

Day Two of The Forum for Leadership Educators

A large rectangular room with a wall of windows overlooks the University of Minnesota West Bank Campus. Along the adjoining wall a heap of long tables are stacked tall, one on top of another.

Above the piled tables, a large printed banner proclaims...

Purpose:

- ***To advance our understanding and practice of leadership development***
- ***To cultivate approaches to leadership development that are equal to the challenges of these unpredictable and daunting times***
- ***To generate adaptive approaches to integrative leadership***
- ***To evoke our capacity and competence to develop leadership for the common good***

Another poster reads...

We do not just live in an age of change. We live in a change of ages. – Eamonn Kelly

Seven tables are scattered around the room covered with red and white checkered tablecloths, small vases of fresh flowers, and wine goblets stuffed with colorful markers. Sheets of flipchart paper drape over the tablecloths. The white pages are blank canvases primed and ready for insights and images that are about to come.

It's break time. Twenty-five women and men are absorbed in animated conversations in the hallway. This cohort is a fertile mix of diversity and commonality. Although they come from very different worlds—business, government, academic, non-profit and community contexts—they all make leadership development their work.

The ring of a chime signals that break is over. Participants return to find a room that looks very different from the simple circle of chairs they left just a few minutes earlier. They are beginning to expect the unexpected.

When the program began the day before there was a subtle stiffness in their bodies, a cautious look in many eyes, and a formality to the cadence of their voices. Today, in this second afternoon there is a whiff of anticipation on their faces that borders on delight. There is a slight flow to their movements as they settle around the tables across from their colleagues. The

sound of the voices is rich and varied—from lilting, playful qualities to deep and thoughtful tones.

This is day two of a three-month program to help leadership educators explore their own adaptive capacity and evolve as leaders themselves. During this first day and a half, the furniture in the room has been configured in many ways, each one signaling a new mode of engaging around the theme of adaptive leadership. After just this short time together, participants are adapting to a constantly changing learning environment filled with simulating ideas. It is time to generate some collective meaning from their divergent experiences.

Scrawled across a flipchart is the theme for the conversation they are about to embark on: What do we know now about what is possible together?

It is the beginning of a conversation that will continue to unfold in many forms over the months to come.

The Invitation

In the summer of 2009 the University of Minnesota's Center for Integrative Leadership invited me to join a small team to design and teach an innovative program on adaptive leadership for leadership development practitioners from different sectors.

I was excited to contribute to this new venture. I had grown familiar with leadership development practitioners as an audience. Leadership consultants, trainers, educators, and coaches are often program participants at venues where I teach, places like the Shambhala Institute for Authentic Leadership ([ALIA Institute](#)) in Nova Scotia, and [Banff Centre](#) in Alberta, Canada.

I was also attracted to the cross-sector nature of the project. Since 2002 I had been co-facilitating a cross-sector leadership development program around creative community change: The Creative Community Leadership Institute ([CCLI](#)). My colleagues and I had developed an approach and a toolbox that had worked well for bringing cross-sector groups together. We drew on many of the core conversational methodologies that are associated with The Art of Hosting Conversations That Matter (hereafter referred to as "Art of Hosting"): we opened and closed each session with [circle](#) process; we regularly used [Open Space Technology](#) as a forum for emergent ideas, issues and opportunities; and we incorporated [World Café](#) as a way to evoke collective wisdom related to curricular topics.

Looking back to when I first met my colleagues from the Art of Hosting network in Canada in 2006, I can imagine that I might have been surprised by how sinuously the patterns and practices of Art of Hosting overlapped the patterns and practices of my own work. But I wasn't surprised. Because those patterns and practices simply seemed to me to be how good work gets done in complex environments. The first time I participated in an Art of Hosting training was in 2008, ten years after I first trained in [Open Space Technology](#) with Harrison Owen, and a

dozen years after integrating [circle](#) process into my own leadership development work. The Art of Hosting training was like being in my own living room—welcoming, comfortable, and familiar.

The story told here is about The Center for Integrative Leadership's inaugural Forum for Leadership Educators and its relationship to the Art of Hosting initiatives that followed at the University. After the first Forum, faculty and staff interest in the kinds of participatory engagement practices taught through the Art of Hosting was very high, and all subsequent Forums for Leadership Educators have been Art of Hosting trainings. As a member of the core teams that led the first Art of Hosting training programs sponsored by the Center for Integrative Leadership, I have seen firsthand the commitment to nurture a robust community of practice, and to grow the number of Art of Hosting practitioners at the University. Faculty and staff have invested themselves in becoming skillful hosts of conversations that matter. Some of those who participated in the first Forums have gone on to train others who are now hosting conversational change efforts inside the University and in the community.

In the summer of 2013, my University colleagues and I came to realize that the First Forum for Leadership Educators four years earlier had prepared the ground for what became the Art of Hosting initiatives at the University of Minnesota. This chapter explores that origin story.

What We Knew...

In 2009 the Center for Integrative Leadership was a young and tenuous collaboration between the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs and Carlson School of Management. The Center was without a director. The Forum for Leadership Educators was the Center's first non-credit, executive education development offering, and a lot was at stake for the Center.

In my understanding, our charge was to build a cross-sector learning community of leadership trainers, educators and consultants interested in delving deeply into the practice and pedagogy of leadership. The structure of the program had been set before I was brought on board and I thought it would work well: three two-day retreats spread approximately one month apart; a trio teaching team; and a cohort of practitioners whose backgrounds would reflect a broad range of perspectives on the field of leadership development. The core content was to draw on cutting edge research, theory and practices around adaptive leadership and integrative leadership, especially the Adaptive Leadership framework developed by Ron Heifetz and his colleagues at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

What We Didn't Know...

None of the people putting on the Forum knew one another.

It is eight days before the program is about to launch.

For a number of reasons the person poised to serve as lead trainer and content expert is unable to fulfill the roles he has acquired. One week before launch he steps down.

Sunday night before our Friday opening session I receive a phone call from Jodi Sandfort representing the University. She asks if I can “get this car out of the ditch”: to step in to complete the program design and steward this effort in four days.

I think about it overnight. I reach out to a colleague I have met a couple of times, Val Ulstad, a physician who I know has done a brilliant synthesis of Heifetz’ work for leaders in health care. I ask her if she’s willing to jump into the program to provide the content frame.

*This is what the work is all about: **adaptive** leadership.*

I agree to step in. Val agrees to step in. We’re on our way.

I want to assess how the program design might resonate with participants from diverse sectors, so I solicit input from a range of people. A colleague who is a senior leadership development practitioner for a large company confers on the program design with a business eye; a friend who knows nothing about leadership development provides a naïve perspective that helps take my implicit assumptions about the program and make them explicit.

In the next four days a curriculum comes together, a binder, handouts, slides...

The trainer who was originally leading the program is invited to join as a participant and accepts.

Jodi, who was originally slotted to co-teach the program as part of the trio teaching team, realizes that what is unfolding is something unfamiliar to her. She recognizes that this is not work she knows in her bones, so she courageously suggests she let go of her trainer role but remain part of the [hosting team](#) interfacing with the University.

As we each rearrange our roles and identities in relationship to this work I feel a kind of awe. It is as if the work itself is asking us to move into positions that are not the ones we would have envisioned for ourselves:

- *The lead trainer becomes a participant*
- *The physician on the sidelines becomes a core trainer*
- *The third member of the teaching team becomes the steward of the program as a whole*
- *The academic expert becomes a whole-hearted learner who nurtures the larger institutional field*

This is what the work is about: adaptive leadership...individuals and organizations adapting and thriving in challenging conditions.

Or at least that’s what I thought. I hadn’t known that when the University used the words

“adaptive leadership,” they specifically meant *Adaptive Leadership™*, the academic framework copyrighted by Ron Heifetz and his colleagues.

Hosting in a Large Academic Institution OR...What’s Up with the Stack of Tables in the Rear of the Room?

Before the first Forum, the University was expecting a conventional educational program delivered by expert teachers with specialized knowledge. Yet I was intentionally designing a learning space to host meaningful conversations that would be conducive to co-discovery and co-creation.

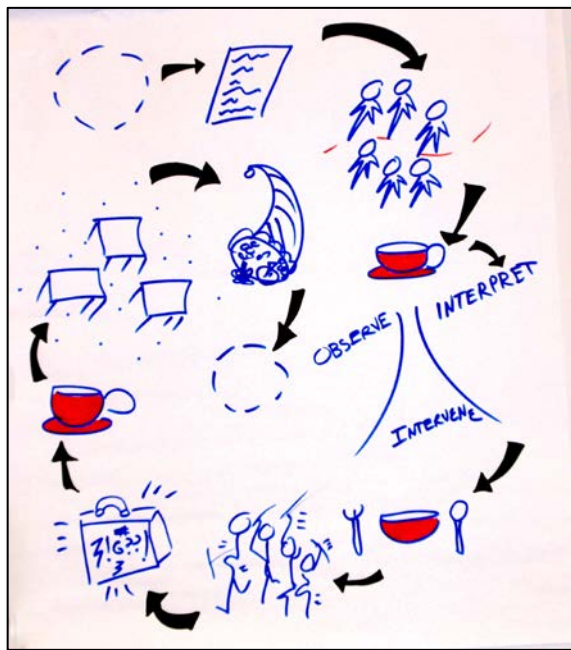
I felt confident that a rich peer learning exchange would best serve our purpose. I envisioned an environment where the participants, who were all leadership development practitioners in their own right, would learn from one another, and [harvest](#) new knowledge out of the intersections of their diverse backgrounds. A hosted program, with lots of opportunities for peer dialogue, was most likely to inspire innovation in leadership pedagogy, which was in essence what this project was about. A hosted program was the right fit for our purposes.

At the start of our collaboration, I didn’t realize that my approach was so far from the University’s expectations, so it didn’t occur to me to tell them that I was bringing a hosting orientation rather than a traditional teaching stance. They just knew that that I was asking for a whole lot of bizarre and impossible things, like a room where I could set up a circle of twenty-five chairs.

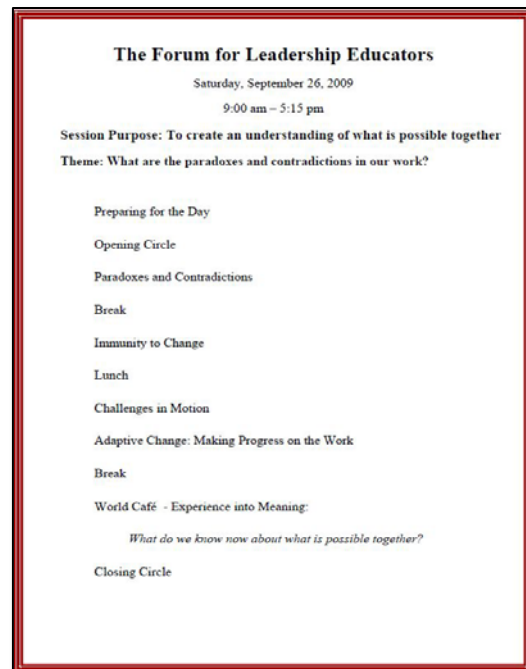
Some of the larger rooms at the Carlson School of Management were pre-set in permanent amphitheater style seating; other rooms had regulations that prevented furniture from being re-arranged or anything posted on walls. We located a room that was big enough, but when I arrived a day before our program to set up, I found the room packed to the gills with tables and chairs. The building staff made it clear that there was no other place the tables could be stored and I would just have to deal with the situation myself. I called my assistant who rushed over to help. She and I, with the reluctant approval of the building staff, dragged tables into hallways, tucked chairs into nooks and crannies, and piled the rest inside the room. It wasn’t pretty, but it worked.

The pile of tables was a symbol of what happens sometimes when a culture of hosting asserts itself inside a bureaucratic institution like the University of Minnesota. The tables were also a symbol of what happens when a culture of hosting asserts itself in the hearts and minds of people who are accustomed to a more conventional meeting structure. The first day, several participants were quite vocal about how uncomfortable they were sitting in a circle without a table. Some expected to sit behind a desk and take notes. Some demanded a place to put their binders, coffee cups and other gear. I brought back a few of the abundance of tables and placed them outside the perimeter of our circle. This compromise sent the message that I was willing to listen and respond to their concerns, even though I wasn’t willing to abandon the structure I

believed would best serve our learning. With this compromise, the group was ready to get to work.



The Day's Visual Agenda



The Day's Written Agenda

The next three months were filled with many such compromises and adaptations. As was my practice, at the beginning of each session as I talked about the coming day, I referred to a visual agenda, which represented the flow of activities in a hand-drawn spiral of simple images and icons on a flipchart page. But for this program, I also handed out typed agendas for each session. I duplicated the work in two versions—graphics and text—to communicate that there are a multiplicity of ways to think and communicate about something as a basic as how we will spend our time together.

People often reject outright new ways of working because to embrace the new approaches might be a judgment that their longstanding practices are bad or wrong. By presenting the same information in two formats I wanted to convey the message that their usual ways of going about things weren't wrong, AND there were other creative options. I hoped to bridge between where they were at and where I was inviting them to go. Participants repeatedly told me how much they appreciated simultaneously being able to hold onto what was familiar and also see what was possible.

Making the Implicit Explicit

Day One of The Forum for Leadership Educators

It is our first morning together. On the wall is a flipchart with a bold headline: What do you

want to know about the other people in this room? Below the heading are participant responses in an assortment of handwriting styles and marker colors: What sector do you work in? Where do you live? Who else is thinking about a professional transition? What inspires you? How do you like to spend your leisure time?

I invite participants to get on their feet so we can physically map out answers to some of their questions. For the leisure time question they call out a favorite way they spend their leisure, "Reading!" "Playing tennis" "Hiking with my kids..." As I spot patterns in their answers, I ask them to cluster according to whether the activity is mostly indoors or outdoors; and then subdivide those groups according to whether it is mostly solo or with others. As we spontaneously generate ways to map answers their questions I tell the group, "In the spirit of stating the obvious, I'm making this up as I go along."

At the end of the day several participants approach me, "We're all professionals here. We are often in front of a group and making it up on the spot. But you don't have to say it out loud." I'm taken aback. In this moment I recognize that, moving forward, I need to be rigorous about taking my implicit understanding and intentions, and making them explicit. The next morning I come back to the group determined to do just that.

"If you look at the structure of that opening exercise, you'll notice that it is designed so I can't possibly pre-plan what we will do. I can't know how we are going to map the answers to your questions, because I don't know what your questions will be. That is on purpose.

I chose to open the program with an activity where I am forced to make it up on the spot as a way to model adaptive behavior right here and right now. You could have received an email in advance asking you what you wanted to know about others in the cohort. But by waiting until we were face to face, we tapped an authentic curiosity about one another, and worked with it to identify the seen and unseen patterns that connect us and divide us. In this way we were able to respond to what is alive right here in us, and in this room. The exercise is designed not just to help us get to know one another, but also to demonstrate how we can intentionally use improvisation to grow adaptive capacity.

As leadership development practitioners and educators, what does it mean for us to not acknowledge that we are often making it up as we go along? What does that imply for the leaders we serve, who are increasingly required to function in fast-changing, unprecedented conditions where they can't possibly anticipate what is coming? This exercise was one small step towards not perpetuating the myth and illusion that leaders can, and should, know what's ahead.

Our brilliant human capacity for strategic improvisation is not something to hide. It is something to model and celebrate because it is essential for leading in today's increasingly complex, interdependent and quickening world."

Or at least, that's what I meant to say. In 2009, at the start of the Forum, I was an experienced

practitioner with more implicit knowledge than explicit language. The Forum and the Art of Hosting trainings I have been involved in, both as a trainer and a participant learner, have been transformative stops on the journey of growing my capacity to give voice to an otherwise silent knowing. I have always been pretty good at “walking the talk”, but in the past five years I have learned to “talk the walk”.

Leaving and Returning

At the end of the first morning three participants decided the program was not what they expected or wanted. During a break they informed Jodi that they were dropping the program, and they left the building. In the month between the first and second session, the grapevine was buzzing about how valuable the full two-day session had been. Two of the three participants who had left reconsidered their choice and asked if they could return for the remainder of the program, which they did.

I had not anticipated that the Forum would be such a shock for some participants, which it especially was for those who came from highly bureaucratic professional environments. I had been using these approaches in other settings for so long I didn't realize how drastically different they were, and how much discomfort they might evoke. I also didn't recognize how often, especially in academic institutions, educators teach things they don't actually do. In the Forum we were breaking that paradigm by asking participants to invest in themselves *as leaders*. The program was rooted in the belief that, if leadership development practitioners understand ourselves as leaders, then that will change how we do leadership education. From the start of the program we built a learning climate where participants were encouraged to explore themselves as leaders. We attended to the relationships within the cohort even as we introduced concepts related to Heifetz and Linsky's (2002) adaptive leadership framework.

Ron joined us midway through the program. In our morning check-in [circle](#) participants expressed themselves with openness, vulnerability, creativity, and heart; so Ron assumed the group members were all seasoned experiential learning facilitators, which wasn't the case. They were not facilitators who already used direct experience as their primary pedagogical strategy in their own work. Later that day, participants collaboratively created presentations that used sound, movement, and visual elements to reflect their understanding of Adaptive Leadership. Ron pulled me aside to tell me that he was amazed at what he had seen the cohort do, and he asked whether I thought *anyone* could do what they had done. I said, yes, if the right conditions were set.

The Art of Hosting is a resource for setting those conditions. For ninety percent of the participants in the First Forum, the ways we were engaging were far from what they were accustomed to. But because these practices are quite basic to what human beings naturally do together, it didn't take very long for them to acclimate, adjust, and find value in them.

How the Worldview, Core Patterns and Practices of the Art of Hosting were Embedded in the First Forum for Leadership Educators

Some think of the Art of Hosting as a suite of conversational methodologies. Some see it as a global network of colleagues who share a participatory and relational approach to leadership. Some associate it with a training process for facilitation that is rooted in the power of self-organization and emergence. And for others the Art of Hosting is fundamentally a [worldview](#)—a way of understanding the nature of how the world works—and a set of principles that flow from that worldview. Below are some ways that the First Forum for Leadership Educators was aligned with the Art of Hosting.

Acknowledging multiple levels of scale

The Art of Hosting attends to four interconnected levels of scale at once, each of which is present in the other levels. Throughout this program we purposefully operated on the following levels...

- *Individual*: strengthening individual capacity for adaptive and integrative leadership by making space for self-reflection, self-awareness, and presence
- *Team*: developing collective capacity for collaborative leadership, co-creation, and group reflection
- *Community, organization, and system*: sharing and generating knowledge about complex systems by working with leadership practitioners from diverse contexts
- *Global*: integrating the larger context by raising questions and bringing into the room what was taking place in our world at that time

Sharing the work

Hosting is not work to be done alone; it is meant to be done with colleagues and friends. In the Forum, even though our roles shifted, the program was still designed and led by a “we.” The “we” included the trainers, the colleague who lent her business eye to the design process, and a participant who contributed a teaching about the nexus between emotional intelligence and adaptive leadership.

Checking-in and checking-out

We began each session with a check-in process to hear every voice, to set the conditions for people to be fully present, and to weave the relational field. We closed each session with a check-out process to [harvest](#) individual and collective learnings, and to create a constructive transition for participants as they returned to the rest of their lives.

Using conversational methodologies to build strong relationships that invite real collaboration

During the program we used many of the conversational methodologies that are core to the Art of Hosting including [circle](#) process, [World Café](#), and [Open Space Technology](#). Six months after the program, participants reported that they had developed new relationships and strengthened pre-existing ones. In the years that followed some of those connections resulted in professional collaborations, as practitioners taught in one another's programs and sometimes crossed into sectors they had not worked in before the Forum.

Creating a meaningful record of conversations and interactions

Throughout the Forum we used a variety of documentation practices to [harvest](#) emerging insights from the group. We employed a broad range of modalities to generate individual and collective meaning—from summary reports to poetry to physical gestures. By representing the group's wisdom in tangible forms, we were able to animate the learning, integrate it and keep it alive a little longer.

Trusting the wisdom in the room

A core principle of the Art of Hosting is that the wisdom needed is inherent in the people who care enough to show up. The design for the program was grounded in deep trust that the skills, wisdom and expertise needed to innovate leadership development pedagogy would be in the room.

Leveraging the power of questions

Questions can serve many roles. They can be used to provoke critical thinking, to demonstrate knowledge, to clarify confusion, to mask a judgment, to further an agenda, to test, or to instigate cognitive dissonance in others. In the Art of Hosting, questions are often used to foster connection and generate a sense of "we." At the start of the Forum, the framing comments addressed the importance of a stance of inquiry in unpredictable environments, like the one we were about to enter into. Throughout the program we used questions to integrate our heads, our hearts, and our action. The primary role of questions in the Forum was to help us connect to our fuller selves and to one another.

Attending to chaos, order, and the space between

In each session we intentionally traversed from activities that were highly ordered, to those that were much less ordered, to those somewhere in the middle. By varying the degrees of structure in the activities, we were able to experientially address issues that were at the heart of the program

- Adaptive Leadership was the theme for the Forum. During sessions, as participants shifted between activities they were invited to observe themselves. How did they respond to the disparate degrees of structure? What were their preferences and knee-jerk reactions? What was required for them to adapt? This inquiry served as a form of case-in-point learning, where the immediate moment in the session becomes a bridge for transformative learning about adaptive leadership.

- Another focus for the program was to inspire innovation in leadership pedagogy. New insights and possibilities are the lifeblood of innovation, and they are most likely to emerge in the space between chaos and order: the chaordic space. Forum activities were designed to invite participants into chaordic space as a way to foster innovation in their leadership development practice.

Suspending assumptions

In order to innovate on leadership development pedagogy or anything else, we need to suspend what we already know and move towards a willingness to “not know.” As part of the opening to the program, I wrote one of my own old assumptions about my leadership on a slip of paper: “I believe that the best way I can serve this community is to generate equilibrium and stability.” I dropped my paper into a glass bowl filled with water. As I stirred, the paper dissolved. I invited participants to join me in dissolving assumptions of their own that were relevant to our work together. I distributed blank slips of dissolving paper, which I had purchased from a magic store. They each wrote an assumption they wanted to hold lightly during the program and dropped it in water. When they were done, I poured the pulpy residue of their dissolved assumptions into an old gelatin mold. When we reconvened a month later, the water had evaporated. What remained was a richly textured handmade paper bowl, which I brought back to them as a reminder of the assumptions we had suspended, and where we began together.

Outcomes, Inspiration and Gratitude

It is four years after the First Forum, and those of us who were involved in putting it together are just now recognizing its ripples of impact.

Within months after the final session, colleagues from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, who had been influenced by their experience in the Forum, [redesigned the mid-career Masters of Public Administration program](#) and established its current cohort format.

Since the Forum, hundreds of people from University of Minnesota and Upper Midwest region have been trained in the Art of Hosting. Forum participants were some of the first local practitioners to serve as apprentice trainers on the teams that introduced the Art of Hosting regionally. Back in 2009 I was heartened by the willingness of Forum participants to grow in their own practice, just as I was growing in my own. Many of those people are now beloved friends and colleagues whose openness and commitment continues to inspire me.

I am outrageously grateful to my colleagues in the global Art of Hosting network who gave language and form to a relational approach that others of us had been using for years, but hadn't yet articulated as a body of practice.

Lastly...Why the Above Story Doesn't Follow a Linear Sequence

The story presented here has been written in a nonlinear, non-sequential format to give the reader a sense that is hopefully a bit closer to the experience being described. My sincere hope is that something from this story affirms your own adaptive strength and practice.

Experiencing the Forum for Leadership Educators: An Experiential Story

Jodi Sandfort

September 26, 2009. I sit looking around the executive education room at the Carlson Business School amazed at how it has transformed. The rectangular tables conventionally arranged in stadium-style—oriented to the large screen and PowerPoint presentations—are pushed against the wall, replaced now with café tables, decorated with checkered tablecloths, small vases with flowers, markers, and paper capturing the discussions we have shared this afternoon. The “we” is a group of twenty-five other professional “leadership educators” who have come to build their capacity to offer transformative leadership development programming; we come from all sectors and sites of work: nonprofits, corporations, government, and higher education. Our conversations focused on sharing our collective wisdom about developing integrative leadership, as well as what we wanted to do together in the remaining days of the six-day program. An intense day of reading discussions, engaged lectures about adaptive leadership, probing case analysis in small groups, physical movement, and creative expression has concluded.

As one of the hosts in this program sponsored by the [Center for Integrative Leadership](#) (CIL), I am cognizant of the risks we are taking. I don't believe the University of Minnesota has hosted many training programs that push people to integrate their analytical and creative, professional and personal selves as rigorously as this effort.

In the day's lecture material about adaptive leadership, one of the hosts, Val Ulstad, talked about the importance of knowing institutional context, the necessity of loss through organizational change processes, and the fact that “exercising leadership alone is heroic suicide.” As I survey my experiences of the past two days and anticipate the four remaining, I physically feel exhausted but realize the potency of these ideas. I am hosting adaptive change at the University, practicing in real time the lessons we are learning in the Forum.

Backstory

I had gotten drafted into participation in this program because I was acting as the chair of a CIL committee, as often happens in University-based initiatives. Committee members from seven different campus units had identified such a program could add value to the University community and our partners in business, nonprofits, and government. Over a number of months, we had planned the effort with two consultants designed, as the marketing materials stated, “to advance the work of those who develop leadership and together improve our individual and collective capacities...” As the date for the launch neared, I had begun to worry about the program's effectiveness. The training team had not come together on content or approach; we did not share a common language or reference point about how we might explore the programs' focus on adaptive leadership (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

I was stressed by these events, aware that as a tenure-track faculty member, I really didn't have time for any of this anyway; this type of activity is not incentivized, rewarded, or really even recognized in my annual review. Yet, I felt responsible for trying to pull together a high quality program under CIL's auspice.

In trying to fix the problem, I knew that high-caliber instructors were critical. As Wendy Morris stepped up, and we brought Val Ulstad on board, I realized that I did not know enough myself about either the Adaptive Leadership content or the hosting process Wendy kept mentioning. So after deep personal reflection, I decided to remain a member of the hosting team but really focus my attentions on tasks I was qualified to do—interface with the staff and facilities at the University, provide academic legitimacy, and participate actively with other leadership educators.

Sensemaking

As noted by [Morris](#), this program was the first known introduction of a full-fledged hosting approach in the University of Minnesota community. I did not understand the language Wendy was using about “hosting,” “stewarding,” “emergent change,” “[harvesting](#),” just-in-time [eight breaths of process architecture](#). Frankly, the language just seemed to be something she used as a creative corporate/community-based consultant with a high-profile reputation. I also was a bit uncertain about how training would happen without lots of PowerPoint slides and handouts, the typical tools of adult professional education.

I did recognize, though, that providing leadership education requires a different set of skills than teaching biology, mathematics, or organizational analysis. The science of leadership studies is weak and yet there are thousands upon thousands of cases in which leadership was a significant factor in creating positive results. The most effective leadership educators stress the integration of analytical capacities and emotional intelligence, the self-reflective and strategic (Palmer, 2004; Parks, 2005). And, the program being developed by Morris and Ulstad made participants walk their talk. Personal risks and significant learning was required if people were going to effectively enable others to understand leadership.

As the program unfolded, I saw how much energy emerged from exercises where the instructor had not predetermined the outcome, where she was inviting people into an experience of the content so that active learning was happening in real time, where learning was happening among participants unmediated by the trainers. As a scholar, I know how important student motivation, relevance, and social learning are in creating positive outcomes. And this approach, what I now recognize happens when we host learning, seemed to leverage all of these in the program.

Yet, there were paradoxes to manage. A few participants were deeply uncomfortable with the experiential approach. A few stopped coming, only to reengage later. Others kept expressing their discomfort. And staff in the facilities we were using were used to a more routinized and predictable training program; numerous times, I needed to interface, explaining why suddenly

we had need for break-out space, new art materials, or access to the space after conventional hours. At every juncture, though, these accommodations were worth their bother, given the reactions of most participants to this unusual and holistic learning experience.

Results

As is the practice at the CIL, we did a multi-leveled, structured evaluation of the Forum for Leadership Educators. First, during the program itself, the hosting team solicited feedback after every two-day session of the program to inform their approach and design for subsequent meetings. This type of formative evaluation is essential to an iterative approach, staying close to the participants' experience so instructors are able to craft a learning experience that both stretches and provides safety.

Secondly, we did a more conventional [program evaluation](#). We sent out an online survey soon after the Forum ended and, six months afterwards, conducted phone interviews with 75 percent of the participants. The responses affirmed my own sense of the experience. While the format was not what they had expected, the majority found great value in learning about themselves, other participants, and the concept of adaptive leadership. They also strongly suggested that CIL step into the role of sponsor for similar programs in the future.

Shaping a New Direction

The results of this Forum, and other CIL initiatives, caused us to rethink how we might build a practice field using the Art of Hosting approach. Other Center leaders and I participated in the first community-wide Art of Hosting trainings offered in Minnesota in January 2011. Reflecting upon it now, I realize that this first Forum and its positive results made me ready to champion a more systematic introduction of [Art of Hosting to the whole University community](#).

My experience also gives me compassion for other leaders willing to step out and consider how their own classroom, department, school, or center might benefit from more skill building as an essential tool organizations often overlook—Conversations that Matter. In the complex organizations of the 21st century, the simplest acts can yield profound results. But they must be supported by leaders willing to introduce and defend simple acts as mechanisms of significant change.

Visual Facilitation Gallery Walk: Co-Learning Gathering at the University of Minnesota

Cristina Lopez

Forevermore, we acknowledge the Doodle as a tool for whole-mind learning, and we wield its power deliberately and without restriction, in any learning environment we see fit. [Doodler's Manifesto](#)

Part of The Art of Hosting Conversations That Matter (hereafter referred to as “Art of Hosting”) practice is to co-learn with others in community. In 2012–13, the Art of Hosting community at the University of Minnesota hosted a visual facilitation workshop to support our co-learning around visual facilitation. Combining the facilitation of an exploratory or deliberative process with graphic recording, visual facilitation creates much more than pretty pictures. The process requires the ability to listen carefully, present the abstract, and diffuse in more concrete and connected ways. The visual images produced render “group think” processes visible, and represent both the bigger picture and its constituent parts. Professional visual or graphic facilitators are highly skilled at drawing, listening, and thinking on their feet. While the rest of us might not achieve that level of skill, anyone can learn basics in visual facilitation, and both benefit and contribute.

While there is much that distinguishes Art of Hosting from other approaches, there are many powerful examples within the community of visual facilitation expertise. When we convened the workshop, we worked with Katie Boone, Jen Mein, Marcela Sotela Odor, Virajita Singh, Sandra Wolfe Wood, and all members of the regional Art of Hosting community in Minnesota.

The session goals were to:

- Explain visual facilitation, and what forms it might take
- Explain how visual facilitation can enrich participative change processes and decision-making
- Create opportunities for pursuing further development in skills and knowledge, either individually or with others in the Art of Hosting [community of practitioners](#)
- Identify opportunities for integrating visual facilitation in their Art of Hosting practice

Planning the Session

Busy team members were not able to congregate in one place, so we met via Google Hangout and coordinated our work through Google Docs. Meeting in a visual medium, combined with our collective enthusiasm for the topic, created a sense of presence as we worked at a distance. Together we developed an event flow and activities, and planned logistics.

Finding space for events on a large campus can be a challenge, and the room we found was functional with white boards, tables, a projector, and space to move around. Making the space

more visually inviting was a priority for our group. When our guests arrived on the day of the event, they saw colorful cloths on the tables, pretty glass jars with rainbows of markers standing up inside, and [origami cranes](#) lining the shelves and tables.

The format we selected for this session was a [Gallery Walk](#), designed to be fast-paced and connect participants with a variety of topics and people. Our facilitators were stationed around the room. Whiteboards, paper, and markers were available so that participants could engage actively and try out new skills in thinking, drawing, and mapping. Our guests formed small groups and moved from station to station, taking ten minutes for each activity. One of our greatest challenges was to keep people moving so they would have the opportunity to try out each activity, though we understood that it can be tempting to linger, to keep working and talking.



Participants learn about graphic facilitation from Sandy Wolfe Wood, a graphic designer and Master of Public Affairs graduate of the Humphrey School of Public Affairs

The activities at each station addressed a range of visual facilitation techniques that can be applied at different stages of an Art of Hosting event:

- Jen shared her expertise on creating visual agendas, demonstrated how she creates drawings, and shared sample harvest documents. Participants then thought about an upcoming meeting and drew their own agendas.
- Virajita taught us about mind mapping by walking us through an example and then providing a topic to mind map. Our participants shared their ideas by speaking them out loud, but also created visual mind maps as they were talking.

- Marcela created activities to help those of us who (think we) can't draw. Participants at her station learned how to draw faces and facial expressions.
- Sandy asked us draw abstract concepts, challenging us to think and express ourselves more visually.
- Katie showed an example of a video harvest and led discussions about the advantages and strategies for creating and making use of them.



Example of a visual agenda shared by Jen Mein

Participant Harvest

"I have done a little visual facilitation in my work with groups doing planning work, and am hungry to expand both my abilities as well as my mindset for using this approach."

Through an intake form our participants explained their interest in the topic, and during [harvest](#) they expressed "what came alive for them" during the session. Their comments, analyzed here into major themes, demonstrate why it's worth picking up a pen to doodle and diagram our ideas as we explore with others through conversation.

Better understanding

"I have witnessed how graphic depiction of a concept can really help form deeper understanding. I've always been interested in communicating complex information via visual representations. I would like to see examples of how others are doing this."

During [harvest](#) the group identified many ways in which visual representations and facilitation can help us gain understanding of topics and issues. Groups can use mind mapping to explore complex issues and problems, and show relationships between ideas. Both the process of drawing and the drawing itself can incorporate "multiple modes of reflective thinking." While we draw, we process at many different levels, and "having something at your fingertips helps." As one participant said: "Let people doodle and share their doodles with each other. Doodling encourages non-literal thinking and more creativity."

Working together

"It sounds intriguing and I want to reconnect with the group! I look forward to sharing and being inspired by everyone who participates."

Those who attended the event noted visual facilitation can be presented as an invitation to work together in different ways. In some instances, visual interpretation creates opportunities for more people to take on the role of teaching or informing: while one person speaks, others might draw on the board, thereby providing a supplemental mode of explanation. Others observed that capturing ideas through drawing presents opportunities to benefit from our collective—rather than individual—powers of observation. "You can relieve yourself of the interpretation, allow the group to see the pattern, and connect it with the experience and the conversation." While a harvester might synthesize through their own perspective, a [harvest](#) team is key for identifying the patterns. And visual representations lend themselves to representing a synthesis rather than a collection of ideas.

Showing Care

"The Art of Hosting is about triggering emotion; the change happens not when people can recount the facts; it happens when people have an evocative experience over a shared experience."

In recognition that drawing requires both skills and time, one participant observed, "Graphic harvesting is a way to tell a group, 'I heard you and what you had to say was important enough that it is written down/drawn.'"

Anyone can do it!

"I hope to get fresh ideas for what might be done, how it can add to a conversation, and some simple tips for visualizing when you don't think you can draw (a.k.a., you are last pick for Pictionary teams)."

And indeed, people commented that drawing is not as hard as it looks and, if children can do it, so can you.

Resource Harvest

We created the following list of resources for those who are interested in exploring visual facilitation further.

Books

- Agerbeck, B. (2012). *The Graphic Facilitator's Guide*. Chicago, IL: Loosetooth.com Library.
- Emerly, E. (2006). *Ed Emberly's Drawing Book: Make a World*. New York, NY: LB Kids.
- Stuart, D., & McAlhone, B. (1998). *A Smile in the Mind*. London, UK: Phaidon Press.

Experts and Organizations

- [Center for Graphic Facilitation](#)
- [Grove Consultants](#)
- [International Forum of Visual Practitioners](#)
- [David Sibbet](#), pioneering visual facilitator
- [Edward Tufte](#), designer

Good Sources of Information and Inspiration

- [The Center for Graphic Facilitation](#): Ideas, Methods and Tools for Visual Learners
- [Good Infographics](#)
- Leah Lundquist, Center for Integrative Leadership: [U of M with InCommons Art of Hosting Training Part II: Harvesting Conversations that Matter](#). CIL >> Time to Lead.
- Leah Lundquist, Center for Integrative Leadership: <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/cil/myblog/2011/08/u-of-m-with-incommons-art-of-hosting-training-part-ii-harvesting-conversations-that-matter.html>
- Sorenson, O.Q. (2013, July 29). *Draw more, together* [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=iRL8ZxBhCa0

Visual Harvest Examples

1. MN Community Education Association Annual Conference: [ProAction Café](#)
2. Center for Earth Spirituality & Rural Ministry: Earth Conference
3. Mankato Area Refugee Consortium [Video Harvest](#)
4. "[Visual Notetaking 101](#)," slides and audio from a SXSW panel featuring Dave Gray, Sunni Brown, Mike Rohde, and Austin Kleon
5. [xkcd](#): A Webcomic of Romance, Sarcasm, Math and Language

Tools

[Animoto](#) is a simple, online tool for creating and sharing videos that can be used to design and build a harvest video during a process or event. Like many online tools, the free version is limited in terms of features and access, and there are different levels of pricing.

A Training Not for Spectators

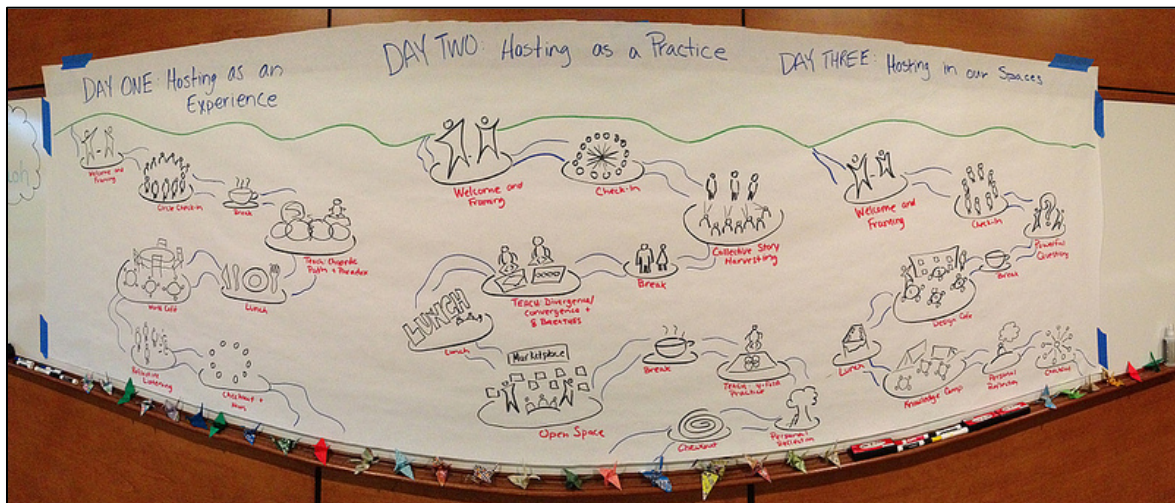
Leah Lundquist & Jodi Sandfort

The Art of Hosting Conversations That Matter (hereafter referred to as “Art of Hosting”) training workshop is not a trademarked set of practices or a three-day retreat. Yet, it serves as a gateway experience through which individuals pass to be introduced to the [techniques](#) and [frameworks](#) associated with the Art of Hosting. For many—including over 170 individuals worked at the University of Minnesota who have had this experience—this is a memorable experience (Quick & Sandfort, 2013). It is a practical invitation to participatory leadership in service of positive organizational, political, and societal change. The story that follows captures the spirit of the Art of Hosting practicums that have been hosted at the University of Minnesota since 2011.

The Training Begins...

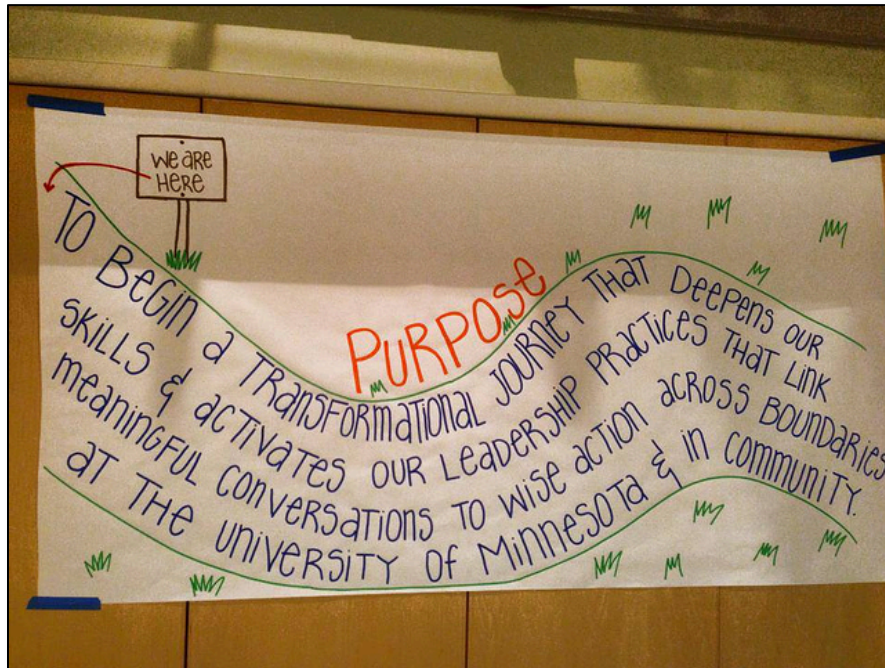
Participants begin to arrive, not completely sure of what they’ve stepped into over the next few days. Many are eager for professional development and looking forward to connecting with others from across the University of Minnesota where there are few opportunities for staff, faculty, and students to interact as equals. This experience poses a unique and exciting opportunity.

And, already, there is much that is unexpected. A couple weeks earlier each participant received a welcome letter outlining logistics and inviting them to consider both “What time is it now for the University of Minnesota?” and “What time is it for me in my leadership journey?” There is no projected PowerPoint image or even a screen. Instead, on the walls are two large sheets of paper with colorful drawings: an agenda—or “visual flow”—drawn out as a landscape, outlining the “journey” the participants will experience over the next three days:



Visual agenda for a three day Art of Hosting training at the University of Minnesota (also called a “landscape flow”)

And a purpose, unique to this particular workshop:



Overall purpose for a UMN Art of Hosting training, as articulated by the hosting team

To begin a transformational journey that deepens our skills and activates our leadership practices that link meaningful conversations to wise action across boundaries at the University of Minnesota and in community.

The hosting team—eight individuals who together designed and are implementing the experience—are welcoming participants as they arrive, inviting them to have coffee and breakfast before settling into the circle of chairs.

The Day Before...

Each three-day workshop is hosted by at least one global steward in the Art of Hosting community, an individual who has deep experience with the practices through application in various contexts, to ensure program integrity to the approach. The steward is joined by at least two other experienced practitioners, invited to added diversity to the skills and background of the team. This team plans the entire workshop purpose, agenda, and activities the day before implementation. They “practice the practice” of honoring emergence to create what is needed.

“Practicing the practice” means the team participates in meaningful conversations to build their coherence, knowing a sense of camaraderie and trust between the hosts will set the tone for how participants interact. The most important element shaping workshop design is purpose: What work will the workshop do for participants at this place and time? In this particular case, each participant had articulated his/her own motivations when registering and the hosting team spends an hour walking through these responses. The caller for this particular workshop is

the [Center for Integrative Leadership](#)—a University-wide center focused on building capacity for cross-boundary leadership. Annually, it has held a [forum for leadership development](#) to enhance cross-boundary leadership in the University. This context influences the shape of the workshop but it still takes the team time to integrate participants’ needs, callers’ expectations, and the larger intention. But it is time well spent as it builds relationships among the hosting team, and determines the activities and their ordering in the three-day program.

Throughout the day, the hosting team comes back to the purpose, as they discuss potential engagement [techniques](#) and [frameworks](#) that could be included. When consensus is achieved, the hosting team members are invited to write their names by the [techniques](#) they are willing to coach, [frameworks](#) they can do a brief 10–20-minute “teach” about, and other roles. They are once again “practicing the practice”; instead of encouraging delegation and role assignment, they are encouraging self-organizing based on individual passion and autonomy. No one will work alone on any role; hosting team members are encouraged to take safe risks, knowing another team member will be there to support their leadership.



Hosting team designing a three-day Art of Hosting training

Over the next few days, the hosts will continue to practice the [Four-Fold Practice](#):

- *Hosting themselves*: Finding balance in the midst of the intense practicum days through exercise, music, and fun; asking their fellow hosts for support when they sense they need it.
- *Participating*: Entering into the experience with a “beginner’s mindset”—open to new insights and ways to understand the [techniques](#) and [frameworks](#); participating alongside participants in any “teaches” or activities they are not hosting.

- *Hosting*: Ensuring participants feel welcome and comfortable. Being attentive to the energy in the room. Teaching the approach through word and deed, at all times modeling the leadership being called upon from participants.
- *Co-creating*: Co-designing the experience as part of a hosting team. Checking-in and checking-out at the beginning and end of every day to debrief on what is going well, what could be changed. Bringing their talents and material artifacts (i.e., markers, baskets, cloths) to enrich the training experience.

Back to Day 1 of the Training...

A chime rings and participants are invited by a host to take their seats. From around the large circle of fifty chairs, members of hosting team voice their welcome and explain the very participatory nature of this workshop. A sign-up sheet on the wall invites participants to step up to host a group process supported by coaching, [harvest](#) the many conversations that will be taking place, or attend to the beauty of the space. It is a practicum focused on learning-by-doing, particularly significant for adult learning (National Research Council, 2000; Parks, 2005; Thomas & Seely Brown, 2011)

After these introductions, participants begin to experience the Art of Hosting techniques. Through the [circle](#) process they are invited to go beyond typical professional introductions to bring their whole selves into the room by responding to the [powerful question](#), “Who am I...really?” This question immediately catapults the participants from the status quo into a place of vulnerability, curiosity; it offers the potential of authentic relationship among the group of 50 people.

Over the Course of 3 Days...

The next three days are alive with conversation and movement. Most participants take advantage of the engaging-nature of this practicum, turning off their cell phones and putting up away email. They experience something that seems quite valuable at this moment of time; the benefit of slowing down and drawing on the wisdom of colleagues.



University faculty and staff creatively harvest collective insights

The organic development of the training, where hosting team members step up to teach [frameworks](#) or coach others demonstrates unanticipated skills in the room.

Some people bring their instruments, and song and dance erupts during breaks. Even those most seasoned in the Art of Hosting techniques and [frameworks](#) learn as they watch others lead presentations and application.



Art of Hosting training participants engage not only mentally but also kinesthetically

Along the way, the hosting team also engages case-in-point pedagogy, making explicit the design decisions informing the activities and validating questions posed throughout the sessions (Parks, 2005). Hosting team members also contextualize the experience by sharing

stories of how they have sought to apply the [frameworks](#) and methods in their personal and professional lives at the University.

On the final day, participants are encouraged to share any intentions they have after leaving this shared, workshop space. Many commit to acting on the projects or meaningful conversations they had worked on with fellow participants through a [Proaction Café](#) or [Open Space Technology](#) sessions. Many also commit to participating with the growing [community of practitioners](#) at the University, to support each other in both co-hosting conversations and continuing to enact the [Four-Fold Practice](#).

The whole learning experience is guided by principles shared by others in the Art of Hosting international community, articulated by Meg Wheatley and Debra Frieze (2011): the leaders we need are already here; there is no greater power than a community discovering what is cared about; we have what we need.

What We are Learning About Training and Adult Learning...

We are using a number of structured approaches to capture our learning about how to improve delivery of the workshop. As is noted in the other chapters in [this eBook section](#), faculty are taking these training methods and adapting them for classroom use.

Also, to assure we have feedback from participants, we conduct a follow-up online survey each time the three-day workshop has been offered and compiled a [comprehensive evaluation report](#). Participants have ranked their experience highly across the number of outcomes, while also suggesting changes that would improve the offering within the academic context.

The experiential nature of the activities over the three days is a refreshing departure from most professional training experiences offered in the academic environment. Eighty-two percent of the respondents agreed they had sufficient opportunities to practice what they were learning during the training.

Many remarked on what a departure this was from the traditional “sage on stage” model of academic learning.

I found the concepts very relevant and the approach effective. I liked the learn by doing approach and that we tried out the different types of sessions -- much more effective about understanding how they can be used and makes me more confident to use them. I also value having the resources to refer to in the workbook. (January 2012)

I loved most that each event had hosts culled from the general population of learners. It allowed everyone to participate equally, even if there was not yet mastery of a particular skill. (June 2013)

The hosting team is crucial to fostering the sort of environment that helps participants both retreat and challenge themselves over the three days. When asked what was most valuable about the experience one participant remarked:

The whole vibe of the three days—the hosts were welcoming and articulate and very knowledgeable and this made for a relaxed, comfortable, yet very intellectually stimulating three days. (June 2013)



Art of Hosting trainings create time for both group conversation and individual reflection

We are learning that participants appreciate the spaciousness of the training flow, which allows ample opportunity to reflect and forge connections with colleagues. When asked what they found most valuable, many participants highlighted the [Reflective Listening](#) exercise. Ninety-five percent of the respondents agreed that the structure of the training allowed them to **share** their viewpoints honestly and openly. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents agreed that the structure of the training helped them to **listen** to the viewpoints of others with an open mind.

Opportunities to practice and to listen, to watch and to learn...it was a good rhythm and balance for me. I particularly appreciate that for many parts of the training there was a great deal of time allowed for understanding, discussion, questions, etc. So often, we want to do so much and that leaves us with insufficient time to process. This training, for the most part, allowed for more time for important reflection, processing, and questions. (June 2012)

In addressing challenges that participants have expressed following previous trainings, we have learned to do a better job of translating terminology that might be useful in shifting perception, but might also turn participants off from the experience. Specifically, we have improved the pre-workshop welcome letter to seek to better prepare participants' expectations for the experience.

At times, the new-agey culture surrounding the training detracted from the incredible value of the philosophy/underpinnings of Art of Hosting. To appeal to a broader audience and prevent people from disengaging, the material could be presented in more universal, less touchy-feely ways. The tactics and engagement strategies presented are wonderful. It's more the presentation style around it that I had a hard time connecting with. (June 2012).

Based on feedback from the 2011 and 2012 trainings, we have increased our intentionality around using case-in-point methodology to debrief and discuss potential application for each of the techniques. While participants still expressed a desire for more conversation around application, this resulted in fewer suggestions related to debrief and discussion in the 2013 survey.

We have also learned that this experience can be quite taxing for those more introverted or needing more time to process and prepare as the nature of the experience involves a high level of conversation and improvisation. By balancing the days with more individual reflection time and improving our coaching of participant hosting and harvesting teams, we are seeking to address feedback around this issue.

Finally, through deeper research conducted by Sandfort and Quick, we have learned that the practicum experience is just the tip of the iceberg and often it takes multiple experiences, particularly being a part of a hosting team, to start to understand Art of Hosting not only as a toolbox, but an transformative orientation to collective leadership. (Quick & Sandfort, 2013; Stuber, Sandfort, and Quick 2012).

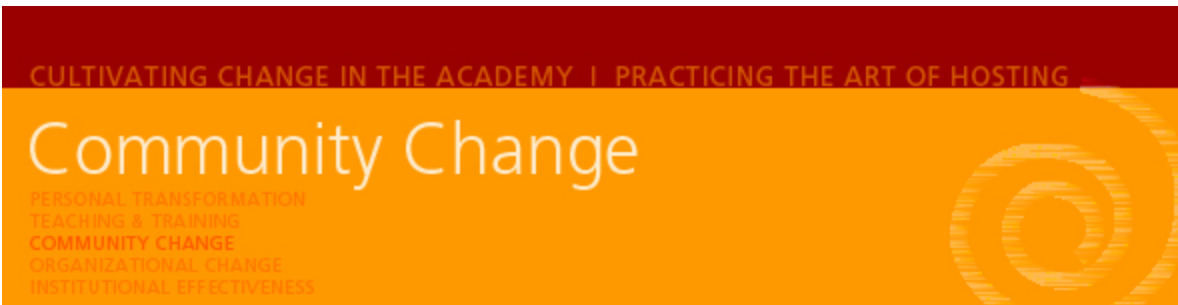
By providing an annual Art of Hosting practicum retreat at the University of Minnesota, the Center for Integrative Leadership has been seeking to cultivate the sort of [integrative leadership practices useful to addressing global grand challenges](#). The network of individuals who have participated over the past four trainings continue to connect across boundaries of employee classes, across disciplines, and even across Universities with practitioners at places like The Ohio State University to bring more meaning and smarter action to their work. The Center does not “own” Art of Hosting. Anyone who sees a need can sponsor a practicum. In fact, the January 2012 experience hosted at the University of Minnesota was called by the College of Design as they were seeking to foster a more collaborative and innovative environment among their employees.

Sharing our Learning...

As noted in the [Personal Transformation chapters](#) of this eBook, some individuals have a powerful experience in the workshop. This eBook is one way to document how people unleash their participatory leadership skills in many different venues following it. Others at the University of Minnesota have gone on to develop their own skills, through more extensive trainings offered in the upper Midwest region or nationally. Some have recently become

international stewards. As a result of this initiative, and the many activities of the University's [community of practitioners](#), our resources at the University for offering these workshops or hosted gatherings have grown considerably.

Yet, practicing the Art of Hosting is not about exclusivity (those trained versus those not trained) or rigidity (methods and [frameworks](#) associated with Art of Hosting at the expense of other participatory approaches). Rather, it is an invitation to step into leadership and transform daily operations and learning from where you sit.



Community Change

Universities traditionally have been perceived as a source of knowledge. This most obvious of ideas becomes problematic when we consider relationships between universities and the surrounding communities they engage, as the interactions are too often one-sided. In meetings between universities and communities, the institution provides information, and a community receives it. Both the university and community suffer as a result. The university does not learn from the discussion, and the community is not provided opportunities to contribute. What might happen if the University *hosted* communities instead?

Hosting requires a shift in perception. The university is now a convener of meaningful conversations—moving from organizing panels to inviting participation. This is not to say that meaningful conversations do not benefit from the being grounded in the theory and research data coming out of the University. They do. But by acting as hosts, members of the university recognize that the contextual experience of their guests is a form of knowledge and is a valuable contribution. Through hosting, we acknowledge there are multiple ways of knowing. New solutions can only be reached when both are brought together.

Building relationships with the community (volunteers, activists, residents, youth, elders, *insert your definition here*) is essential to achieve effective results. Meaningful conversation around topics that matter to both academics and community members provide such a vehicle. Employing hosting methodologies (such as [powerful questions](#)) with volunteers and community partners enriches relationships, leading to a heightened sense of ownership and engagement for all.

Hosting conversations for Community Change requires a paradigm shift for those of us in higher education. The stories included in this section exemplify that shift.

- [Gerdes' story](#) demonstrates the need to trust the process, as he finds himself being the “caller” of a group of strangers gathering to inform the complex task of redesigning the work of a statewide organization. Throughout, the importance of slowing down to go deeper is palpable.
- [Lundquist's contribution](#) highlights the importance of asking [powerful questions](#) when building partnerships between organizations, institutions, and community members as they deal with complex and challenging issues. In this case study the presence of different forms of “knowing” are clear and visible.
- [Doty and Kellerman's story](#) illustrates how Art of Hosting [frameworks](#) and methodologies impact the work of large government bodies such as Hennepin County and their interaction with the University. From large-scale events to routine meetings, the results have been more engaged conversations, better-informed employees, and a more collaborative mindset.
- [Straub describes](#) the power of Art of Hosting in engaging volunteers by changing regular routines such as existing meetings and trainings. Allowing participants to be more present and tapping into the wisdom in the room has led to strengthened relationships and more engaged participation of volunteers with whom the University has a long-term, ongoing relationship.
- [Sotela Odor provides](#) a glimpse at the importance of listening intently and acting intentionally while working in community. From the definition of purpose, to the invitation, to regular meetings and hosting of events, it becomes apparent that it is collaboration that leads to community building.

In an era of decreased resources and high public expectations, these activities point to exciting avenues for improving effectiveness within higher education.

Trusting the Process

Kevin Gerdes



Visual flow for State Services for the Blind Redesign Gathering

Gathering with a Purpose

Twenty-two strangers, invited to participate in a daylong workshop organized by an unknown representative from the University of Minnesota [Humphrey School of Public Affairs](#), anxiously awaited the opening comments by their host. Though representing diverse experiences and occupations, all were connected to the topic of public service to aging and/or visually impaired. There were representatives from multiple state and nonprofit agencies; some were employed in private companies; some were from academia; others were community activists; some were educated in design and unfamiliar with issues faced by elderly or visually impaired populations; and some were clients of the state agency that currently delivers services to elderly visually impaired: State Services for the Blind (SSB). This group of strangers respectfully earned the collective title of “Redesign Team.”

After grabbing a cup of coffee, a muffin, and fruit from the reception room’s back table, the strangers sat on living room-style chairs and loveseats that offered comfort and warmth to the mid-April Minnesota snowstorm that threatened many of their afternoon commutes home. But they were drawn to participate by a projected problem that intersected their daily lives as service providers, activists, and clients/future clients: “The anticipated continued growth of elderly individuals in Minnesota with vision loss will exceed the current capacity of SSB’s Senior Services Unit (SSU) to serve their needs.”

Though this problem was the impetus for the study, the purpose for today’s event was much more focused and limited in scope: “To seek a deeper and broader understanding of the challenges and possibilities for supporting the independent living needs of older individuals who are visually impaired.”

For the experienced SSB members who worked in this field of service delivery, most with 35+ years of service each, this purpose statement fell short of their expectations for the workshop—they wanted to advance far beyond understanding. They understood the issue, were intimately familiar with it, and looked anxious to move into solution-oriented discussions. The majority of the Redesign Team, however, needed time to better understand the issue and the service needs of clients, as well as the ancillary topics surrounding this issue with regards to how this agency intersects with the sector or field where redesign team members operate on a daily basis.

Host Team

Planning for the day’s activities was guided by a “host team” of individuals that included the Principal Investigator (PI) and Research Fellow for the project, and members of the University’s Art of Hosting [community of practitioners](#). All were trained in The Art of Hosting Conversations That Matter (hereafter referred to as “Art of Hosting”), but we were each assuming particular roles. Some helped facilitate the activities, which allowed the PI and Research Fellow to engage with Redesign Team members in workshop activities. The team knew there would be different levels of understanding among workshop participants and made plans to “hold” this tension to allow time for the group to come together with a common understanding.

The Host Team helped the SSB develop communications messaging themes that would be valuable to achieving our stated goal for the day: deeper understanding of the problem. The Host team helped craft some opening comments that emphasized that we are all equals today—all experts who bring different pieces of information to the group. Participants were assured that there were no preconceived notions of how to address the problem; that we will all figure it out together. Finally, they cautioned that the process may become messy as we venture deeper into understanding and awareness of differences. It would be important for the team to demonstrate this commitment as the day’s activities unfolded.

Opening Circle

To kick off the day’s activities, all 21 members assembled in a circle. A member of the host team invited each participant to introduce themselves and present an item that they always carry with them—sharing its significance and creating some interpersonal connection between members of the group. This style of check-in stimulates engagement, participation, and connectedness among group members.

To help the team understand the over-arching process for how the day was intended to unfold, and to shape an expectation for outcomes of the day’s activities, another host team member

conducted a short “mini-teach” on the [divergence/convergence](#) process—emphasizing the importance of divergence in today’s workshop. While many would be tempted to begin the convergence towards a solution to the troubling problem, the message of the “mini-teach” was to emphasize the importance of holding the tension. Recognizing that many are uncomfortable with the tension of uncertainty regarding outcomes, a deep understanding is critical to identifying viable solutions.

With half of the morning already consumed with introductions and the “mini-teach,” the schedule indicated it was time to take a break. Some who were anxious to “dive into” the meat of the subject matter were tempted to forego the 15-minute break. With the snowstorm brewing outside, it seemed logical that we might shorten the break to get ahead of schedule and create opportunity for an earlier afternoon release, but the hosts actually announced a longer break since we were ahead of schedule. The engaging conversations and laughing that occurred during the break confirmed the importance of this break, and provided evidence that the group of strangers were making important connections that would be important for the redesign team’s activities.

Reflective Listening

Another host team member then introduced our next exercise designed to create a personal connection between every team member with the focus topic for our session: aging and vision loss. Teams of three would be formed, allowing each person to tell a 10-minute story about a personal experience they’ve had with aging and/or visual impairment. While telling the story, the other members would each be listening for something different: emotions and values. The listeners were not allowed to interrupt or ask questions, and if the storyteller paused or felt they were finished, the team was directed to sit in silence until completion of the allotted 10 minutes.

Before breaking into teams of three, one of the experienced SSB staff members raised a concern signaling impatience about how these types of activities would help us achieve our desired outcomes at the end of the daylong workshop. In a very short amount of time, we witnessed the power of story and its ability to connect people at a deep, interpersonal level. Through telling a story to complete strangers, we witnessed some team members become emotional and wipe away tears as they shared their emotions and feelings about aging and visual impairment. It was clear that the stated problem at the center of today’s workshop was more than just an academic challenge requiring a cognitive response; it was now being felt at a deeper, more personal level.

World Café & Harvest

After lunch, we re-convened as a large group into a classroom with tables set up with four chairs each. The host team had organized a [World Café](#) exercise with three rounds of discussion focused on three different questions. After providing them with handouts of facts about the vision loss field, demographic trends, and information about SSB services, the team briefly

explained how the [World Café](#) process would work and the small-group discussions at each table began. After 20 minutes of discussion, where participants were encouraged to contribute verbally and/or in writing on the blank sheet of butcher block paper on each table, the group spent about 15 minutes to [harvest](#) key concepts from the first question: “What stands out to you when looking at these handouts?”

After [harvesting](#) key concepts from the first round of discussions, one person was asked to remain at the table and the other participants were allowed to move to a different table and form a new group to discuss the second question: “Given the discussion we have just had, what are we not considering?” The person who remained served as the table host and shared some of the key concepts that had been discussed at this table from the previous group. After this short summary, the group kicked off their discussion for another 20 minutes and, again, the key concepts and ideas were [harvested](#) in a large-group setting.

With the wind picking up outside to create a rare April snowstorm, the team remained committed to complete the process, an indication that this style of convening was engaging and meaningful for the participants. The final question provided to be the liveliest topic of the day: “What is the best possible outcome/goal for serving the needs of older individuals with vision loss, given what you now know?” While some in the group felt this should have been defined at the start of the morning session, the [harvest](#) from the small-group discussions helped to create a much broader and informed outcome than the research team had previously defined. It was also clear that the rich discussions that took place by a group of individuals who were no longer strangers, but connected at an interpersonal level, could not have occurred at the start of the day’s activities.



Participants engaged in [World Café](#) discussion

Closing Circle & Assessment

The value of Art of Hosting was reinforced by the day's activities, and reflected in the richness of the [harvest](#) from the final question and the final check-out question that asked each participant to briefly share: "What's alive for you right now?" This workshop was able to engage each individual in a meaningful process that demonstrated value to each of their diverse voices—limiting the tendencies that can often occur in large group settings by those with greater perceived value because of social or educational status. Participants left at the end of the day feeling like their voice had been heard and that their experience was meaningful—both as a member of a collective and as an individual seeking to grow and contribute to a meaningful cause.

As the SSB and Host Team reviewed the final [harvest](#) from the day's activities, it was clear that the purpose and goal for the day's gathering had been successfully met: "To seek a deeper and broader understanding of the challenges and possibilities for supporting the independent living needs of older individuals who are visually impaired." Though the beginning exercises of [circle](#) and [Reflective Listening](#) may have felt unimportant and distracting to those who were anxious to move into solutions, they proved invaluable in connecting participants with one another. This connection provided a safe environment where individuals felt empowered to participate in meaningful conversations that provided a deeper and broader understanding of the challenges. The individual group members were now invested in the work of the project and felt like they had contributed to shaping the future actions of the research team. Their commitment would be needed for the future phases of this important redesign project and Art of Hosting invited this to happen.

What's Next?

The day's activities helped to focus the research team's efforts for the next few months—to clarify the project problem statement, conditions for the desired outcomes, and, most importantly, build a collaborative team that felt invested in continuing to work as a contributing member on this project. The team received a [harvest](#) document within a few weeks of the event and remained engaged through monthly emails. In August 2013 the team will re-assemble to evaluate potential solution options under consideration for recommendation to SSB. The group's diverse experience and expertise will be extremely valuable in helping to assess the final proposal considerations, and Art of Hosting [techniques](#) will once again be at the core of the day's activities.

Beyond Presentations and Panels: Public Engagement Through Meaningful Conversation

Leah Lundquist*

“There are things we know but don’t really talk about.” - *Conversation Participant*

The conference room was packed in the [Urban Research and Outreach Engagement Center](#) (UROC)—a University of Minnesota Center focused on strengthening urban communities in partnership with North Minneapolis. More than one hundred individuals had come from throughout the Twin Cities metro area on a chilly October evening to engage in a conversation on the challenging topic of how sex trafficking and prostitution impacts the health of urban communities. Neighbors, police, advocates, students, clergy, survivors, service providers, and faculty sat co-mingled, enjoying dinner together before diving into small group conversations informed by the principles of [World Café](#) and *The Art of Hosting Conversations That Matter* (hereafter referred to as “Art of Hosting”) more broadly. In designing meaningful conversation about this topic, four components emerge as particularly key: the hosting team, the invitation, the questions/principles, and the [harvest](#).

The Hosting Team

North Minneapolis remains Minneapolis’ most diverse and historically marginalized neighborhood. As such, there was an understandable distrust of the University’s establishment of a physical presence in the neighborhood. Some residents feared that the intent was using residents as research subjects without mutual benefit. By hosting conversations open to the public on topics identified as critical by community members, UROC has built trust, serving as a bridge between the University and North Minneapolis residents and helping to facilitate the University and community residents in addressing urban issues in authentic partnership. The issue of sex trafficking and trading was one UROC Director of Research—Dr. Lauren Martin—had been working with residents and partner organizations through [a community-based study](#).

One of the partnerships that had developed through this research was with Pastor Alika Galloway of the Kwanzaa Community Church, host congregation for the [Northside Women’s Space](#), a drop-in space for women and girls who had been sexually exploited. Pastor Galloway brought a deep understanding of the context around the issue, acknowledging that faith leaders are highly sensitized to what is happening in their community and often the first confidant individuals go to when they are being exploited. Pastor Galloway supported the planning of this conversation, sharing her belief that reweaving community through conversation is the first step to healing. In welcoming individuals to the conversation, she quoted spiritual leader Gwendolyn Brookes saying, “We *are* each other’s business.”

The third co-sponsor for this event was the [Center for Integrative Leadership](#) (CIL)—a University-wide Center focused on using participatory processes to foster collective impact on

complex issues. Over the past year, the Center had served as a convener around the issue of human trafficking both globally and locally. In 2012, CIL kicked off the yearlong exploration with a daylong symposium co-hosted with the Women's Foundation of Minnesota: [FREEDOM HERE + NOW: Ending Modern Slavery](#). Though more than 300 individuals attended this informative symposium, the packed agenda left little time to surface wisdom from the individuals attending as a basis for future action; furthermore, there were many who might be engaged but could not give up a workday to attend the all-day symposium.

As CIL Program Manager, I had the pleasure of working with Lori Lindgren Voit—a passionate advocate and teacher of healing practices—who generously offered her time as an Art of Hosting practitioner and CIL community volunteer. Not only did she help infuse more of an action-orientation into the Symposium, but she co-hosted the follow-up community conversations being described in this story.

There was great value in having this hosting team of four individuals that each brought unique expertise related to the issue, the context, and the conversational design.

The Invitation

While there was room to be more explicit about this, the invitation evolved into not just an invitation to participate in a single conversation but rather to help further instigate a growing network of conversations. Though [World Café](#) as a *methodology* consists of rotating small group conversations often happening synchronously and in the same room, [World Café](#) can also be viewed as a *metaphor*, representing the power of a network of asynchronous conversations dispersed across geography or time but focused on the same purpose, resulting in the broad emergence of new insights and smart action.

Following the FREEDOM, HERE + NOW symposium members of a neighborhood adjacent to the University of Minnesota which had recently experienced the bust of a sex trafficking ring were inspired to host multiple conversations in their neighborhood. CIL had hosted an initial follow-up before co-hosting the conversation with UROC and the Northside Women's Space. The first conversation inspired another two months later. All of this developed into a growing network of meaningful conversations around this issue.

The Principles & Questions

Designing [powerful questions](#) is a key skill to hosting meaningful conversations. Scholars Eric Vogt, Juanita Brown, and David Isaacs have developed a theory related to the architecture of a [powerful question](#), proposing it is in the question's scope, construction and assumptions (Vogt, et al., 2003).

In developing questions for this first conversation at UROC, the hosting team found it essential to gather input on the conversation questions from the team of individuals who had

volunteered to serve as table hosts. For a community conversation such as this, we were seeking questions that would be inviting and proactive. This is what emerged:

- *Round 1:* What concerns, questions or insights about sex-trafficking and prostitution brought you here tonight?
- *Round 2:* What can we as individuals and communities do to reduce harm and promote healing?

Equally important as the questions were the principles that were framed at the beginning of the conversation and listed on table tents at the center of every table. These principles and our application of them are described here:

- *Create hospitable space:* All participants were invited to take ownership for ensuring others around the table felt welcome.
- *Explore questions that matter:* The questions were carefully crafted to encourage participants to dig deep into the issue, while respecting that participants were approaching the conversation from many different backgrounds and depths of awareness.
- *Encourage each person's contributions:* Though a talking piece could have been used at each small group, we chose to ensure individuals felt safe and welcome to contribute by having a table host present at each table from dinner through the conversation.
- *Connect diverse people and ideas:* This had been done through the marketing of the conversation, but also by encouraging individuals to sit with people they didn't know.
- *Listen together for patterns, insights and deeper questions:* Deep listening and presence was encouraged.
- *Make collective knowledge visible:* Participants were provided with paper and markers at the center of every small table and encouraged to draw, write, and link ideas visually in order to engage both their creative and emotive mind along with a more analytical approach.

Following the conversation, one participant voiced that she felt heard on the topic for the first time: "This is as close to the issue as I have been able to get. I have felt shunned and not wanted when I have tried to help in the past but because I haven't 'sold my oldest child' it's like I have nothing to offer." Another participant expressed how powerful it was to share her story as a survivor of sexual exploitation. These responses from participants made us as co-hosts feel that the questions had been powerful enough to drive the sort of conversation we hoped to host.

The Harvest

One way we encouraged participants to see themselves as a part of a broader network of conversations and iterative loop of conversation and smart action was through the collective creation of a piece of art. At the FREEDOM HERE + NOW symposium CIL had co-hosted, individuals were encouraged to take a blue construction paper circle—representing a water ripple—and write an action they would take individually or collectively after this conversation, attaching it to a hanging cloth that represented cascading water. This "ripples of action" art

installation traveled between many of the conversations hosted on this issue with participants in the current conversation adding their hopeful actions to those participants in previous conversations had added.

In addition, themes from the conversations were [harvested](#) to inform future action and research around this issue. For example, at one of the conversations it became clear there was misinformation related to the policing of trafficking in the Twin Cities in the community. A police sergeant in attendance offered to partner with UROC to respond to resident's concerns and questions.

Closing Reflections

Using meaningful conversation as a public engagement method in this instance brought to life what it means to embrace multiple ways of "knowing" in addressing a complex societal issue.



Participant at Symposium on Human Trafficking Contributing to *Ripples of Action* co-created art piece

By sharing this story, we hope to illustrate how hosting [techniques](#) and principles can redefine how the University typically approaches the design of engagement experiences. When we are seeking to address issues that involve dramatic shifts in cultural norms and the reweaving of community fabric, meaningful conversation among diverse perspectives can serve as a powerful tool.

Getting Better Results at Events and Meetings

Kathie Doty and Brittany Kellerman

The Hennepin-University Partnership (HUP) was created to expand and enrich connections between the State’s largest unit of local government, Hennepin County, and the State’s premier research institution, the University of Minnesota. One of the functions of the HUP office is to identify areas of mutual interest, then design and implement projects and programs that connect government practitioners with University faculty, staff, and students. There are several ways we do this including events such as symposia, forums, and workshops, as well as creation of a community of County middle managers who extend the purpose of the HUP into their respective departments. Since the HUP office became introduced to The Art of Hosting Conversations That Matter (hereafter referred to as “Art of Hosting”), we have applied the philosophy of Art of Hosting as well as used specific [techniques](#) to significantly enhance efforts to catalyze meaningful connections that lead to active partnerships. This has made a noticeable difference to us—we now have more engaged conversations and we’re getting more positive feedback from both County and University collaborators.

There are three implications of the Art of Hosting that the HUP is actively uncovering for our work:

Asking [Powerful Questions](#)

In March 2012, the HUP hosted a half-day forum about what it means to effectively engage communities from the viewpoint of governments and universities, specifically Hennepin County and the University of Minnesota. More than 150 County officials and staff, and University faculty, staff, and students participated in the forum that was held at the University’s McNamara Center. This forum catalyzed important discussions:

- Why engage communities?
- What do we hope to accomplish?
- What is community engagement?
- Can we work together to achieve better results?



County and University employees at 2012 annual forum

In first planning the event, the HUP team started with selecting the event topic and identifying speakers. We didn’t give much consideration to how the participants would be engaged as we did our initial planning. As the planning progressed and we learned more about Art of Hosting, we reached out to the University’s Art of Hosting [community of practitioners](#) to see if people

would volunteer to help us. We were delighted to hear from 18 staff and faculty who volunteered to be part of our event. We then set up a planning meeting with these volunteers and learned that there was more to what Art of Hosting-trained individuals could offer than facilitating conversation. As a result of their input and suggestions, we revised our table discussion questions to make them more powerful and set aside more time on the agenda for table discussions. For example, in order to get participants to think about themselves as part of the community, rather than separate from the community, we first asked: Can you think of a time when you were asked to participate in an engagement activity as a community member? How was that experience? Each question was crafted with the goal of producing meaningful conversations that would allow participants to take the time to reflect upon how what they were hearing applies to their work.

We were very pleased with the results—not only did it appear that participants were more engaged than at past events, but the feedback we received via the end-of-event evaluation cards included comments expressly stating that the “facilitators” performed their role skillfully and made the entire event more productive.

Energy & Flow

The HUP hosted an event in May 2013 that was attended by more than 200 participants, primarily County employees who are on the frontline of working with families and children in need. These individuals must manage a range of stressful situations as they serve the public, and the turnover rate for many of these positions is quite high. The event focused on offering these valuable staff access to some of the latest research on infant brain development by two premier University researchers, Professors Megan Gunnar and Ann Masten.



County and University employees gather to discuss infant brain development

Keeping in mind what had been learned from the Art of Hosting approach, we planned for table discussions after each speaker. We also engaged members of the University’s [community of practitioners](#) to assist us in planning the session, reaping considerable benefit from the great ideas generated at that session. We focused on [powerful questions](#) to engage participants and attended with more care to meeting logistics. We decided that in the welcoming comments, we would invite the participants to be present in the moment. This invitation was meant to be a positive way of bringing people’s minds into the room by asking them to let go of any distractions, including cell phones/devices.

Table hosts were asked to arrive a few minutes early to welcome participants as they arrived. This gave off the subtle message to participants that this event was planned well and that any

effort they put into engaging in dialogue would not be wasted. It also encouraged participants to be actively engaged from the beginning, within group discussion.

Table hosts guided the conversations and used markers to write on large sheets of “butcher paper” that covered each table. Not only was this a more engaging layout for the event, but we [harvested](#) many comments that the County’s Department of Human Services could take away for analysis (also, students working with the University’s Center for Early Education and Development did a fabulous job of translating the table comments to a summary piece that is being used by the County to determine next steps). Follow-up activities are being planned to improve how the County interacts with and supports families in need.

Changing the Dynamic

In addition to using Art of Hosting philosophy, [techniques](#), and resources at major events, the HUP tapped into Art of Hosting thinking to explore ways to improve the effectiveness of regular meetings of a group of Hennepin County staff as well. Starting in 2011, the HUP began meeting quarterly with a group of middle managers representing each of the County departments to extend the reach of the HUP office into County departments in a way that was not possible previously. These leaders agreed to learn more about how to work with the University, act as liaisons within their departments to catalyze productive collaborations, and also act as a resource for colleagues who are thinking about tapping into University resources. Prior to this approach, we had focused our attention on communication with elected Hennepin County officials, department heads, and key program leaders.



County and University employees gather to discuss infant brain development

Initial meetings were structured to educate members about the University and the HUP office, and included a tour of the Minneapolis campus. Over time, meetings continued to include an educational component, but we also wanted to engage these leaders so they felt able to initiate connections with the University. We realized that the passivity at our quarterly meetings could be caused by our own facilitation and we decided to change our practices. We knew each leader had passions and wisdom. After consulting with members in the University Art of Hosting [community of practitioners](#), we identified a number of ways we could change our meeting dynamics. We adopted a number of new elements—leaders presenting information, taking turns sharing with each other their “elevator speech” about their interest in the partnership, re-arranging our table formation (from a large rectangle to small pods), and setting aside time on each agenda for check-in/check-out questions.

The changes were instantaneous. At our first meeting with these new approaches, the leaders were much more engaged, and ready and eager to “grab the ball.” The check-in/check-out questions alone invited members to bring their thoughts into the present around the topics of discussion for the day and reflect on how they plan to bring what they learned/discussed back to their departments. They encouraged more interaction between cohort members, which naturally lead to more collaborations and shared understanding of the work of different departments. In retrospect, we feel that our original ways of running the meetings unconsciously communicated that we expected them to be passive recipients of information although it was the complete opposite of what we wanted. These changes not only improved the meetings, but we have now seen our members taking on more leadership roles within their own departments as well.

Conclusion

These three examples demonstrate the impact that the HUP has experienced by implementing Art of Hosting approaches. While we see opportunities for even greater improvements, we have been pleased with the results of the changes to date in both the engagement of participants at events and in building communities of collaborators.

Enhancing Volunteer Engagement Using the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations

Terry Straub

I had never heard of The Art of Hosting Conversations That Matter (hereafter referred to as “Art of Hosting”) until becoming part of the University of Minnesota’s 2011 [President’s Emerging Leaders Cohort \(PEL\)](#). PEL brought 25 individuals from across the University system (including greater Minnesota campuses) to learn about various leadership topics. Some of the goals of this program were to articulate leadership competencies required at the University and demonstrate initial steps in developing them; and tap the talents and expertise of staff from a range of units and operations to support the University’s mission through collaborative leadership. To put theory into practice, each member was assigned to a team to work with on a project sponsored by a University department. While learning to work with five individuals we’d never before met, we also had to decide on a project that helped us in our leadership skill building, but was also of personal interest. While I had hoped to work on a project that I could relate back to my own work with volunteers, I did not expect to work on one that was so well suited to volunteer engagement.

It took our team several weeks to decide on a project—much later than many other teams in our co-hort. Part of our delay was trying to understand what the Art of Hosting was all about. Online searches offered some information, but often times we ran into jargon and confusing language. Even after we decided taking it on as a project, it still took a couple months to actually understand the practice. I don’t think any member of my team was comfortable with the topic until we attended an actual [three-day Art of Hosting training](#). Then—wham!—things fell into place. By the end of our three-days, I was even brave enough to participate in a [ProAction Café](#) to gather ideas about how to incorporate Art of Hosting practices into our monthly volunteer leadership team meetings.

As a professional leader of volunteer programs, I find the Extension Master Gardener Program rather unique. Not only do volunteers pay \$300 to receive their initial 50-hour training, but they also give 50 hours of community service and pursue an additional 12 hours of continuing education during their first year. Procedures and structures differ from county to county, but in more and more instances, volunteers are educating the public and leading other volunteers in the work done in the communities we serve. In 2012, 323 Master Gardener volunteers in Hennepin County provided 19,539 hours of service, equivalent of 9.3 full-time employees working 40 hours for 52 weeks. With only one full-time staff person to oversee the work done by this outstanding group, it is imperative that volunteers take leadership roles and help guide program activities.

Art of Hosting [techniques](#) are a great tool to engage volunteers in leadership roles. Employing these [techniques](#) in our monthly “business” meetings and other sessions has breathed new life

into our program and how we interact with each other. The story that follows captures many of the ways I have incorporated Art of Hosting practices into our program and what has resulted.

Asking Powerful Questions as a Leadership Team

Our group is led by 10 volunteers who help oversee the spending of money raised by our volunteers, and provide guidance and feedback on projects and experiences with the program. We meet on a monthly basis, follow Robert’s Rules of Order, and use a traditional printed agenda to share information. There are typical agenda items that need to be covered, the most important being the report and discussion of our finances. Three years ago we created a strategic plan. We were challenged with trying to figure out how to discuss and implement goals and outcomes of the plan into our traditional structure. Through the use of [powerful questions](#), we decided on a new format to our meetings, basically using the first 40 minutes of our time together for a meal (which we had always done) but with an added discussion of a topic related to the strategic plan. This has helped build community around the meal, but also ensures our plan is discussed and steps are taken to implement components of the plan. We then move into our traditional reports, but they are shorter, and focus on subjects that the entire team needs to know, or problems to be solved. There are other Art of Hosting practices that we may be able to incorporate over time, such as a check-out question to end the meeting and using a “flow” technique for agendas but, for now, the simple change of structure has enabled more meaningful work to occur.



Gathering Mentor Wisdom

New volunteers, called “interns,” are assigned a mentor to assist them during their first year with our program. Before mentors and interns start working together, we hold training for mentors so they are aware of current program expectations and best practices for mentor/intern relationships. We use the traditional “talking head” model where someone would stand in front of the room, review expectations, and then a panel of experienced mentors would share best practices and tips for a successful mentor/intern relationship. While this model has worked, through Art of Hosting I realized that using the [World Café](#)-style model with [powerful questions](#) could make the experience more meaningful for volunteers and tap the knowledge about mentoring within the

Extension Master Gardeners -- Hennepin County, share their wisdom to a create a successful mentorship program

room. With an overall question of “What does it mean to be a Hennepin County Master Gardener mentor?” and three deeper, clarifying questions—“What are you hoping to get from this year’s Mentor experience?” “What has worked for you in the past as a mentor? Share a best practice.” and “Is there anything you fear or have questions about for the coming year’s Mentor experience?”—we were able to develop a list of best practices for the year. Feedback from mentors, both new and long-term, was overwhelmingly positive.

Celebrating Our New Members

The first year for a new volunteer in our program can be challenging. To become a “certified Master Gardener Volunteer,” new members must attend a 50-hour “core course” in horticulture, provide 50 hours of community service, and pursue 12 hours of continuing education in horticulture. Surprisingly, most new members achieve this, with many going above and beyond those expectations (in 2012, the average number of volunteer service hours contributed by our new members was 81–30% more than the requirement). Obviously, we like to celebrate intern achievements at the end of the year.



Community members in conversation with a Master Gardener volunteer

These celebrations usually involved food, a cake, and a focus group discussion where we collected feedback. While we received useful feedback using this model, not all were comfortable with providing feedback in a large group setting, especially with the program coordinator leading the discussion. In 2012, I started using Art of Hosting [techniques](#), including starting and ending the session with check-in/check-out questions, a visual flow and a [World Café](#) technique. Leadership Team volunteers acted as table hosts, recording the conversations that came from our [powerful questions](#). Conversations and photos from the event were collected into a document and then were shared with participants. Changes were made to the 2013 intern experience based on the conversations that occurred during this celebration.

Learning from Each Other

In February 2013, the University of MN Landscape Arboretum sponsored a Schoolyard Garden Conference. Several volunteers from our program attended this one-day event, which consisted of numerous PowerPoint presentations and panel discussions. Discussions were held during the lunch hour, so there was little time for our volunteers to connect and discuss what they were learning. There were so many ideas presented that it was hard for me, the program coordinator, to synthesize the information and format an implementation plan. It was time to bring in the Art of Hosting [techniques](#)! We gathered on a night when as many of the volunteers who attended the conference were available as possible. Using a visual flow, check-in/check-out, and [World Café](#), we were able to gather what was learned at the conference, and then develop a plan to begin best schoolyard gardens practices in the county.

Recruiting New Volunteers

We've even been able to utilize Art of Hosting [techniques](#) in recruiting new volunteers to our program. We discovered that one of the barriers for entry is our application process. In addition to questions about life experiences, the application has five horticultural dilemmas for applicants to solve. Many applicants do not realize that in our county, applying to our program is highly competitive, and these questions are used to weed people out. So we get a variety of applications, some handwritten with very brief answers. These individuals usually do not even get a personal interview, despite having skills we could use in the program.

In 2012, we used Art of Hosting [techniques](#) at volunteer outreach sessions. Community members interested in applying to our program were invited to attend one of these sessions. Each session started with a check-in question, a short overview of the program, and small group format where current volunteers covered five topics in seven minutes, with participants moving from topic to topic in small groups. Topics included how to complete our application, a discussion of what Master Gardener volunteers actually do, a description of what our core course training, and a "Stump the Master Gardener" session where participants could ask a volunteer anything they wanted. In addition to potential volunteers getting more information about the program, current volunteers were able to share their knowledge in a nontraditional way. This process also allowed a chance for potential volunteers to "opt out," deciding that our program was not a good fit for them.

The Art of Hosting [techniques](#) are ideal for use with today's volunteers. Our aging Baby Boomers and generations of volunteers that follow, are interested in sharing their skills. While generational research has been done by numerous organizations nationally, our local Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA) conducted focus groups with their members from across the State of MN. These focus groups, along with other research, helped develop a list of "[12 Best Practices of Engaging Boomers and New Generations of Volunteers](#)". These Best Practices are a shift from the way things have been traditionally done in volunteer programs, and actually have elements of Art of Hosting [techniques](#) to

accomplish all 12 Best Practices will lead to a better engaged volunteer pool, not only enriching the experience of the volunteer, but ultimately leading to better service in our communities.

CHANCE: Creating Community Through Collaboration

Marcela Sotela Odor

Let me share with you a story of a village, a town, a city within a city (Martin, 1978). This is the story of a group of people removed from their ancestral lands finding their way in a new land. It is an account of the power of working together as human beings to create a sense of community.

In September of 2012, as a graduate student, I was searching for a capstone project, a professional development activity where I could apply all I had learned in my graduate program at the [Humphrey School of Public Affairs](#). I came across a class on community engagement, which immediately caught my attention. It was an opportunity to work in the Cedar Riverside community, which is nestled within the West Bank of the University of Minnesota. For much of my time living in the Twin Cities, the colorful towering buildings, the bounty of arts organizations, and most of all the people interacting there, intrigued me. On any given day it is not uncommon to find yourself amongst university students, small business owners, Somali women wearing flowing dresses, community elders, and counter-culture types. To an outsider, this neighborhood seemed filled with diverse people and perspectives; a place ripe for community engagement work.

A capstone project can be a required academic exercise with clear purpose but without much soul. This is far from what I wanted to experience and even further from what most communities want. Institutions often have a reputation of coming into communities, doing their research, and exiting without leaving much behind. Doing work in community requires more than that. It would be arrogant, and perhaps naïve, to think that one can come in and become part of the community. It is important to strive to have a relationship that will allow for good, honest collaboration.

Building Relationships

There is an important distinction to be made between working in the community and *working in community*. Though subtle in syntax, the real life application is vastly different. While one implies *them* and *us* with all the assumptions that it carries, the other denotes collaboration and partnership. As people affiliated to a large anchor institution, the University of Minnesota, many of us come in to the communities we work in with the first mindset. Whether it is part of our research or our application of theory, it is a task to be done as part of our work. Working in community is bigger than that. It is a worldview. One that allows us to humbly come in to a community other than our own to learn from those with whom we collaborate.

Working in Cedar Riverside has been an amazing experience. Through its [Cedar-Humphrey Action for Neighborhood Collaborative Engagement](#) (CHANCE) initiative the Humphrey School of Public Affairs offers the opportunity for students to come into the neighborhood and work with community partners on a specific project. This project is designed by the students with the

guidance of faculty and presented to a community forum. At this forum community members and CHANCE participants come together to discuss the proposed projects. By the end of the night the community votes for projects they would like to see developed during the next four months. Later, students pick the project they feel they can contribute and connect to. This is how this journey started.

After selecting the project—Library Resources in Cedar Riverside—it was time to look into who could be our potential community partners. Given the interest demonstrated in the project, their leadership in the neighborhood and the relationships that had already been started, our capstone team invited the [West Bank Community Coalition](#) (WBCC) and the [Riverside Plaza Tenants Association](#) (RPTA), and they accepted! We set up weekly meetings to start the project. During our meetings we came together as a team, attempting to understand where each of us stood, clarifying assumptions we might hold of one another, and striving to understand the community we were hoping to serve. After a month the standing joke was we had two meetings in one: the first hour we talked about logistics, analyzed potential next steps, and divided up tasks; the second half of the meeting, we shared lessons from our cultures, our experiences, and our stories. This is when the real relationship building happened. Beyond the labels given by affiliation, nationality, or immigration status, these were conversations about our humanity; strengths and failures, hopes and dreams. It was the connecting thread that allowed us to do our work more effectively, with greater clarity of purpose.

Listening Intently

For several months we had attended meetings hosted by different organizations in the community. As a class, we had researched on the neighborhood's history, demographics, crime rates and more. It became clear there were a series of efforts that would improve the neighborhood: beautifying the sidewalks and streets, improving housing structures, expanding communal spaces, and the list went on. As important as gaining context was, we were still missing a critical piece: What is the greater longing in the community, the need? Well, there was no library in Cedar Riverside but people wanted to be able to access the services that public libraries provide... so that must be the need. Right? We set our focus on the task at hand: identify literacy-related needs, identify library resources available to the community, and fill any gaps with recommendations of potential partnerships.

It all seemed fairly straightforward. We would invite people to share their opinion, then analyze the data gathered and propose recommendations. Then came the moment of realization. At a team meeting, as we discussed the logistics of recruiting people to community conversations, one of our community partners said, "You know, what we need to give this community is hope." A bit stunned and very curious, I wanted to know more. He went on to say, "The people who live in this neighborhood are trying to make it work; they are surviving. This project can help them focus on the future." That is when it became crystal clear that the greater longing was for members of the community to move from a place of survival to a place where they could thrive. In order to do this, we needed to build a sense of communal pride and hope for future possibilities.

Open Invitation

The team decided to hold community conversations, open to anyone interested in participating. We intentionally chose to use a [circle](#) process, where everyone at the meeting sits in a circle, including the facilitator, taking turns to respectfully listen to each other. This would allow all those present to be seen and heard. The invitation would be simple: “We are interested in hearing what you have to say, your voice matters.” The location needed to be convenient—walking distance from homes and businesses (after all, this was Minnesota in the dead of winter). To ensure that we would be attracting people from different areas within the neighborhood, the locations would vary. Personal invitations, emails, radio announcements, and flyers went out. Considerations were made for cultural norms, such as prayer time. Everything was in place. We were ready for our first group.

The first group meeting took place at [Brian Coyle Community Center](#). Many frequent it, so it provided the familiarity we were looking for to start. As we approached the building it was clear that something was happening. People were on their cellphones, seemingly making arrangement for something. Others were waiting at the curb, looking for a ride. As it would turn out the Somali president was in town that evening. There had been little knowledge of it until hours before. Questions started emerging quite quickly. What to do: cancel or continue? Would anyone show up? Thirty minutes after the scheduled start time, there were two people in the room, other than our team. Once again the thoughts of cancelling came to mind. At this point the principles of [Open Space Technology](#) came alive.



Initial community conversation held at Brian Coyle Center

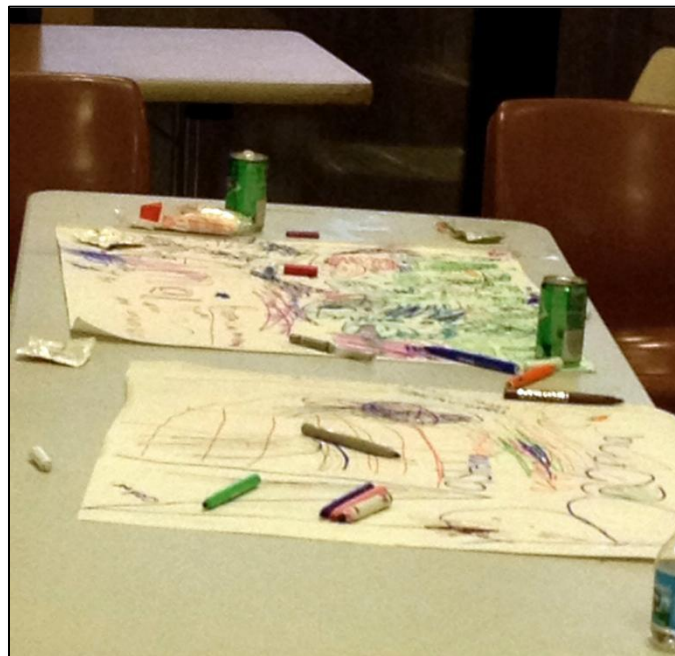
Though we were not using this particular technique, our goal for the meeting fit its philosophy perfectly: creating time and space for people to engage deeply and creatively around issues of concern to them. *Whoever come are the right people*. Whoever would show, despite the Somali president's visit to the state, would be vested in this project and make it happen. *Whenever it starts, it starts*. Given the circumstances it was important to be flexible. In an effort to do away with some time and in the hopes that others would show, the conversation started with an icebreaker. In a few minutes we were sharing facts about each other and laughing together. *It* had started, even if we had not talked about library resources yet. Then an elder showed up. That was the critical mass the rest of the group was waiting for. Quickly the group shifted its attention to the conversation we came to have. For the next hour the discussion flowed from the definition of library resources, to the importance of literacy and lifelong learning. Food came, creating a pause before ending with the importance of building community. *When it's over, it's over*.

The reality is that *what happened is the only thing that could have*. The group was smaller than expected, allowing for a more intimate setting. The discussion was rich and fruitful. Through the conversation, it became evident that those in the room all held some kind of leadership role within Cedar Riverside. This informed our next steps, we decided the next session would intentionally focus on parents.

By the second session we were openly embracing the principles of [Open Space Technology](#). This time the location was a community room inside Riverside Plaza. Once again we sat in a circle, highlighting the importance of recognizing that there is a leader in every chair (Baldwin & Linnea, 2010). Respecting cultural norms, there was an opening in the middle of the circle to leave space between men and women. People moved fluidly in and out of the room. Those who were genuinely interested stayed. Mothers came in with their young children, so we quickly set up an area for children to color and have a snack. Once again the conversation started by weaving a connection amongst the participants by building a common definition of what library resources meant for the community. Many in the group expressed their interest in bringing others to future sessions. Given our goal of getting a better understanding of what the community wanted and the fact that each community conversation was building ownership and support for the project, another session for parents was called. At each session, people expressed their interest in continuing conversations; ones in which they could freely express themselves and that would lead to community action.



Marcela facilitating a community conversation at Riverside Plaza



Set up for children to allow mothers to engage in the conversation

During most of these sessions, the voice of the adults was dominant. Though some youth were present and their voices quite assertive, there was a lingering need to include their perspective. The team decided to invite the [Cedar Riverside Youth Council](#) (CRYC). After all, the idea for this

project emerged from an informational meeting with them. In order to have a more casual and candid conversation, only youth were invited. The location picked was the Safety Center, a familiar site to them since they use the community room for their own meetings. Like previous sessions, it was humbling to hear the wisdom that was present. The youth not only expressed interest—they wanted to make sure that the project was going to lead to something, that it would enrich their community and better their lives.

Building Community

As students we knew that we were conducting community-based research in which genuine collaboration would be driven by community interest, rather than from academia (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003). Therefore we made sure that our community partners were part of every step in the process. All along we thought that by having two Somali men on the team we had representation of what the community needed. During the community meetings it became clear that the wisdom lies in the community at large, that our community partners served as guides. As we all participated in the community conversations we were learning from each other, building a stronger network.

The capstone presentation was most certainly the highlight. Once more the invitation went out to the community with great intentionality. The presentation would be hosted at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. The community had welcomed and invited us in—now it was our time to return the favor. The room was set up to create a welcoming environment. The chairs in a circle, the walls lined with the notes taken at the community meetings; at the center of the circle a sampling of the books, most of them bilingual Somali-English, that had already been donated to the project. The food served represented the cultural groups involved: sambusas, hummus, pita bread, tortillas, chorizo, salsa and homemade chocolate chip oatmeal cookies.

As people started trickling in, there was a sense of the energy around the project. There were representatives from the different community organizations, Hennepin County Libraries, University Libraries, community elders, the CRYC, Brian Coyle, and the Park Board. In all there were 40 people in the room, from all walks of life, ready to engage deeper in a conversation to make this initiative come to life.



Circle set up for capstone presentation

Moving Forward

Now it is time to bring one of the next pieces to fruition: A reading room will be set up in the community room of the McKnight Building in Riverside Plaza. It will house more than 40 boxes of books donated by [Breck School](#) and the [Minnesota Humanities Center](#). Sherman and Associates, the developer of the housing complex, donated the furniture to renovate the space. Once again a call will be made to the community to come together to set up the space, igniting their vision of bringing library resources to Cedar Riverside.

This time our team will not come in as students from the University of Minnesota, but as three people vested in the growth of a thriving community. It is not an overstatement to say that this was truly a transformational experience. The ways we approach our work and our worldviews were positively impacted. One member of the team has become a volunteer for an adult literacy organization serving the Somali community in the area, another is considering becoming a resident, and I continue to work in projects within the neighborhood.

Ultimately, working in community is about sharing our culture, our experiences, our stories, so that together we can achieve things we could not have possibly achieved on our own.

Organizational Change

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION
TEACHING & TRAINING
COMMUNITY CHANGE
ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE
INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS



Organizational Change

Universities are constantly changing, but change typically occurs at a structural level: research centers emerge; new courses are invented that reshape undergraduate and graduate programs; service units are re-engineered to be smaller and more nimble (or are decentralized or re-centralized, depending on the preferences of a current administrator). Importing the underlying [frameworks](#) of the Art of Hosting and specific [techniques](#) has made possible a different approach to change. Instead of emphasizing changes in structure or adjustments within units to fit existing personnel preferences, Art of Hosting participants endeavor to change whole units from within by changing culture along with day-to-day activities.

Integrating Art of Hosting sometimes is challenging because it alters the target of attention. Rather than focusing merely on the usual array of recurring problems such as developing a

prioritized agenda for department meetings, recruiting a new cohort for a program, or organizing reports for an accreditation process, people are also first changing how they work with each other. They are invited to move from a more mechanistic, predetermined path to more organic and emergent actions focused on these larger objectives. However, the results make change worthwhile: leaders can engage more people and groups, and can generate ideas more collaboratively, all while stepping up the pace of information gathering and decision-making. In a time when change is a constant and efficiency is a byword, can we ask for anything more?

The four stories included in this section suggest different approaches to engaging university employees that begins with a dramatic alternative to planning-as-usual:

- [Mein's story](#) begins with a "call" to create more effective integration of the Web in the University of Minnesota's largest academic unit—The College of Liberal Arts. By bringing together a diverse group of administrators, faculty, and IT professionals in a shared space to generate important questions, the [Open Space Technology](#) process opens up the agenda for change and surfaces challenges in sustaining momentum.
- [Hokanson](#) also draws on the enduring problem of how to integrate technology into the administrative and academic work of one of the smaller academic units, the College of Design, and points to the importance of using face-to-face engagement even when the task is technical.
- [Dorman's contribution](#) shows how Art of Hosting can jump-start redesign and implementation of well-established programs involving previously unacquainted individuals from many units. He demonstrates that trust, a critical component in his leadership development program, can be established rapidly.
- [Hokanson and Maple discuss](#) how Art of Hosting can have pervasive effects throughout a college. When an increasing number of members acquire the fundamental training and skills, they reshape basic recurring decision-making routines and rethink their approach to major academic program renovation.

These contributions all highlight how, by working together, people become more effective in carrying out their roles. Increasing participation does not necessarily come with increased inefficiency. In each case, Art of Hosting events took no more time (any many times, even less) than a more typical approach, but produced results that were immediately useful.

Open Space in the College of Liberal Arts

Jen Mein



IT Staff of the College of Liberal Arts Gather for an Open Space Technology Forum

It was the morning of January 17, 2013, and the hosting team (myself, Dave Dorman, Anne Gomez, and Myron Lowe) and the callers (Jennifer Cieslak and Karen Swoverland) were gathered in [circle](#) just moments before we welcomed 75 guests. A lot of planning had gone into this day. We had hopes for what would happen, but we went into it with no predetermined outcome, trusting that those who were convened today would bring the questions, ideas, and possible solutions that would enable the co-creation of a web strategy that would advance the University of Minnesota College of Liberal Arts. As we settled into nervous anticipation for what was about to unfold, I shared that as a team of hosts and callers for the conversation we had been unconsciously following the [eight breaths of process architecture](#)—beginning with a question and progressing through a series of phases that lead to wiser, more informed action. Although these are described as phases, the process is not linear but rather cyclical; sense making, reflecting on the alignment of purpose and next wise steps happens through the process. We had been intentional and thoughtful in our planning so we could let go and trust the process and let whatever happens next just happen.

First Breath: The Call

This breath represents the birth of the calling team. The ‘caller’ or ‘callers’ are the ones who invite the host(s) to help them. What is really at stake here? What if we worked together to surface the need that matters to the community?

In this case, the callers were Jennifer Cieslak, Chief of Staff in the College of Liberal Arts (CLA), and Karen Swoverland, Service Manager in the CLA Office of Information Technology (OIT). Rather than drafting a plan in isolation, they stepped into a more participatory process engaging those who cared deeply about the issue of web communication and who wanted to develop a plan together.

The CLA fosters inquiry, dialogue, critical thinking, and creativity so using an Art of Hosting approach to plan a web communication strategy fit very well. Those who have positional authority and responsibility for communications were very capable of developing a plan; however, such a plan would affect others around the college and university. By including those who cared about the issue from the beginning, the callers hoped a plan would be co-created and support by all those who have a stake in the outcome.

Second Breath: Clarify

This breath is the callers and hosts working together to create clarity around the purpose and principles of engagement. How do we move from identifying a need to a having a purpose for gathering members of our community? What is our purpose?

After a bit of discussion, we developed a purpose statement that articulated that the reason for calling a conversation for the community. We were focused on creating a shared understanding for building a roadmap to inform how we are using the critical tool of web most effectively to advance CLA and CLA’s academic programs. The phrase “building a roadmap” had the intention of setting a vision and action steps. The phrase “advance CLA and CLA’s academic programs” got right to the heart of the matter.



A participant captures insights from a small group conversation

Third Breath: Invite

This breath gives form and structure to the invitation and design process. This is a very active, engaging breath. It requires discipline and diligence to hold to the agreed upon purpose and allow it to ground the work in progress. We ask questions like: Who are the stakeholders? How do we invite people to participate in a way that moves them to show up? The callers begin to engage stakeholders in person to extend a warm invitation and the hosts dive deep into planning the logistics.

Jennifer and Karen began sharing the idea of having a conversation with individuals and groups around the CLA and University. A diverse group of faculty, staff, department chairs, and deans from the CLA, University Relations, and the OIT were invited to come together to learn from each other and to inform the future of a collegiate-wide web presence and resources in an engaging, participatory day. Some initial questions were: What's working today? What opportunities do you see? How does the web and web communication advance your work? Are there future directions you would like to pursue?

Jennifer and Karen set the context and explained why there was a sense of urgency and importance around developing a web strategy together. They said, "We know that people care a great deal about web communication and that there are diverse perspectives and great ideas that are waiting to be tapped. Help us shape what the future of web communication will look like in the college." It had been approximately six years since the college took comprehensive stock of the global collegiate web presence, web resources, and web needs. Needs and interests keep growing, new ideas and technologies are constantly emerging, and now CLA has a very large web presence that is challenging to maintain. It was time to assess and get a handle on the range of interests, needs, and perspectives in the college community.

The environment was changing as well—the college's web team was about to move from the collegiate technology unit to the media and public relations unit, recognizing the web's role as a communications tool. The University's Operational Excellence initiative was sparking change in the IT and communications environments. Plus, the web team had a staff vacancy and they wanted to consider options for moving forward thoughtfully.

Concurrently with the conversations Jennifer and Karen were having, Dave Dorman and I were creating the meeting design grounded by the purpose, while maintaining open communication with them to understand the issues emerging from the attendees. The process was very iterative; initially, we had planned for a [World Café](#) in the morning and an [Open Space Technology](#) process in the afternoon. However, Dave and I attended an in-depth training in [Open Space Technology](#) and came to learn, understand, and appreciate more about how the technique draws out ideas, fosters meaningful conversation, and—with the inclusion of caller-generated reports and an action market—really allows a large group to [harvest](#) their discussions and converge into action teams. [Open Space Technology](#) works best when these conditions are present (Owen, 1997):

- A real issue of concern, that it is something worth talking about.

- A high level of complexity, such that no single person or small group fully understands or can solve the issue.
- A high level of diversity, in terms of the skills and people required for a successful resolution.
- Real or potential conflict, which implies that people genuinely care about the issue
- A high level urgency, meaning the time for decisions and action was "yesterday."

Dave and I recognized the need to have a larger hosting team to and invited our Art of Hosting colleagues Anne Gomez and Myron Lowe to join us for implementation. Closer to the day of the event, the following invitation was sent to those who had confirmed that they would be attending the event:

In our collective and individual experience, we may have seen that on the path to communicating the outstanding work being done by CLA and its programs in service to the University's mission, we are at a crossroads for determining the direction that the web can play in our communications strategy.

In our exploration, we understand the need for...

- *Aligning with fiscal realities*
- *Optimizing a "student-centric" focus*
- *Countering skepticism of the liberal arts and deepening understanding of its relevance*

The college organized this day as a participative retreat in order to share and leverage diverse perspectives and expertise and to support collaboration that makes a difference.

Who will be there? *We expect 75 attendees from diverse academic and administrative units in CLA, as well as colleagues who work on web communication from other colleges and University offices.*

What will happen? *After you and your fellow attendees generate the agenda on site by suggesting topics to explore ideas and develop action plans, you will have multiple opportunities to connect with others in meaningful conversations. In the spirit of a design charrette, this will be a creative and collaborative session that will allow everyone to benefit from the diversity in the room—drawing on the collective experiences, knowledge, and wisdom—to move web communications in CLA forward.*

To prepare *think about the following question to identify topics you would like to discuss:*

What are the opportunities we want to explore in order to develop our future web strategy that advances CLA and its academic mission?

The success of the day relies on the initiative and participation of everyone present! Be ready to raise those questions for which you want to discover ideas and strategies you may want to share in small group discussions.



The Open Space Marketplace of Conversations

Fourth Breath: Meet

The fourth breath is about creating the container for the collective wisdom to emerge.

Before everyone arrived, we paid special attention to the space and beauty of the meeting location. We hung hand-drawn posters, loaded a slideshow of CLA images that displayed all around the room on large display monitors, created the [Open Space Technology](#) Marketplace, set up the laptops for the newsroom, and arranged the small group discussion spaces. Before guests began to arrive, Jennifer, Karen, Dave, Myron, Anne, and I met in [circle](#) for check-in and to prepare us for the day.

The day opened at 8:30, allowing a half hour for people to arrive, get name tags, and socialize a little bit over coffee and treats. Then, at 9:00, I welcomed everyone and provided a walk through of the day with a visual agenda before Dean James Parente gave a warm welcome and an inspiring talk about the importance of liberal arts and aligning our resources. To provide further context, Karen Swoverland introduced Kristeen Bullwinkle, an online marketing consultant who had conducted an assessment of the web in CLA and identified opportunities for the future. Jennifer Cieslak then set the stage for the work we were about to do together to generate the future that responds to the challenges, with a focus not solely on “change,” but on co-creating the future.

By 9:40, we moved from providing context and setting the stage into the [Open Space Technology](#) process. The following principles and law were explained:

- *Whoever come are the right people:* Genuine interest and wisdom are there in this group. You don't need the president or 30 people in your group. Those who show up are the right people because they care about that topic.

- *Whatever happens is the only thing that could have:* Let go of the past and regrets; focus on the best possible effort in this moment—it’s about letting go of expectations. Let’s not waste energy on blame and regrets, the could-haves and should-haves. Bottom line, it’s about working with what we’ve got now. Look for possibilities and be ready to be surprised.
- *Whenever it starts is the right time:* Take things as they come. The discussion will take the rhythm that suits the group. Teams know that creative energy, dialogue, and breakthroughs are not programmed according to a schedule.
- *When it’s over it’s over:* Discussions may be short or long, you decide. It may all be said in 10 or 20 minutes. If the energy of the group is going down ask, “Are we done?” If so, move on to another group. If it’s not over after the expected time, find a place and keep going. You can discuss the same topic for hours if you need to.
- *There is one law—the law of mobility:* If you are neither learning nor contributing, move on!

When the Marketplace, was opened, there were 26 conversations that were called for three rounds of conversations: two rounds were 45 minutes long and one round was an hour long. Lunch took place between rounds two and three. Between rounds and after round three, those who called conversations used laptops that were in the room to type up reports, [harvesting](#) key points of the discussions that they hosted, which were then posted all around the room. Participants had dedicated time to walk around and review the reports before we opened an Action Marketplace. Prompted with the question, “What are we ready to act upon?” six actions were called and people gathered into action work teams to plan next steps for those actions. Then, action reports were typed up and shared with everyone in the room. In closing, the participants were thanked and applauded for all their hard work. The day ended like it began, with Jennifer and Karen meeting with the hosting team in [circle](#) for a check-in about how we thought the day went and a check-out about what we were leaving the day with.



Two participants discuss the Open Space topics

Fifth Breath: Harvest

This breath is about collective meaning making and collecting what will allow the group to make decisions for the wiser way forward. [Harvesting](#) often is about bringing more perspectives in to help make sense of what one person can't see alone. We look for underlying patterns and ask, how do these patterns shape our intended actions?

For this event, there were three types of [harvests](#). The first [harvest](#) was a book of reports that contained typed up reports from the callers of the 26 exploratory conversations and six action team conversations that were sent to all the participants within a couple of days of the event. We had a talented student capturing some of the interactions and energy in the room through photography and video that were used to create a high-level [summary document](#) and a beautiful [harvest video](#) to illustrate the process.

Sixth Breath: Act

This breath is about performing the wise actions that decided upon during the conversations, follow-up, and continued learning. We ask, "How do we sustain the self-organization?"

In this case, action teams that formed during the event followed up and began to take some of the steps they had identified. In hindsight, there was lack of clarity around the responsibility and expectations of action team leads and members. There was also an intention to review all of the discussion notes and develop a roadmap for a web strategy that advances CLA and CLA's programs. Unfortunately, that intention was not realized due to a number of factors, but it remains one of many priorities for the CLA going forward.

Seventh Breath: Reflect

This breath is about reflecting and capturing what we've learned. We ask if we gained results that are aligned to the initial need and purpose and think about the next long term steps.

Upon reflecting on the day of the gathering, we reviewed feedback from the participants. Some of the themes that emerged included appreciation for the diverse perspectives and great conversations, the fluidity of the structure, and the level of engagement from all the participants. It was a long, exhausting day as some left feeling overwhelmed and some even felt powerless to suggest or implement wise action.

Regretfully, the CLA is not in a place that they had hoped at this point in time. One important lesson that we learned is that it is important to maintain the momentum generated in an event like the one we hosted. There was an intention to engage in a structured planning process to co-create a web strategy based on the [harvest](#) of reports, but there were other priorities that demanded time and attention, too. In the future, we all agreed that it would be helpful for a follow-up planning session within a few weeks of a community engagement event. The team

also thought it would be helpful to provide greater support and clarity to the action teams so they are empowered to take next steps toward wise action.



An Open Space conversation in action

Eighth Breath: Holding the Whole

This breath is the story of the unfolding progress, tending to the core team and the purpose underneath all activities. It's being aware of all the breaths, tending to the long-term intent and the wisdom of the actions and the well being of everyone in this system.

I suppose, simply writing this story is one way of holding the whole. Each breath includes time for [divergence/opening, emergence/groan zone, and convergence/closing](#). Knowing that the [eight breaths of process architecture](#) is not linear but rather cyclical, allows us to go back and revisit breaths, make them stronger, and go forward again. Opportunities exist for us to revisit each breath and make them stronger.

Taking it on the Road

Brad Hokanson

Most our work in the Art of Hosting community involves engaging with colleagues and others on a personal basis; we are working to connect through conversational [techniques](#) that help us connect, learn, and teach. The effort is in person and face-to-face; it is a very individual method of communicating, and one that has lasting impact on our lives and understanding.

Practitioners often call the Art of Hosting [techniques](#) "technologies of engagement," perhaps as an intentional contrast to the electronic, digital technologies that dominate our current society. We have learned to consciously use these methods as personal software to structure and develop meaningful conversation.

We are, somewhat ironically, publishing these stories of Art of Hosting application within an eBook. In doing so we seem to recognize the need to use the electronic tools when needed, and to use the personal tools where *they* are appropriate. Meta-cognitively, we have recognized that there is something missing from our silicone-based communication structures. Our digital communications often are solely information based, simplified to the point where much of the value is removed. We have the empty calories of the data, but none of the richness of a complete meal.

Most of my work in academia involves the use of electronic media; ubiquitous emails, website management, teaching digital design, course management systems, and evolving massive online courses. Additionally, my academic community is in the field of instructional design and technology, and I recognize the isolating nature of much of this communication. Ironically, electronic media is where my application of Art of Hosting has occurred, with the human-based conversations informing work in the digital realm.

I am focusing here on three stories to illustrate this contrast of technologies of engagement: [World Café](#) to help plan technology use in the College of Design; [ProAction Café](#) and [Reflective Listening](#) to lead a research symposium in educational technology; and design of conversations at Professors of Instructional Design and Technology (PIDT), an annual meeting of professors of instructional design and technology.

First, within the [College of Design](#), the management of technology is a topic that touches every staff member, student and faculty. They have disparate concerns and needs, both of which are often in conflict with other College needs. Communicating and weighing these concerns is difficult and complex.

In May 2012, I worked with other Art of Hosting practitioners to host a discussion on information technology services for the entire College community. Eighty-five staff, faculty, and administration participated in a wide-ranging discussion about the use and maintenance of

computers within the College. Questions addressed included costs and environmental impacts of printing services for students; replacement planning and budgeting for College computer labs; future need and vision for College computer labs; and IT support in a time when BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) is a growing trend.

We used the directed questioning of [World Café](#) to structure our conversation. Our audience was seeded with approximately 20 faculty and staff from the University's Art of Hosting [community of practitioners](#), and they served as table hosts.



[World Café](#) conversation among IT staff at the College of Design

The use of [World Café](#) addressed a number of issues of communication, power, and status within the College. We were able to encourage conversations between support staff and faculty, generate new ideas in a broad context, and lay the foundations for additional conversations at all levels. One member of the IT staff noted that it was the first time he had met or interacted with many faculty members.

Secondly, I was fortunate to successfully propose and run a research symposium in 2012 for the [Association of Educational Communications and Technology](#), an organization focused on the use of technology in education. In each of the previous symposia, papers were solicited from the membership and presented in traditional concurrent paper presentations. I used the techniques of [ProAction Café](#) and [Reflective Listening](#) to create conversations and engagement; participants were surprised by the intensity and value of the discussions regarding their work. The association director said this strong interaction and growth was the original goal of the symposium series, but that it only now was being realized through Art of Hosting.



ProAction Cafe called by the Association of Educational Computing and Technology

The symposium was focused on generating an edited book. We designed it as a collaborative effort, built on the contributions of some of our authors. After each author contributed his or her chapter draft for review (prior to the symposium), attendees questioned and examined the contribution. During the past year, building on these close connections, the authors have honed their work, and publication of the book is forthcoming with [Springer](#). Both this symposium and the process used to create the book focused on building a community of scholars who shared a joint intellectual effort of high scholarly value.

Thirdly, I had the opportunity to facilitate the annual meeting of the PIDT in Bloomington, Indiana. PIDT provides faculty and selected graduate students time gather informally and discuss issues in the field. Intentionally informal, it is exceptionally good for developing and strengthening collegial networks. In previous years, the structure had ranged from highly programmed to generally chaotic. Striking a balance with the history of PIDT, I used [ProAction Café](#) to allow participants to present and test their ideas in a knowledgeable and yet flexible environment.



Professors and graduate students in Instructional Design and Technology use ProAction Cafe

These examples illustrate ways the Art of Hosting approach can be used in higher education. They also reveal its value in communities that are highly skilled, and devoted to technology and electronic media. While most of us use electronic technology for much of our work, there is significant value investing in methods of engagement that enhance face-to-face experiences.

Perhaps the new information technologies may have not developed the ability to fully portray human communication. Alternatively, the problem may lie with our own attention. While we can be distracted or amused by electronic technology, in-person communication engages and encourages us to actually pay attention to "things that matter." The [techniques](#) and technologies of the Art of Hosting build that engagement in various forms. One of the early requirements of participating in the work of Art of Hosting is a requirement that participants fully participate, and that they remain present in mind and spirit as well as body. That is a goal for all our work at the University, in classes and in our research and outreach.

Hosting a Leadership Development Cohort: We're Not in Kansas Anymore

*Dave Dorman**

Introduction

Upon completing The Art of Hosting Conversations That Matter (hereafter referred to as “Art of Hosting”) training, I was excited to apply what I experienced to my work with leadership development. The use of [powerful questions](#) and slowing down to allow for deep reflection seemed well-suited to helping people further their leadership journey. In a leadership development cohort where relationship-building is so critical, I saw great potential for using Art of Hosting methodologies and core principles with their ties to participatory and collaborative leadership.

Developing Leaders through a Cohort-based Experience

From 2001 to 2012, PEL was an acronym for the President’s Emerging Leaders Cohort program. After a long run, the time had come to evaluate PEL and the decision was made to programmatically align it with the operational excellence (op-ex) efforts that grew out of stakeholder listening sessions held by President Kaler. A name change was called for so we re-branded as the [President’s Excellence in Leadership](#) program. There are 26 participants in the 2013 cohort including staff from the Crookston, Duluth, Morris and Twin Cities campuses with half from administrative units and half from colleges and schools.

Changing Institutional Culture through Operational Excellence

[Operational Excellence](#) is a long-term commitment to working smarter, reducing costs, enhancing services, and increasing revenues throughout the University. It includes a variety of integrated activities with the collective goal of:

- Mitigating the impact of state budget reductions and keeping tuition increases low by reducing the University's operational costs;
- Improving operations and processes, resulting in a more efficient, better run, less redundant organization;
- Promoting entrepreneurship, intelligent risk-taking, cooperation, and engagement across our campuses and in our interactions with business and community partners; and
- Freeing up dollars to be reinvested into the core academic enterprise.

Jumpstarting the Building of Relationships and Trust

In the interest of efficiency—one of the guiding op-ex principles—the PEL program was shortened to eight months from 12–14 months. For me one of the key components of a cohort program is the opportunity to connect and converse cross-functionally with staff from a broad

range of colleges, units, and system campuses. How would cohort-building occur given the reduced timeframe?

In designing the seminar calendar for the 2013 PEL cohort, it struck me that I would need to jumpstart the bonding and collective sense of cohort for the participants. We needed to build a foundation of trust for meaningful conversation in a very short time. Different from other first days with the PEL cohort, our kickoff day in April was devoted solely to learning about Art of Hosting strategies and principles, and using them to engage in meaningful conversation.



Check-in circle with PEL team

Investing in Visual Aesthetics to Support Meaningful Conversation

One aspect that struck me most significantly at my initial exposure to Art of Hosting—and that I wanted to explore for the PEL kickoff—was the attention given to the visual aesthetics of the room. From the colorful agenda landscape to the large group circle with its lovely cloths and artifacts holding the center to the myriad other touches, it was obvious to me that the hosting team was dedicated to pulling out all of the stops to create the container for meaningful conversation. As someone who had not spent much time thinking about the impact that physical surroundings can have on the quality of learning and dialogue, I was immediately hooked.

My personal goal became to invest in environmental space and beauty as frequently as possible whenever I was hosting groups for conversation. My thinking regarding seminar design has also evolved into using conversation as a way to tap into collective wisdom for co-learning more often than in the past when I might have chosen a guest to share thoughts on a particular topic.



Floor discussion among PEL team alongside circle center

Hosting with Purpose

In February, I convened others from the University's Art of Hosting Community to meet weekly to participate as co-designers for the kickoff. It was important to us to host ourselves and each other using Art of Hosting practices while doing the design work.

My initial desired results for the kickoff were to have the PEL participants leave the kickoff:

- With ideas about how to optimize the PEL program to continue their leadership journey
- With a sense of the cohort
- Knowing some individual cohort mates better
- Having contributed to a participatory leadership experience

In addition, I challenged the hosting team to design a kickoff that would convey the message "[We are not in Kansas anymore.](#)" I wanted participants to have the sense that this was something new and full of possibilities.

Designing the Kickoff

The design team had many deep conversations considering the audience and the new direction for the PEL program. We carefully looked at how the PEL experience could be tied to operational excellence. We reviewed the projects that the PEL participants would be working on in their home units and how the operational excellence principle of change management could be brought to bear on the projects.

It was important for the hosting team to develop a statement of intention to ground ourselves in the work we were doing. We considered questions like:

- What's at stake?
- Who's the client?
- Who is being served: the participant? the sponsoring unit? the University?
- How will the kickoff set the tone for the program?

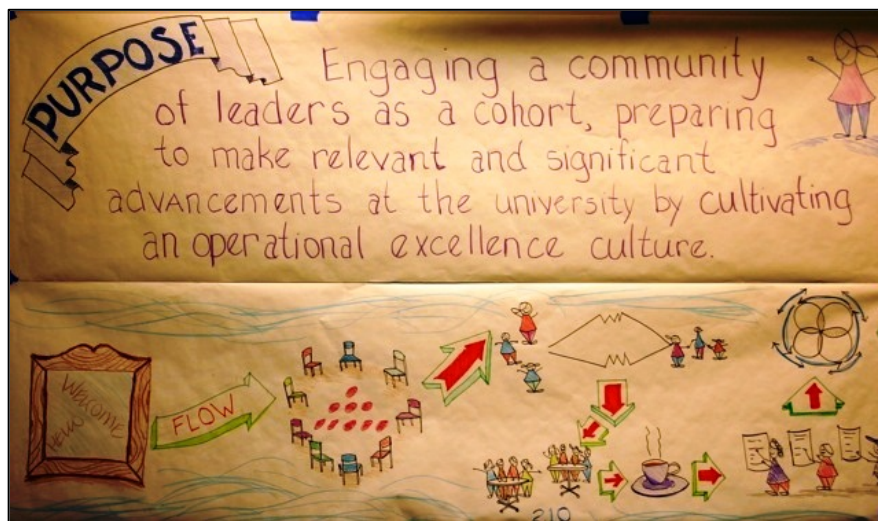
Over time, the team developed this statement that we would use internally:

To host PEL participants at the beginning of their experience in a relevant and significant manner, using Art of Hosting as a mechanism to create a container to build authentic human connections and model participatory leadership.

The purpose statement we developed to share with participants expressed our hopes for what we intended the kickoff to be for them, and to relate the day's activities to what would come in later seminars:

Engaging a community of leaders as a cohort, preparing to make relevant and significant advancements at the university by cultivating an operational excellence culture.

Creating learner objectives had been part of my experience in developing seminars, but this was my first experience with investing so much thinking into developing a purpose statement for a seminar. The clarity provided by the statement made the work of the hosting team so transparent and allowed us to select the activities that would best serve our purpose. I'm committed to translating learner objectives into purpose statements in the future.



Visual landscape for PEL Kick-Off

Hosting the Kickoff

The primary components of the day included:

- An opening [circle](#) exercise asking participants to describe themselves as a leader using nine words or fewer
- A [World Café](#) with two rounds of questions
 - Round One: What is the University community calling for right now?
 - Round Two: What are your leadership challenges and opportunities? What is being asked of leaders at the University?

- An [Open Space Technology](#) process following up on the [World Café](#) question, “What is the university community calling for right now?” Topics included:
 - Investment in Capacity-building
 - Working Better Together
 - Ideas and thoughts on Increasing Efficiency
 - What is our message?
 - Grassroots or top-down?
 - Which community?
- [Reflective Listening](#) exercise
- A closing [circle](#) creating a group consensus of the individual leadership traits created in the opening [circle](#)
- Brief content sessions explaining the [divergence/convergence](#) model and the [Four-Fold Practice](#)

Listening Reflectively

The [Reflective Listening](#) exercise helped us quickly gain a cohort conversational comfort level. The attention to a comfortable yet stimulating environment, the [World Café](#) and [Open Space Technology](#) conversations, and the brief teaching on content all played a part, but it was that capstone listening exercise that solidified the day’s activities.

After a ten-minute description of the technique, the cohort was grouped in threes. The assignment was to have each person tell a story related to his/her leadership. One member of the trio then listened for facts while the other listened for feelings and values. Each participant had the opportunity to assume each role. If there are four people in the group, listening for feelings and values can be separated.



Small group doing Reflective Listening exercise

I had been doing this kind of work for 30 years and had never experienced this exercise until I participated in the Art of Hosting training. It is an understatement to say that this is powerful.

To this day, I can easily recall the participants in my foursome and the stories they told. I believe such was the case for the PEL participants.

My advice to anyone coordinating the activities of a learning cohort is to start out the experience with this exercise. This intentional listening paired with the opportunity for vulnerability and feeling heard sets a foundational tone that can carry throughout the cohort experience.

Evaluating the Kickoff Experience

Were my desired results accomplished? Based on my previous experience with cohort groups, this 2013 PEL cohort reached a depth of conversation based in trust in a shorter time than I had ever seen before. Sample evaluation comments were: “I enjoyed diverse conversation and sharing modalities,” “I really enjoyed the sense of being equal—we are all here for the same purpose regardless of where we are from or what our title is,” “I enjoyed meeting and getting to know colleagues; glad we weren’t ever put on the spot; great conversations; good pacing,” “I very much enjoyed the listening exercise. It was instructive and allowed for good connection with some of the other PEL participants.” Deep conversations have continued at the May, June, and July seminars.

As for the “not in Kansas” challenge, I have done a lot of training in our primary training rooms and for the most part the rooms reflect a “sea of taupe.” The hosting teams’ attention to room aesthetics, the consideration of the activities chosen, and the heartfelt hosting by the team truly transported the cohort to that colorful place where personal growth and ideas can emerge. The [harvest document](#) conveys this “not in Kansas’ experience.

Applying Art of Hosting throughout the Cohort Experience

I’d also like to acknowledge another Art of Hosting strategy that has been successfully implemented for this year’s PEL. Knowledge camps are used during Art of Hosting trainings to convey information about mental models and core practices in a short amount of time. For the May PEL change management seminars, guests were invited to share brief overviews about change management models during twelve [knowledge camps](#) (three rounds with four camps per round). PEL participants were able to select one camp to attend for each round and all of the camps were video recorded using iPads so that they could be accessed at any time.

A hybrid of knowledge camps and a software [tool expo](#) hosted by the Project and Change Management Collaborators group was used to share change management tools. There were two one-hour rounds with eight stations per round, each staffed by guests who described their tool in 5–7 minute segments. PEL participants stopped by the tool stations of interest with most learning about six tools per round. The energy during the [tool expo](#) was palpable, with so much knowledge passed in quick bursts.

Visual considerations have continued for the PEL program. Each seminar includes a hand-drawn agenda landscape mirroring a style first developed by [David Sibbet](#). In addition, much attention continues to be paid to the physical space and using artifacts in the middle of circle to provide a focus for the center of conversations. The original [harvest](#) landscape made up of the individual leadership traits from the opening [circle](#) activity at the kickoff will be brought out periodically and at the end to provide context for where the participants' leadership journey began.

We are only a third of the way through the 2013 cohort year and it will be interesting to see how this attention to conversations that matter will continue to benefit the participants. I am especially looking forward to how [World Café](#) and [Open Space Technology](#) might be applied to the end of the cohort year reflection time to unleash the deep co-learning that will hopefully emerge.

Art of Hosting as College-Wide Change

Brad Hokanson and Kate Maple

During the summer of 2011, Brad participated in training around The Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter (hereafter referred to as “Art of Hosting”) offered by the Center for Integrative Leadership. Recognizing the value of the processes, methods, and connections, he became an enthusiastic supporter. He knew a number of people in the College of Design who would enjoy and benefit from participation in Art of Hosting and strongly suggested they participate.

The College of Design is diverse in terms of disciplines, faculty, location, and staff, and communication is often a challenge. We believed developing in-house practitioners of Art of Hosting was seen as a move that would benefit the entire College and decided to “call” a training for January 2012. “Calling” is the term used in Art of Hosting to describe the initiation and organization of training. The College administration was supportive and a number of senior staff participated. The training was also opened to others in the University community, providing a richness of participation across many units.

In the last two years, more than 30 faculty, staff, and graduate students of the College of Design have participated in Art of Hosting training. This represents about 20% of the College staff and faculty and has included faculty, department heads, deans, academic staff, support staff, and graduate students. During the past two years, Art of Hosting [techniques](#) have been used in a variety of venues, demonstrating the high value of these methods. Additionally, this has had an overall positive effect on the College culture and working environment. This chapter is an opportunity to describe some of these results.

Art of Hosting [techniques](#) have been applied directly in a number of classes helping engage learners in a [more](#) active and collaborative learning environment. One of the authors of this writing has used various discussion formats such as [World Café](#) and [ProAction Café](#) to support conversations that reach a deep level of involvement, and that help ensure intellectual development. The activities have focused on reviewing readings and the development of new, divergent ideas.

In addition, one of our apparel instructors, Anna Carlson, took training in January 2012 and immediately put the [techniques](#) to use in her classes. She reported by email the following enthusiastic report: “WOW. This works! I used the Art of Hosting practices in my Apparel Design Research class: We started with a check-in, and continued with a brief ‘teach.’ They loved that I sat on the floor and drew pictures! There was a really great discussion about the first assignment, then check-out.”

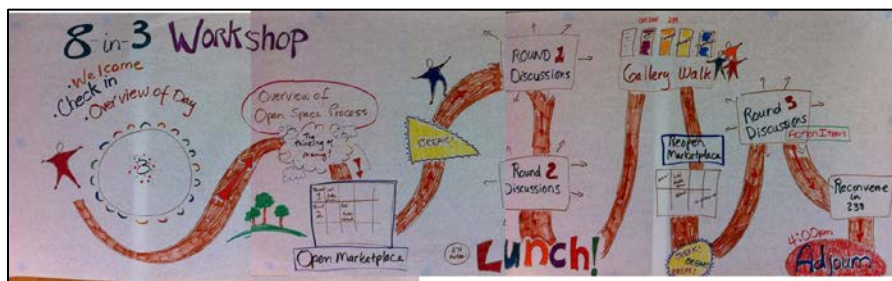
We also have used the [techniques](#) in the governance of the College. They have been applied in a variety of meetings and employed the seemingly simple [techniques](#) such as check-in, [circle](#), and [World Café](#). This has meant that we are moving away from the traditional meeting

structuring of Robert's Rules of Order, which is based on contention and conflict, and toward a more collaborative work environment.



Design School staff using an Art of Hosting engagement technique

We also applied Art of Hosting to larger planning efforts of the College. As with many organizations, the involvement of larger groups of people in decision-making process is often difficult, time consuming, and does not operate in a way that values all the voices present. The [techniques](#) that make Art of Hosting valuable in public meetings are also applicable and helpful within organizations. The distributed discussions help address many of these concerns and ensure a broad based public involvement.



Visual flow for a session exploring an eight-semester/three-year curriculum

For example, we used it in a daylong planning workshop called "8-in-3" that sought to examine the implementation implications of an eight-semester/three-year curriculum for undergraduate programs in graphic design and retail merchandising. The workshop was called by Elizabeth Bye, department head for Design, Housing, and Apparel, and Kate Maple, Assistant Dean for Student Services. These two programs were selected by central administration to pilot a year-round, three-year baccalaureate. Stakeholders from within the college (students, faculty, and staff were invited to participate) as well as across the University (Student Finance, Housing and Residential Life, the Registrar, etc.) worked in small groups of focused interest using [ProAction](#)

[Café](#). The daylong workshop, hosted by Art of Hosting practitioner Karen Zentner Bacig, identified a wide range of concerns and opportunities for the programs and the implementation, both close to home and across the University; these issues will be sorted and addressed by various working groups in the coming months. We received many positive comments from participants who had been expecting a day of sitting and listening, hence many pleasantly surprised and engaged colleagues!

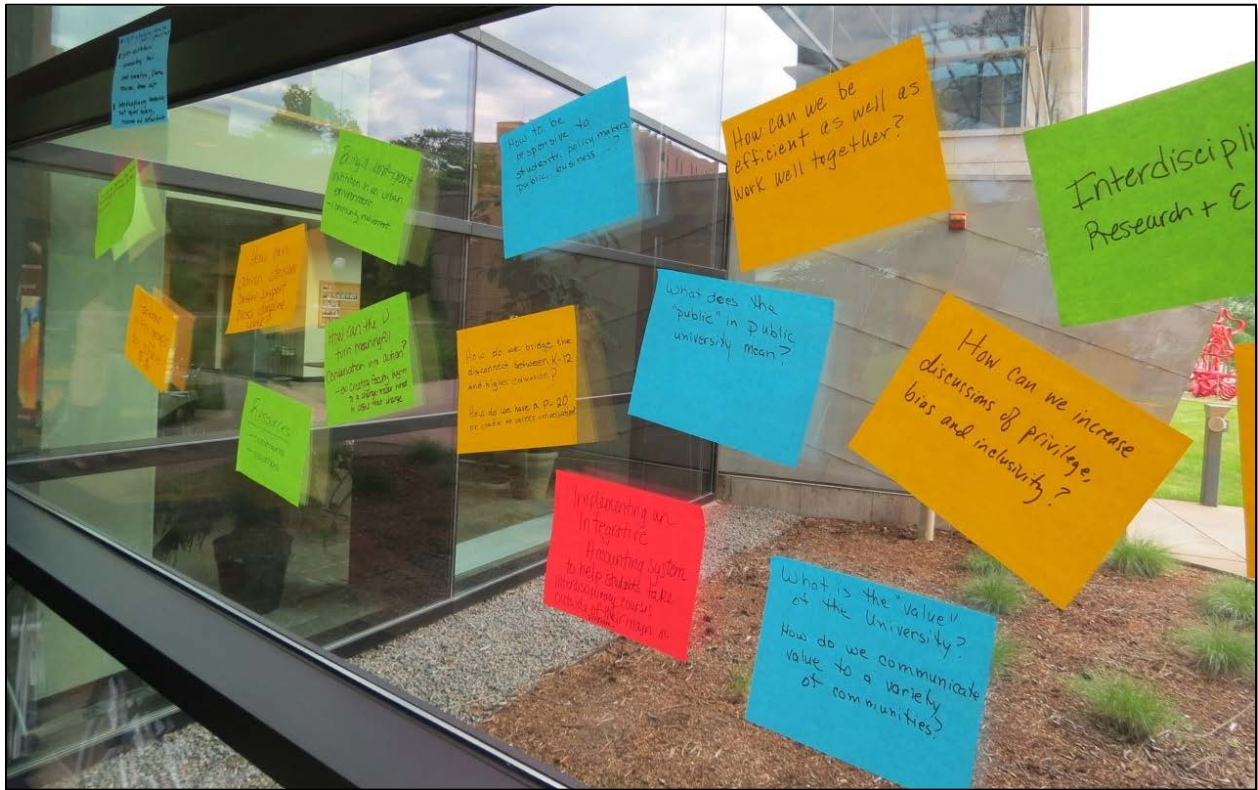


Design School staff capturing insights during a World Café Conversation

Conclusions

It is our belief that Art of Hosting [techniques](#) can easily be integrated into the regular, ongoing work of a college, including teaching and administration. Both academic/pedagogical and managerial initiatives can be supported and strengthened by the full range of Art of Hosting [techniques](#). The engaged classroom can benefit from [World Café](#), [ProAction Café](#) and [Open Space Technology](#). These [techniques](#) and others such as [Reflective Listening](#) can be used in administrative areas. The focusing and reflective [techniques](#) such as check-in can make classes and meetings much more effective.

It also appears that there have been substantial indirect and qualitative effects on the atmosphere of the College. Separations between different departments have been lessened and participants in hosted meetings report both knowing more members of the College community and respecting each other more. With more of the College of Design community participating in meaningful conversation, helping host meetings elsewhere, and attending larger outside events, the practice continues to be integrated into the College culture.



Institutional Effectiveness

The University of Minnesota is a big place: five campuses, 65,000 students, and 25,000 employees. An institution of this size can present complex challenges: how do we develop services and systems that meet variegated needs and interests? How might we engage large groups that are diverse yet share common interests to advance the common good? What new strategies will spur on creative thinking, help us take conversations into action, and make possible the formation of communities that are invested in continuous improvement of services, systems, and governance?

Challenges are inevitable even in the most healthy of large, complex institutions. But our challenges can become intractable when members of a group perceive their organization as dysfunctional and ineffective. Sometimes organizational silos create barriers to institutional

effectiveness. In other instances, top-down planning predictably leads to a lack of community acceptance.

In the three chapters in this section, the authors explain how they mobilized Art of Hosting to address complex challenges across the University of Minnesota and, at the same time, introduce structural transformation in an effort to make positive change sustainable.

- [Geller recounts](#) the first phase of designing the new University of Minnesota portal, which will provide personalized information, tools, and services to the entire University community. She and her colleagues created an intentional and methodical planning process with a focus on participatory engagement and co-creating solutions. The result will be both a better portal and wider commitment to its success.
- [Singh and Rosencrans introduced](#) Design Thinking to the Enterprise Portal Project, and in doing so introduced a framework that complements and enriches the Art of Hosting. Design thinking sparks creativity and helps take conversations to action.
- [Edwards and Sintjago recount](#) how the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA) at the University of Minnesota faced major challenges: council members were displeased with the direction of the organization, a lack of student engagement and satisfaction, and a decision-making process in which a few voices dominated discussion. The Art of Hosting and other methodologies is altering this organization, making it more flexible, democratic, open, and representative of students.

These initiatives suggest that the power of meaningful conversations is altering what occurs throughout a large, complex system. By overcoming divisions, they show what might be accomplished at a larger scale through application of the Art of Hosting approach.

Collaborative Creation for Technology Implementation: The University of Minnesota Portal Story

Susan Geller

The University of Minnesota is implementing a new portal, a central website that will provide personalized information, tools, and services to the entire University community—more than 100,000 students, staff, and faculty across five campuses throughout the state. It potentially could mean a significant change in the way that people in the University system meet many of their daily needs at work. The new portal will first be available in late 2014, continuing to develop and evolve after that.

This project has no shortage of challenges including limited funding, a time frame constrained by a larger initiative, and technology limitations. The single biggest challenge is to build a portal that will meet a diverse group of needs and interests. There are many people grand ideas and it will be impossible to accomplish them all at the initial release of the new portal. The success of the effort depends completely on people's acceptance of the initial product. The more people like what is there at the start, the more they will be invested in adding to it, and the more it will be used.

The University has a history of creating/implementing products that are not widely accepted. The reasons behind that are complex and include organizational structure, traditional top-down processes, and funding models. The core problem seems to be that people don't feel the product meets their needs. We didn't want this to be our story and so we invested in early and often broad collaboration.

There are already several portals existing in the University landscape and our project goal is to bring them together and make one strong portal that will be the go-to place for all. The core strategy for this initiative is to provide a framework in which the University community can create the product together. If we all create it together, we'll have a better chance of meeting all of our needs. And, if we create it together, we'll collectively be more invested in using it and growing it over time.

The Art of Hosting Conversations That Matter (hereafter referred to as "Art of Hosting") practices and [frameworks](#) focus on participatory engagement and co-creating solutions. They have much to offer this initiative and we look to them again and again. The following story takes us from the first meeting of the portal leadership team to the end of the first phase of the project. The practices move us from initial team formation to a concrete list of priorities. They provide a vehicle to move from idea to action.

Every step in the process is focused on building community towards our objective. At each point, we are clear about purpose, intentional about method, and committed to deliverables

that will feed the next activity and advance the work. Throughout we weave together relationship building with task completion.

Part 1: The Leadership Group Convenes

On January 7, 2013, members of the [leadership team](#) and the project team (the people who guide the process and the people who work through the specifics, respectively) convened for the first time. We gathered for a full day, at the start not knowing each other, at the end feeling like a team.

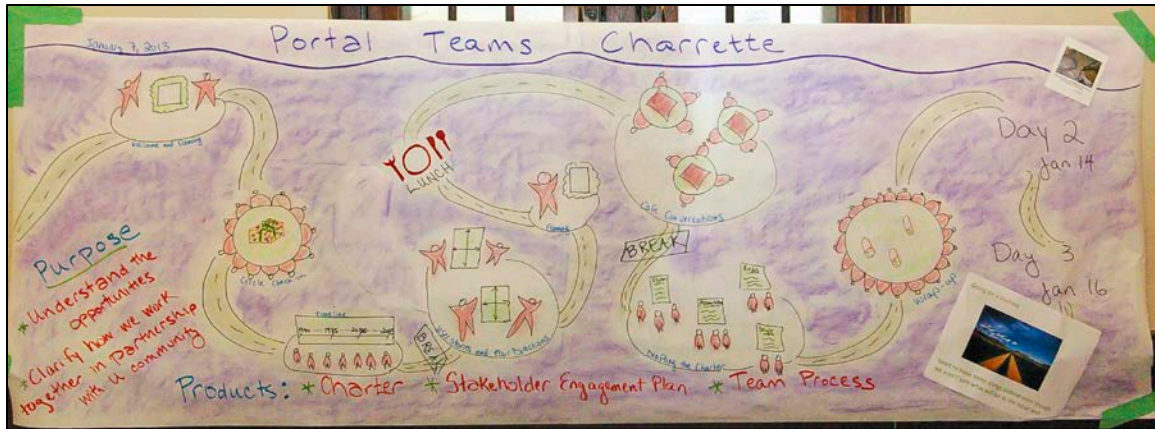
The leadership team consists of a chair plus 10 members from different business areas and campuses throughout the University system. Prior initiatives included people only from the main Twin Cities campus leaving other campuses feeling that their needs were not attended to. Because we did not want to repeat this pattern the leadership team is comprised of four people from other campuses. While the primary responsibilities for each leadership team member are elsewhere in the University system, a successful portal affects their work in significant ways.

The project team consists of people whose primary work is for the portal project. Some of us are full-time on the project, some part-time. Some work for the University and some are consultants. I am the project director and my role is to lead the work of the project team and to support the work of the leadership team.

Each of us has expertise in certain parts of the University system and has deep understanding of certain demographics. Collectively, though, we do not represent everyone—there are still major gaps. We need to come to our team both with our expertise but also more broadly as stewards of the University as a whole.

Purpose & Method

The purpose of the day was to understand the opportunities presented to us with this project and to clarify how we were going to work together to implement the portal in partnership with the University community.



Landscape agenda for portal leadership team charrette

I designed the day with input from some of the project team and the chair of the leadership team. We used the charrette format, a structure that comes out of design thinking and is used to solve problems. We identified the problem as how to become a team that could lead the portal initiative. The components of the day were structured so we could get to know each other and have opportunities to practice working together as a team. This day would be the only chance we'd have to be in the same physical space. Subsequent meetings would include at least some of us attending via technology.

I and one other member of the project team hosted the charrette itself.

Highlights of the Day

- *Gifts to the team:* Sitting in a circle, each person shared an object that represented what they will bring to the team. We put each object in the center as we told our stories. The collection included a penguin, a ball of rubber bands, local coffee, a thermos and much more.



A Circle center created using the artifacts individuals brought to symbolize the gifts they bring to the team

- *User Stories*. In preparation of the meeting, we had identified different user stories to help us keep in mind the diverse portal audience. Some examples include Alex, a first year undergrad; Yinong, a faculty researcher; Hayden, a student adviser; Gail, a staff manager. Each was fictional but tried to represent a different experience that would come to the portal. The stories included a name, some background, the person's connection to the University, what excites them about the portal, and their relationship to technology. During the day, we worked in pairs to do a reflective activity from the perspective of these user stories.
- World Café. We held a World Café to share ideas about success, challenges and assumptions. This conversation was designed to help us think about what we'd include in our project charter. At the end of the café conversations, we identified themes and used these to start our charter.



Individuals doodling, drawing, and writing during a World Café conversation

- *Breaks and lunch*. We planned long breaks and a festive lunch to ensure time for more informal getting to know each other. In these spaces, people told stories, shared concerns, and made bonds that would sustain us in virtual space for the next four months.
- *Closing*. We started the day asking team members to share their gifts. We ended by giving them two gifts. One was a photo card created by Kate Maple, a member of the University's Art of Hosting community of practitioners, that offered insight from

Wendell Berry: “It may be that when we no longer know which way to go we have come to our real journey.” The second gift was a compass to help us as we embarked on the journey together.

Harvest

We captured the day in a [summary document](#) with many pictures to help us remember the energy and the content of the day. We also shared this document with the University community as a way to learn about the leadership team and process.

The charrette was part one of a three-part team-building framework. The result of the gatherings was a [one-page document](#) that explained the project and that would serve as a communication tool to talk about our initial work. It discusses the vision, the anticipated benefits of the new portal, the timeline, and the intention to use a collaborative and transparent process for the project.

We also created [principles](#) for stakeholder engagement and added detail to each to explain how we intend to work with these principles in the project:

- A collective vision results in a stronger portal
- All voices have value
- The process is stakeholder-centered
- Innovation lies at the intersection
- The project embraces the unknown

Part 2: Widening the Circle

The portal team cannot create a portal on our own. We need broad input from the community. At the end of the leadership charrette, with a strong core team in place, we were ready to invite in the University community into the conversation, learn more about what the University needs, and build relationship to help us co-create the new portal.

In addition to being the portal project director, I am a member of the core leadership team for the University of Minnesota Art of Hosting [community of practitioners](#). I knew the community was interested in a major event for the year, to show the University the potential impact the Art of Hosting could offer. While individuals are using these methods in their areas of work, the community as a whole was looking for something that would let us work together on a larger initiative that had great impact for the entire University system. The portal project offered a chance to work with students, staff and faculty on all five campuses, meeting the scale the Art of Hosting community was seeking.

They hosted the portal project kickoff event providing wisdom, expertise, commitment, and enthusiasm of 20 volunteers who served on the design team and as hosts on the event day.

Purpose & Method

The purpose of the kick-off event was “to begin a University-wide conversation about creating an easy-to-use interactive web tool for facilitating access to information and services that are of primary relevance to YOU and the University community.”

We designed a two-hour event using a [World Café](#) held simultaneously in seven locations across the state. We needed to get input from all our campuses and demonstrate, from the beginning, that we were committed to doing that by having the event at all five campuses. By holding the events at different locations at the same time we hoped to convey that we are all going to work on this project together. We invited the entire University community including students, staff, and faculty. More than 430 people attended. The portal leadership team was equipped to host this type of event both because we had just participated in something similar during the charrette and we could work with the volunteers from our Art of Hosting [community of practitioners](#).



Participants doodling, drawing, and writing during a World Café conversation for the portal kick-off

Highlights of the Day

- Each location had a hosting team that included both members of the portal leadership team as well as members of the University’s Art of Hosting community. In this way, we made sure that the hosting team was grounded in both the conversation method of [World Café](#) and the conversation topic of portal.
- Each location had the same visual agenda posted on the wall to bring unity to the seven sites, and each hosting team added its own visual interest to the room to create a space that reflected their own creativity. One site was covered in batik cloths, another had seedlings on their tables.



Landscape agenda for portal kick-off event

- At the center of one of the rounds of conversation was the one-page document explaining the portal project that had been the output of the leadership team charrette.
- We used Twitter to connect people between the sites, tweeting the text of the comment cards that came out of the [World Café](#). At one point, we were trending in the top three across the state of Minnesota.
- We used Google Hangout to connect the sites together at the end of the [World Café](#), so that everyone could see and hear a bit about each site’s conversation. We staged this as in a news room format having anchors in one event and reporters from each of the sites engage in a short conversation with the anchors.

Harvest

We captured the experience of the day in a [graphical summary document](#) to share what we learned back to the community. We also captured all the [planning details](#) from the day to share with the Art of Hosting community as a reference for future events.

At the end of each [World Café](#) conversation we asked participants to capture their thoughts onto comment cards. During the event, each location themed the cards from the first round of conversation and reported on the themes when we all gathered via Google hangout. All of the cards were collected at one location after the event for a larger theming activity.

A small group of Art of Hosting volunteers spent most of the next two days [theming](#) the 838 cards we collected from the three rounds of café conversation. The single biggest request we heard from the event was that people wanted to be able to log in once and then access all the University tools that they need for their role. This learning and other identified themes formed the basis for going deeper into the design of the portal project. The



Themes from portal kick-off event

specific ideas identified formed the foundation of what became a long, collected list generated during this first project phase.

Part 3: Listening Deeper

Purpose & Method

From the kick-off we knew some general things that people were hoping for from the new portal. But, we needed to hear in-depth from more audiences. The purpose of this step was to have more extended conversations with a lot of different groups around the system.

The kickoff conveyed the message that the portal team is interested and listening to what the University community has to say. Yet, many people had more they wanted to say. We designed and conducted more than 50 listening sessions across the state with student, staff, and faculty groups. The core format was the same and included sharing information, collecting ideas, and building investment in the outcome. Each session was slightly different to reflect the specific situation. We talked with the Faculty Consultative committee about teaching and research, we talked with administrative staff about operations, and we talked to student groups about student life at the University. The team that lead these sessions dubbed themselves the “Stakeholder Superheroes” given that they held this number of conversations during six short weeks.

Most notable about these sessions was the number of people and groups who wanted to meet with us, and the number of people who attended each of the meetings. One participant from a central office said that in more than 15 years at the University, she had never seen such widespread representation at meetings.

[Harvest](#)

At the end of each listening session, we captured all the opportunities that people told us about into our collected list of ideas started after the kickoff event.

Part 4: Design Thinking Workshops

Purpose & Method

In our listening sessions we spoke with people sharing a common perspective. The purpose of the design thinking workshops was to bring people together from different perspectives to generate specific ideas about features and design elements people thought would make for a great portal experience.

As part of an academic institution, we wanted to bring academic knowledge and expertise to our project. We partnered with the University of Minnesota College of Design and Virajita Singh, founder and lead of Design Thinking @ [College of Design](#). These workshops and highlights are described in [another chapter](#) of this book.

Harvest

We harvested the workshop learning in three ways:

1. We posted results of the workshops on our [project website](#) to help generate enthusiasm for the upcoming workshops and to share what we were learning.
2. We extracted the features and the sticker count, and then logged these in our growing collected list of portal opportunities.
3. We created a [Pinterest](#) site to share the prototypes in a way that responded to what we learned about how participants like to consume information.

Part 5: Closing the Circle

After nearly four months of engagements in many different formats, we had more than 1800 items identified in our collected list of ideas. We needed to move from a massive list to a roadmap for implementation. The portal leadership team would have to set priorities and they wanted to do that in collaboration with the University community so that the direction would be shared and owned by everyone.

Purpose & Method

To prioritize opportunities towards a manageable scope for the first implementation of portal, the project team began to synthesize the collected 1800+ opportunities into a set of approximately 300 options. We designed a survey to help us learn what the University community thought was important at least among a subset of those. We sent the survey to everyone who had engaged with us through any of the methods listed above as well as to the broader University. We received more than 2200 responses, far exceeding our hopes of 500–1000 responses. The survey was anonymous so we are not sure how many of the respondents had engaged in prior events. However, we suspect the high participation rate was a result of all the earlier work we had done.

At the same time, the portal leadership team deliberated about how to set priorities for the first implementation. They decided on using a values-based model and identified the core values that would drive decision-making. They drew upon this long list of ideas that represented the diversity of perspectives at the University and a lot of data about each. Though each leadership person works with or for a specific demographic at the University, the team agreed to make decisions based on the larger system needs.

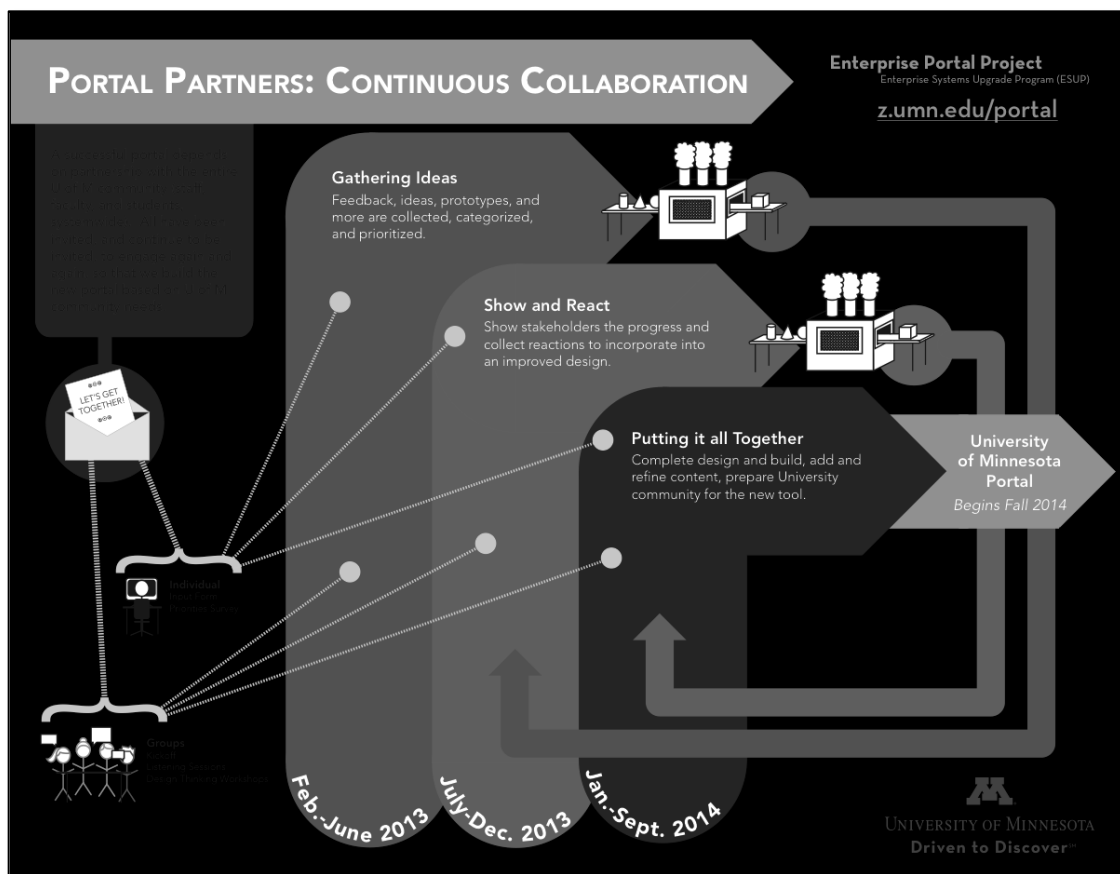
Harvest

The portal project has a website that makes visible all of the work we have done. As this work came to conclusion, we gathered the documentation in one [place](#). This includes [the list of ideas and the data](#) we had about each, the [results of the survey](#), the [values](#) the leadership team used, and the resulting [priority set](#).

Part 6: Next Steps

The writing of this chapter coincides with the end of the planning phase for new portal. Next we move into design and build. The steps we take will build on the data and priorities we set in the first phase, as well as the ownership people currently feel towards the new portal. We will ask for and rely on continued active involvement from the community. Plans include building a community of content providers and sharing several early versions of the portal design to get input as we refine the design in a build-measure-learn cycle. We'll build our best guess as to what people want, measure how successful we were, learn what we need to do better, and start over again.

This [graphic](#) shows how the work described in this chapter is part of a larger vision of collaboration. The “Gathering Ideas” phase is what we have just completed. The framework of collaboration continues through the next two phases and after the product becomes available.



Graphic depicting the collaborative nature of the portal project

Conclusion

We know that people who engaged in this first phase were satisfied. After the kickoff we sent out a survey and asked, “Did you feel a part of the conversation about portal and that your input was valuable?” We had a 52% response rate. 75% of the people said “Yes, I felt a part of

the conversation” and 20% said, “Sort of.” We surveyed design thinking workshop participants and asked them, “Did the workshop provide you with an effective mechanism to develop and share some of your ideas about portal?” We had a 72% response rate. 84% of the people said, “Yes” and 14% of the people said, “Sort of.” Both the high response rates and the high reports of satisfaction and effectiveness help us know we are on the right track.

People have also told us they like what we are doing. A faculty person who does product development shared that we are doing all the right things with engagement. Long-time staff members who have seen many new tools implemented in their tenure have said that there have been so many opportunities to give input that nobody will be able to say that they were not asked. We’ve heard over and over again, “Thanks for asking. I didn’t know anybody cared.”

So, we have been successful at engaging. And, the engaging has resulted in a deep understanding of the needs and priorities of the University community. The portal team has been surprised by what we’ve learned about critical project elements; without the input we could easily have gone in misguided directions.

What I don’t know at this writing is whether these engagements have set a new expectation or increased desire for more of the same in relation to other projects. I think so and I hope so, but until the next large system-wide initiative, it will be hard to say for certain. Nor do I know at this writing if all of this engagement will lead to a portal that is well received by the University community. My hope is that even where the portal tool might fall short because of limited time and resources, it will have a strong foundation and base of support from people who helped to bring it into being. That foundation can help the portal grow and evolve over time to better meet the needs of the University.

The content of this story is clearly focused on creating a new portal at the University of Minnesota. But, the impact is in the process we are using to create it. We started by building our core team with authenticity and engagement, and then broadened those same principles to include more and more people. We used solid methods to both expand our input pool and to narrow the options to set direction. This process could be used for many different types of initiatives. I wonder what it will be next time?

The Art of Hosting Creativity and Innovation: Applying Design Thinking at the University of Minnesota

Virajita Singh & Nick Rosencrans

Design Thinking is an emerging field applying the tools and processes from the design disciplines (architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, graphic design, product design, apparel design, and others) to complex, system-wide problems (Brown, 2009; Wolfe Wood, 2013). Here, we propose that Design Thinking be included as one of the tools within The Art of Hosting Conversations That Matter (hereafter referred to as “Art of Hosting”) [frameworks](#), like [appreciative inquiry](#), and [techniques](#) like [Open Space Technology](#). The Art of Hosting approach is intended to host conversations and bring people together to communicate and collaborate in conversation, which it does quite effectively. Yet, often people are interested in going beyond conversations; integrating Design Thinking within the Art of Hosting collection helps in creating tangible results. Design Thinking takes conversations beyond just conversations, and effectively taps imagination towards action by developing ideas into tangible prototypes.

We see an opportunity for Design Thinking to complement and contribute to Art of Hosting in five ways:

1. Taking conversations to action
2. Building on Art of Hosting principles and themes, specifically, Hosting Others and Co-creation
3. Creating an individual and group experience of applied creativity
4. Teaching people to frame and work on Design Challenges
5. Give feedback and give people permission to fail (low stakes, fail early and fail often)

We have observed that many people come back from [Art of Hosting trainings](#) and conversations having had a breakthrough and a new experience of the potential of effective and meaningful conversations in community. Design Thinking has similar breakthrough potential because it introduces people to a new way of thinking beyond their past experiences, and gives them creative tools to apply in their daily work.

As the core focus of this eBook is change in the academy, we propose that Design Thinking can build on, and take to the next level the Art of Hosting’s significant successes in improving conversations and building community towards effective action at the University of Minnesota. In fact, we propose the University of Minnesota Art of Hosting community intentionally experiment with combining these methodologies, documenting the process, and results of our experiments.

We have begun to explore this direction in the [University portal](#). The Enterprise Portal Project is intended to serve all users with audience-specific communication, employee benefits, payroll, grades, course information, events, training, and so on. University users are being engaged in

the process of design and prototyping; the delivery of the new platform will occur in the fall of 2014.

Because the University of Minnesota community is large and diverse with five campuses across the state, the design team is partnering with [Usability Services](#) (where Nick works) that works with University teams to objectively evaluate user interface issues during vendor selection or development of an application for the University community and the [College of Design](#) (where Virajita works). As a team, we have collaborated on how the portal design goals and design thinking might intersect to develop portal design. We developed the workshop design and hosted seven workshops, anticipating that learning from each would affect the next delivery. This was applying design thinking to the design of design thinking workshops! On March 5th, it was time to test our approach and enter into the unknown.

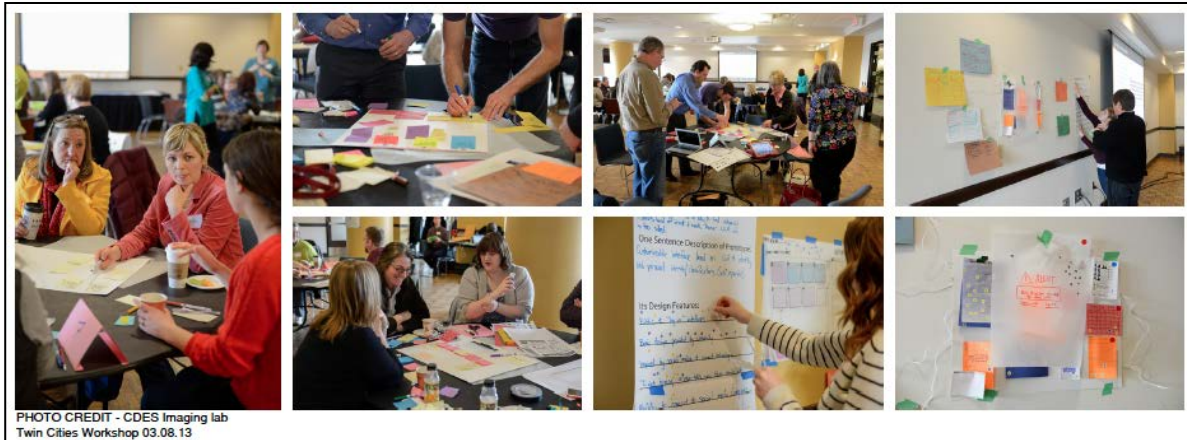
Design Thinking Process

There are a few different ways the design thinking process is described. We had the participants work in teams with the following five-step process:

1. *Empathy*: building empathy between users
2. *Problem Definition*: clarifying the focus of the problem to be solved
3. *Ideation*: generating an abundance of creative ideas and selecting from them
4. *Prototyping*: giving the ideas physical form using art materials to rapidly to evolve the thinking and details of the solution for implementation
5. *Test*: testing the ideas in real life for further development

The participants of the workshops would apply the first four steps; the Enterprise Portal Team designers responsible for creating the final design would apply the fifth step.

The teams created prototypes to mock up what the portal might look like and what features it might have. After the prototype was created, the teams were given the chance to develop a brief presentation on a pre-created format that included names of the team, a title and description for the prototype, as well as a list of design features that were unique to that prototype. This was useful not only to clarify to what the team members thought were the best and unique features of the prototype, but also to consider the audience to whom they would present.



Portal design workshops in action

In developing the workshops, we recognized the need to gain feedback from all of the participants who would observe one another's presentations. Traditional models for capturing feedback—question and answer periods, voting, contests—didn't seem like the right fit to quickly [harvest](#) meaningful, critical data from all participants equally. In order to engage participants in one another's designs, we considered a number of approaches. The approach that garnered the most interest in the team was to provide stickers to everyone so they could express their feedback as they listened to each team describe their designs. Once the team explained their design in a few minutes, then the large group could apply their stickers on whatever facets of the design captured their interest the most. The stickers they used would be given specific meanings, and their value would come from them being limited in quantity: for each design, there would be only two copies of each sticker to use. This way, the team hoped, the key aspects of each design would become apparent by the presence of these stickers surrounding them.

But what kind of stickers would engage the participants in one another's design? At first we thought about using smiley-faces and frowny-faces, allowing the team to gauge consensus and get visual impact on aspects to avoid. This approach seemed to be lacking something; it seemed that the smileys and frownies were just positive and negative points on the same scale, so we looked for other models of feedback that could offer more depth. We turned to the model of feedback called the [Kano Model](#). Sometimes included in six sigma techniques, this model is used to assess how features compare to one another by classifying each one according to two variables: fulfillment and satisfaction.

If a participant in the Design Thinking Workshop gave up one of their two smiley-face stickers to a given feature over another, we would interpret that feature as something that was exciting to the participant. But to capture the risk component, the sense of dissatisfaction if a feature was done poorly, a frowny-face sticker would not work. We needed something that related to the sense of upset that might occur if something wasn't given the attention it needs. In order to graphically represent this in an understandable way, the team elected to use a sticker with a

shield on it. We told participants that the shield sticker represented a sense of protection: by giving up one of their two shield stickers on a given feature over some alternative, they were protecting that feature so it might be more likely to be carried forward in the resulting development work.

The relationship between these two stickers seemed to work: once applied to the prototypes created by the Design Thinking Workshop participants, their stickers would not be simply opposite versions of one another, and their presence could tip us off to areas of opportunity and areas of risk as seen by the participants. Further, this depth of feedback could be [harvested](#) from the Design Thinking Workshop experience quickly enough to be employed with every team's prototype.

Results

More than 260 people from 171 units participated in the seven workshops held across University system-wide campuses; they created thirty-six prototypes. The workshops were successful, based on participant feedback:

- "It was a wonderful experience. The Design Thinking lens is the perfect way through which all major changes at the University (and elsewhere) should take place. As an employee, it made me feel that my ideas and input might matter and that being a user of the tool is the only expertise one needs to be seen as a valued contributor. I felt inspired by the event and the conversations that took place at our table and around the room."
- "I went in kind of skeptical that I wouldn't be of much help, but left feeling energized and excited about the portal."
- "This is going to be quite the undertaking and I am happy to see that key stakeholders are being engaged right from the beginning. I'm excited to see how this project progresses."

During and after the workshops, we compiled the materials and results in a few ways—prototypes photos, summary documents, and team presentation videos for each prototype were posted on the portal project [website](#). After all workshops were completed the 36 total prototypes were posted on [Pinterest](#). Also, a spreadsheet of design features was created where all the data from sticker counts were added as well as information from the post-workshop evaluation feedback.

New Technique for the Art of Hosting Collection

As we reflect upon the connection between the existing Art of Hosting [techniques](#) and Design Thinking used in this project, a few elements come into focus.

- First, Design Thinking connects with two important aspects of the [Four-Fold Practice](#), hosting others and co-creation. It provides additional techniques that fit within other existing methods.

- Second, because Design Thinking is hands-on and takes conversations to action, it is appropriate for additional steps in any change process. It is an individual and group experience of applied creativity and that manifests co-creation.
- Third, Design Thinking focuses on particular challenges, pushing them to frame issues carefully. The methods provide people mechanisms for giving feedback. Through the use of prototypes, people also have permission to fail (low stakes, fail early, and fail often).

In conclusion, we propose that Design Thinking be integrated into the Art of Hosting approach, with the University of Minnesota being a test set for this integration. We can design intentional experiments in the coming years and report the results of this to the global Art of Hosting community.

Applying Art of Hosting as an Open Governance Model

By Alfonso Sintjago and Brittany Edwards

Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it. – Dwight D. Eisenhower

Introduction

As the elected leaders of the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly ([GAPSA](#)) at the University of Minnesota from 2012–14, we value The [Art of Hosting](#) Conversations That Matter (hereafter referred to as “Art of Hosting”) and related emerging civic engagement models promoted by the [Center for Integrative Leadership](#) (CIL). We feel this practice is best used in conjunction with program evaluation, openness, and democratic governance. GAPSA used the feedback from our evaluation process to restructure. In the various surveys and focus groups we held, students asked for a more welcoming and inclusive process. Despite GAPSA’s identity of cross-sector governance, the organization had not previously emphasized the importance of integrative leadership, collaboration, and engagement to the degree it has since its recent restructure ([2013 Constitution](#), [Bylaws](#)).

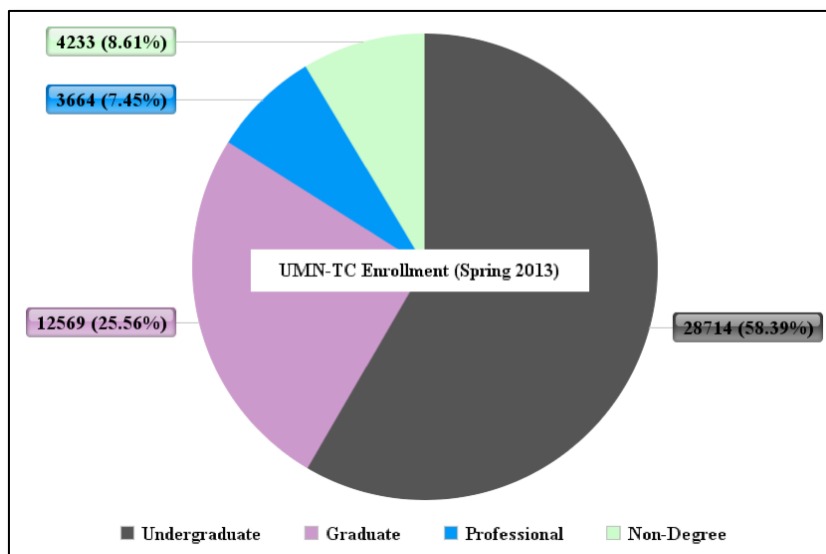
Yet, we see Art of Hosting as a radical practice for democratic governance and inclusive change within the University and beyond. We feel it is where democratic institutions need to move in order to remain relevant and evolve in our post-Enlightenment era. These intentional environments are like the [coffeehouse/ penny universities](#) of [Oxford](#), or [Café Procope](#) of Paris, or the [café culture of Vienna](#) of today—they are low-cost gathering spaces for creativity and thought to emerge. It is the Art of Hosting: the creative practices of making people feel welcome and included. It is a practice that invites civility in discourse, and encourages participation. Art of Hosting is a forum for new ideas, for decision-making and social change to emerge. This is the environment and culture we feel is best for graduate and professional students to thrive, and where the best products of academia might emerge. This practice has the opportunity, in combination with open governance and related open movements (affordable textbooks, creative commons, open data), to transform both academic and political culture to be more inclusive, transparent, and productive, at a time when we need it most.

However, we have heard some misconceptions about Art of Hosting. Some of these misperceptions exist because the practice needs to be appropriate to the context of the event, and the needs of those involved. For example in the Spring of 2012, University of Minnesota President [Eric Kaler](#) asked GAPSA to co-host a Town Hall-style meeting for fall as part of a series of listening sessions with major stakeholders across the University for his inauguration. It was also meant as a check-in with our population after the graduate student [unionization effort](#), which had been a major source of division among stakeholders, documented in these articles ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)). In this event, we were able to demonstrate the value of the [World Café](#) process, as an efficient way to gather feedback from a large group, in a short amount of time. As an engineer by training, President Kaler is concerned with improving efficiencies and using his time

well. In this context, Art of Hosting techniques were quite effective. After hosting this forum and other events using an Art of Hosting approach, we were encouraged to do more. This chapter highlights various ways in which we have incorporated Art of Hosting into University of Minnesota graduate and professional student government.

Structural Changes to a Well-Established Organization

Accounting for close to 40% of the student body at the [University of Minnesota](#), GAPSA represents more than [fifteen thousand students](#) (see Figure below), as the graduate and professional student governance organization in the Twin Cities campus. All currently registered, full-time graduate and professional students at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, full-time undergraduate Nursing students, and Pharmacy and Medical Students at University of Minnesota-Duluth are members of GAPSA. As such, it represents a very diverse group of programs and interests. GAPSA was [established in 1990 as a nonprofit \(IRS 501\(c\)\(3\)\)](#) confederation of independent college councils representing students to the [Board of Regents](#), the [President of the University](#), the [University Senate](#), the University at large and wider community. GAPSA also provides a space for students to convene, share knowledge, and promote mutual understanding, collaborating so we can most effectively address broader challenges.



University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Enrollment - Spring 2013

GAPSA's ability to influence and promote major changes relies upon the connections between student groups, and its ability to bring student concerns to the awareness of administrative bodies. By meeting with President Kaler and other administrators across the University, as well as allocating student representatives in University governing bodies such as the [University Senate](#), GAPSA can voice concerns and learn about initiatives that are taking place across the University. By supporting issues such as Open Textbooks, Tobacco-Free Campus, Student Advocacy, among others, the administration became aware of and acted on these concerns.

GAPSA acts as a natural catalyst for cross-sector collaboration and leadership development. Yet GAPSA did not include a mechanism to ensure project continuity, maintain student-administrative networks, and ensure a basic understanding of [collaborative leadership](#) techniques that are useful in promoting greater effectiveness and collaboration. When Brittany was elected Vice President, she was approached by several council presidents who were not pleased with the direction of the organization. Members of the Executive Board implemented an anonymous survey to the Assembly, asking for feedback to improve, and it confirmed the organization was facing major challenges in terms of student engagement and satisfaction. Particularly, the data revealed that parliamentary procedure used to run meetings created a climate where a few people dominated the discussion, a process that was being controlled by those who best understood it.

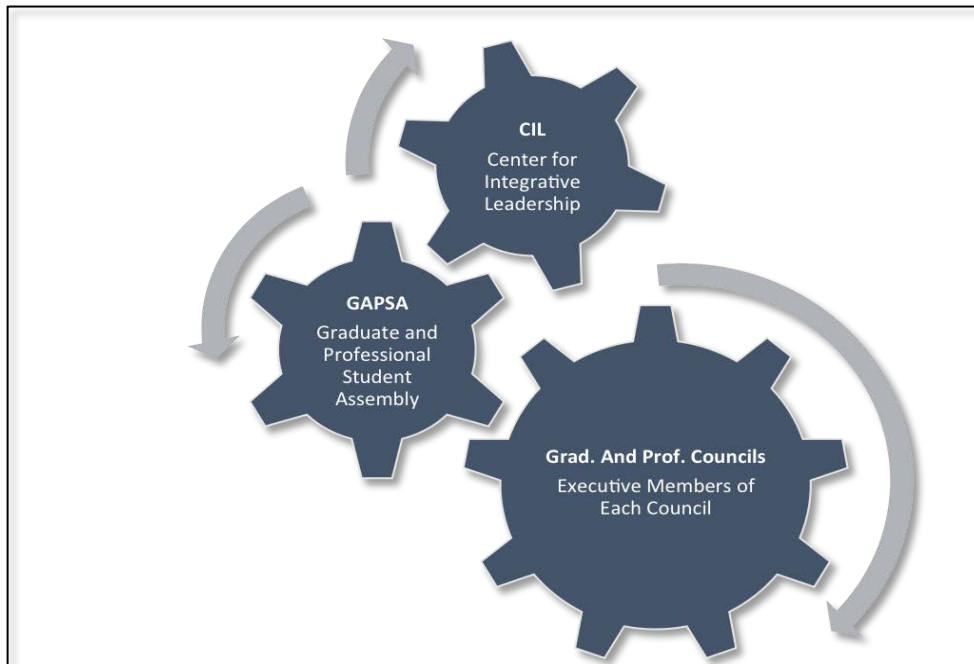
These challenges provided a unique opportunity to reframe GAPSA and restructure it in a way that would effectively address the needs of students and fulfill the organizational mission. We were not afraid to be bold and innovative. In the search for answers, GAPSA looked at [multiple models](#), and in the beginning of the 2012–2013 academic year, the GAPSA Assembly voted in favor of a developmental [program evaluation](#) process, to address the continued dissatisfaction with the organization. The initial phase of this evaluation included an [extensive student body survey](#), focus groups with members of each of the ten councils, and individual interviews with executive board members.

Various Assembly members drafted resolutions promoting structural changes; some initiatives were supported by individuals, who later became a part of the 2012–2013 Executive Board and contributed to its transformation. We have made structural changes to GAPSA's [constitution](#) and [bylaws](#), based on feedback gathered during from our evaluation. We hope that the ethos of these changes is institutionalized and that student government remains collaborative and open. We have shared the restructuring ideas on various occasions, including two focus groups with the [Council of Graduate Students](#) (COGS). Increasing dialogue not only improved our outcome, but it is also a key attribute of student government where all stakeholders should have a way in which to express their concerns.

We also felt that GAPSA's issues went beyond these structural problems. As an organization, we were not demonstrating integrative leadership or authentic civic engagement. This could easily propel the entity back into inefficiency after a transition in leadership.

Based on a positive experience with [World Café](#), various GAPSA members expressed their support for becoming more involved and discussed the possibility of strengthening GAPSA's partnership with the [Center for Integrative Leadership](#) (CIL) (illustrated in the figure below). This direction was also reinforced by our [developmental evaluation](#) and our awareness of Open Governance models. GAPSA has integrated [CIL tenets](#) and civic engagement techniques into its process and activities. We are demonstrating GAPSA's promotion of integrative leadership by using and experimenting with emerging technologies—[MOOCs](#) and e-learning, and Art of

Hosting. The openness of these strategies increases transparency and individuals' willingness to be included in processes.



New CIL-GAPSA Alignment

This change, which identifies CIL staff as an adviser, also helps connect GAPSAs to a broader University community. As Merrie Benasutti, Associate Director for Student Initiatives said, “The value I add is that students come and go every year, but I’m consistent, and I think the community recognizes me as somebody whom they can turn to.” Her priority is to reinforce student learning and engagement in the community, affect broad institutional change, and help future students practice Art of Hosting. She embodies the practice of making people feel welcome, which we feel is central to the Art of Hosting approach.

Why Art of Hosting? Its Relationship To Student Government

Liberal arts colleges and programs promoting a holistic education require a set of core or standardized courses from their students. These courses provide the foundation of an informed and engaged citizen, and allow students to better understand the complexity of societal problems, their individual strengths, the benefits of collaboration, and the value of others’ knowledge and understanding. In contrast, as elected student body leaders, there are no core courses or requirements, only the expectation that a student does their best to represent the student body.

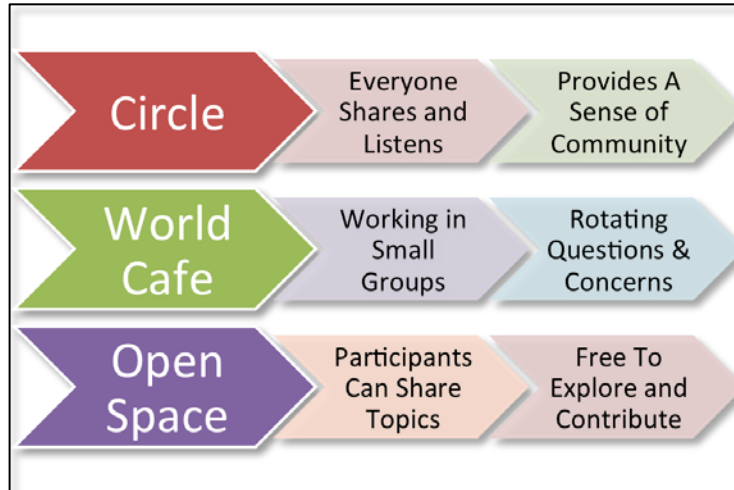
Yet, student leaders in GAPSAs bring what they learn in coursework to their roles. Brittany took a class on [Managing Civic Engagement](#), where she learned [World Café](#) and brought it to the design of the session with President Kaler.

Along with another executive board member, we took the [PA 5190 One Health/Finding Common Ground/Grand Challenges](#) that expanded upon some of the Art of Hosting [techniques](#) to facilitate a [Finding Common Ground Forum](#) on [Animal Health and Worker Well-being](#). The Forum is a daylong event, including divergent stakeholders across controversial issues in which graduate and professional students facilitate at each table. By participating in the event, we became aware of its potential in helping to further conversations about Grand Challenges, from gun policy to climate change. It could be applied as a way in which to address politically sensitive topics, and we expressed this possibility to the [MN Senate Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development](#).

These applications emphasize to us the importance of [divergence/convergence](#) by seeing the many concerns of participants but allowing them to leave the meeting with a newfound understanding of either the problem or ways in which to move forward. We learned the [techniques](#) vary depending on the groups gathered and the topic of the conversation. Appreciating the potential of combining different civic engagement and Art of Hosting [techniques](#) convinced us of the importance of more application. By setting our focus on major challenges, we can come nearer to addressing them, and transform into an action-oriented organization that tackles challenges, knowing well that they may not have a permanent solution, or may take a longer timespan to address.

In the spring 2013, we hosted an [Open Space Technology](#) forum on [E-learning with Provost Karen Hanson](#). In June 2013, several newly elected board members attended the [three-day Art of Hosting training](#) that exposed a core group from public health to veterinary medicine to education to the work. We plan to host a fall Assembly meeting using multiple Art of Hosting [techniques](#) to bring about a more productive conversation. We will specifically explore the sustainability of higher education.

As we hope to plan other [World Café](#) and [Open Space Technology](#) events with administrators in the future, we also have discussed ways in which to include Art of Hosting [techniques](#) in innovative ways. GAPSA is also developing a [MOOC environment](#) with partners, to promote the discussion of [Grand Challenges](#), while helping to tear down silos and barriers common within larger research universities. We hope that this platform will be able to include various Art of Hosting [techniques](#) within a digital environment. The figure below highlights some of our initial thoughts about how some Art of Hosting [techniques](#) can be included within an online environment. Transferring Art of Hosting elements to a different environment can help spread its core concepts and help additional projects to benefit from its affordances. By sharing ideas and promoting collaboration we hope to help promote innovative solutions to complex challenges.



Art of Hosting and Online Environments

A major way in which GAPSA is promoting Art of Hosting and an [Open Governance](#) Model, in addition to hosting events, is by changing its structure and promoting integrative leadership, as well as providing its members with the information they need to host their own Art of Hosting events. GAPSA represents students in ten different councils including the Graduate School, Carlson School of Management, Law School, Medical School, Dental School, School of Nursing, College of Pharmacy, School of Public Health, College of Veterinary Medicine, and College of Education and Human Development. In prior years only a handful of councils were represented within its executive body. We hope that these changes will result in structure and practices that makes us more flexible, action-oriented and more representative of the student body.

As a land-grant institution, we believe the University of Minnesota has an obligation to practice and explore the boundaries of emerging ideals in 21st Century democracy. This means using a combination of information and civic engagement technologies to improve higher education. We believe that this is the future of the land-grant institution—to provide public opportunity to exchange ideas freely in a public forum. In Vienna, this meant [Cafés](#). We love coffee, but we feel there are new means to share ideas today. For us, that means a combination of newly available online exchange in the Creative Commons, and related practice in community through the Art of Hosting.

Epilogue

Because the creation of eBooks—particularly collaboratively authored eBooks—is still in its infancy, we want to share our experiences developing this volume. Our efforts were greatly aided by the work and lessons of the first [Cultivating Change in the Academy](#) volume (Duin, Natar, & Anklesaria, 2012). This first authoring team was composed of sophisticated information technology professionals, blazing a new trail to document innovations in teaching technology. They pioneered the use of eBook software, and offered ample training and documentation. In contrast, while the design team of this volume possessed people with some information technology skills, none were experts; eBook publishing software and blogging platforms are now developed enough that there are few barriers for generalists.

Most notable about the creation of this eBook was the ways we deployed the Art of Hosting approach throughout the whole process. As such, this epilogue functions as another descriptive chapter showing how Art of Hosting—supported by information technology—transformed the conventional academic process of book writing, editing, and publication.

Inspiration & Invitation

Watching the collaborative and nimble publication of the first *Cultivating Change in the University*, Public Affairs Associate Professor Jodi Sandfort was inspired. At the time, Sandfort was involved in [basic research](#) with Professor Kathy Quick about the Art of Hosting model in the upper Midwestern region. Others at the University of Minnesota were developing a [report](#) based on interviews with Art of Hosting training participants. While useful, these conventional social science surveys, interviews, and analysis were too time-intensive given the diverse applications of Art of Hosting reportedly being carried out throughout the University. Moved to action, Sandfort issued a request for participation in a documentation design team to capture the diverse applications of Art of Hosting at the University.

Purpose & Principles

Ten people responded to Sandfort’s general call, sent out to an email list including all those previously trained in Art of Hosting at the University. During three meetings, this design team laid out a vision, articulated the purpose statement, and created the overall design process, applying the [chaordic stepping stone framework](#). The principles this group felt important included:

- The eBook should **free** and as accessible as possible—a contribution to the commons, published under creative commons licensing.
- This project would be about **sharing stories**, not creating a “how to” manual.
- The process should **encourage authentic co-creation**. To the extent that it made sense, we would work face-to-face and collaboratively as a project team.
- The process should **encourage community-building**. We would bookend the project with gatherings of the broader University of Minnesota Art of Hosting community, hosting both a kick-off gathering and a book launch celebration. Similar to the 2012

Cultivating Change eBook, we would create [a companion Wordpress site](#) to stimulate online discussion and community interaction related to the stories and video content.

- Everyone would be **welcomed to contribute** where they feel they could best do so.
- We would keep the **process** moving; attempting to complete the process in a manner akin to the [booksprint](#) approach being used globally to collaboratively author open source textbooks.

As a result of implementing these principles, we moved from initial meeting about the concept to full publication of the eBook and companion website in less than six months. We did so by leveraging the power of the community of Art of Hosting practitioners, creating working groups for events, marketing, technology, and content.

Prototyping the Technology & the Stories

Even since the 2012 eBook had been published, more eBook publishing platforms had entered an already crowded marketplace. In keeping with the principles of accessibility and co-creation, the tech team selected a publishing software that would not only functionally allow for collaborative authoring, but also create an eBook based on ePub open format. This would ensure it could be readable on as many platforms as possible, including iPad, Kindle, Nook, Android-based tablets. It also meant that video and audio could not be embedded directly in the eBook, but would instead have to be directed to through the use of hyperlinks.

To begin, the design team thought it best to create a prototype eBook, with an introduction and three chapters (with multimedia content) during April. This helped the team familiarize itself with the selected eBook and website development software (i.e., Sigil/Calibre and Wordpress, respectively), enabling them to draft simple submission guidelines for authors, and provided a tangible example of what was being co-created to inspire storytelling broadly.

In May, the design team issued an invitation to all University of Minnesota employees trained in Art of Hosting. This invitation not only welcomed community members to submit a story but invited all community members to support the creative process by participating in a kick-off gathering. The purpose of this gathering was to help individuals and authoring teams practice sharing their story. The gathering was hosted by members of the design team as a modified [Proaction Café](#), allowing storytellers to share their ideas, and further develop their ideas and outline their stories through focused small group conversations. Twenty people attended to share their questions and insights with others in the community.



Community members gather in May 2013 to share their story ideas

Writing & Editing

Following this gathering, authors were given two weeks to draft their stories and an offer to be paired with other community members serving as writing coaches. The original design team served a key organizing function, reaching out to colleagues whom they knew to be practicing hosting to invite them to submit stories. After two weeks, 20 stories were uploaded to a shared Google drive folder to which all authors and design team members were given access.

An editorial team of six “content weavers” gathered to read the stories to provide additional feedback to authors, determine the book’s flow, draft framing text for each of the book’s sections, and overall continuity. Authors were given an additional week to incorporate final edits before they were loaded into the eBook software and the companion Wordpress site.

Licensing & Distributing

The involvement of the University libraries was valuable for ensuring effective licensing and distribution. In keeping with the 2012 Cultivating Change eBook, it was determined that a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 license would be desirable, allowing end users to utilize materials in the eBook as long as the materials were attributed to the authors. The University Libraries acquired and provided a permanent URL for hosting and distribution of the eBook. The eBook was also converted from the ePub format (i.e., iPads, Nooks, etc.) to the Amazon Kindle format for the widest possible distribution. Accounts were created on iTunes, Google Books, and Amazon Kindle, as well as on public libraries’ open source systems (e.g., OverDrive, GOBI, etc.) and databases (e.g., ERIC, Google Scholar).

A marketing and distribution plan was developed and initially implemented by the design team. We connected with University Relations to share this news with the University community broadly, as well as reached out to the Art of Hosting community both regionally and internationally, and the higher education community. A conversation campaign was initiated cultivatingchange.wp.d.umn.edu/hostingconversations in which one of the eBook stories and a [powerful question](#) are sent out via social media to stir up conversation. A series of in-person gatherings around the themes of the stories has also been envisioned as an avenue for co-learning and community building among anyone interested in the practice of Art of Hosting across the University of Minnesota and regionally.

In Conclusion

Just as the team of editors and contributors to the 2012 Cultivating Change in the Academy eBook left a roadmap for us to follow, we hope that this epilogue (as well as capturing our process and resources on a team wiki created as a Google site) will provide documentation enough for others interested in using a similar collaborative authoring and eBook publishing method to share their stories. We are happy to have a conversation with anyone interested.

In keeping with the [Four-Fold Practice](#) this book truly was the result of a community being present to what is emerging and possible, participating in meaningful conversation about what

we're learning, hosting each other in sharing stories and co-creating this eBook. As with the original Cultivating Change eBook and any hosting experience, this was a result of shared leadership in which many individuals were willing to contribute their skills and wisdom while exploring their own learning edge. We hope this project inspires many at the University of Minnesota and other institutions of higher education to explore new ways to enrich the work. We also hope this project contributes to the dialogue among the community of Art of Hosting practitioners both regionally and internationally.

Acknowledgements

From Leah Lundquist & Jodi Sandfort

First and foremost, we thank the 2012 Cultivating Change eBook team who not only inspired us but also generously shared a roadmap for us to follow. They also welcomed us to co-brand, acknowledging the importance of harnessing both virtual and human technologies in cultivating change in the academy.

We deeply appreciate the contributions of our [authors](#)—those courageously practicing Art of Hosting with a beginner's mind and willing to deeply reflect and share back their learnings. These people are truly passionate about the University's mission and are working day-in and day-out to make it a transformational place to learn and work. And they took the time to author a story on an abnormally short timeline. To this, we owe a great deal of appreciation.

We also owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the project design team. Without their creativity, enthusiasm, and organizing, this book simply would not have happened. Though the initial call was only for participation in three project design meetings, many of these individuals stuck with the project through its entirety, contributing as authors, gathering hosts, and serving as content weavers. This team proved what powerful results can come from co-creation.

We also thank the copyedit and technical support provided by Abram Anders, Meghan Krause, Angela Stehr, and Kristen Mastel. We appreciate the beautiful graphic design work provided by Sandra Wolfe Wood, inspired in part by the graphic work of Joel Dickenson for the 2012 Cultivating Change eBook. In Art of Hosting, we talk about making spaces beautiful and welcoming—you have wonderfully hosted our readers in this literary space.

And, in closing, we would like to thank the Bush Foundation whose funding supplemented the many volunteer hours spent on this eBook and whose support of community-powered problem-solving continues to positively impact the region.

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Appendix 1: [Art of Hosting](#) Techniques

Additional resources for many of these techniques can be found on the International Art of Hosting community of practitioners Ning Site: <http://artofhosting.ning.com/page/core-art-of-hosting-practices>. Some techniques also have dedicated communities of practitioners with unique websites that are listed below.

Engagement Techniques	Explanation & Reference
<p>Circle http://www.peerspirit.com/ http://youtu.be/V9FD_j1s7EU</p>	<p>An ancient technique that has gathered human beings in conversations that fulfill their potential for respectful dialogue, replenishment, and wisdom-based change. Participants literally sit in a circle, around a centerpiece, and take turns speaking one at a time (Baldwin & Linnea, 2010).</p>
<p>World Café http://www.theworldcafe.com/ http://youtu.be/9k2zWhxfOjg</p>	<p>A method for creating a living network of collaborative dialogue around questions through a series of rotating table conversations (Brown & Isaacs, 2005).</p>
<p>Open Space Technology http://www.openspaceworld.org/ http://youtu.be/uEVTdrRUsbw</p>	<p>A meeting process in which the agenda is created by the participants. Those who have a passion and commitment call sessions to explore questions or issues with others. They become the hosts of their sessions. The other participants decide with their feet where they will participate (Owen, 1997).</p>
<p>ProAction Café http://youtu.be/2sWHCLWYa8o</p>	<p>A method for creative and action-oriented conversation where participants are invited to bring their project or ideas for which they need help to manifest in the world. ProAction Café is a blend of World Café and Open Space technologies.</p>
<p>Collective Story Harvesting & Reflective Listening http://www.compassionatelistening.org/</p>	<p>A practice that involves tracking multiple arcs of a single story simultaneously to practice targeted listening and group learning, while reflecting back to the storyteller themes underlying the story that they might have not recognized previously. One format of this technique is <i>Reflective Listening</i> in which groups of four rotate storytelling and three listening roles: listening for facts, listening for feelings, and listening for values.</p>

Appendix 2. [Art of Hosting Frameworks](#)

Additional resources for many of these frameworks can be found on the International Art of Hosting community of practitioners Ning Site: <http://artofhosting.ning.com/page/core-art-of-hosting-practices>. Some frameworks also have dedicated communities of practitioners with unique websites that are listed below.

Engagement Frameworks	Explanation & Reference
Appreciative inquiry http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/	An approach to group processes that focuses on discovering what gives “life” to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. It emphasizes the use of positive questions in order to achieve a strong vision for the future (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).
Harvesting/harvest http://youtu.be/4_ZXRYRnr3M	The process or product of collecting the insights, ideas, or themes during a conversation or meeting. Harvesting may be conveyed verbally, in text, visually, or kinesthetically.
Divergence/convergence	A three-phase pattern that shows up in any inquiry or multi-stakeholder engagement process of generative, goal-seeking conversation (divergence), ideas/needs integration (emergence), and action-oriented, decision-making (convergence). This pattern builds on the Diamond of Participation (Kaner, 2007). For an application of this framework, see “Discoveries of Faith” by Karen Zentner Bacig.
Eight breaths of process architecture	A planning tool that outlines the multiple different phases of divergence and convergence that each group or project goes through. For an application of this framework, see “Hosting an Open Space in the College of Liberal Arts” by Jen Mein.
Community of practitioners	A group focused on work, co-learning, and relationships to move to a deeper community. These domains generate conditions for a group to become more cohesive and to discover new learning and emergent solutions to issues. For an application of this framework, see the Introduction.

<p>Living systems paradigm</p>	<p>The idea that organizations and groups are self-organizing, living units that interact with and respond to their environments. For an application of this framework, see “Discoveries of Faith” by Karen Zentner Bacig.</p>
<p>Four-fold practice http://youtu.be/FWodPL9C1UI</p>	<p>The framework at the center of the Art of Hosting approach: being present or hosting yourself (pre-sensing), practicing conversations (participating), hosting conversations (contributing), and engaging in the community of practice (co-creating). For an application of this framework, see “Leadership Journeys Lead to Hosting an IT Community” by Jen Bentrin and Jen Mein.</p>
<p>Chaordic path & chaordic stepping stones http://youtu.be/B8SNaAH20fk http://youtu.be/2gV3Cb9VaC4</p>	<p>A process that follows the story of our natural world in which form arises out of nonlinear, complex, diverse systems. The chaordic path helps us discover innovative, new solutions to challenges in the place between chaos and order. In this place we access the collective intelligence and wisdom of everyone. The chaordic stepping stones provide a planning tool with the strategic steps that can be taken to balance chaos and order in a group process (Hock, 1999).</p>
<p>Cynefin framework http://youtu.be/N7oz366X0-8</p>	<p>A model used to describe problems, situations, and systems. The model provides a typology of contexts for description, which include: simple, complicated, complex, and chaotic.(Snowden, 2000; Snowden, 2007).</p>
<p>Powerful questions</p>	<p>A foundational concept that stresses the power of questions to open up exploration. In all Art of Hosting techniques, a well-crafted question attracts energy and focuses attention on what matters, they invite inquiry and curiosity, they surface good ideas and possibilities (Vogt, et al, 2003).</p>