

Special Session: See Something, Say Something: Redirecting Stories for Organizational Change

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Abstract— Telling our lived stories and listening to others' stories are part of how we make sense of our lives and build our communities. It is no wonder that stories hold us in such thrall and have power in our relationships and organizations. Both listening to and telling stories are important skills for engineering educators and change agents at any career stage. We also have to learn how to nudge the stories towards the improved future we know can occur. Before we can redirect the stories in our organizations as part of making change happen, we have to learn how to identify, and build meaning from, the stories we hear. This special session builds on data from our active research study of systemic curricular change origins as well as the work of others to demonstrate techniques to nudge stories. Every member of the FIE community, regardless of their institution or job title, is a potential change agent for improving CSET education and needs opportunities to continue building their skill sets. In this special session, we offer a portion of this training in an interactive, hands-on manner within the safe environment of FIE.

Keywords—organizational change, narrative, storytelling

I. INTRODUCTION

Stories etch grooves deep enough for people to follow in the same way that water follows certain paths down a mountainside. And every time fresh actors tread the path of the story, the groove runs deeper...

It takes a special kind of person to fight back, and become the bicarbonate of history. [1]

Stories have been an important part of how humans remember their past and hope for a bright future since long before we created written language. Telling our lived stories and listening to others' stories are part of how we make sense of our lives and build our communities. It is no wonder that stories hold us in such thrall and have power in our relationships and organizations. Both listening to and telling stories are important skills for engineering educators and change agents at any career stage. Listening to the stories others tell provides an important glimpse into the values, beliefs, and assumptions made by those in an organization, and help us make sense of how our own stories fit into a given community.

Learning to 'read' the stories others tell is only the first step. If we really want to be the bicarbonate of history, to be agents of change in CSET (computer science, engineering, and technology) education, we also have to learn how to nudge the

stories towards the improved future we know can occur. Before we can redirect the stories in our organizations as part of making change happen, we have to learn how to identify, and build meaning from, the stories we hear. We build on data from our active research study of systemic curricular change origins [2-5] as well as the work of others (e.g. Schrank's study of stories to understand artificial intelligence [6], Pennebaker's extensive work with guided writing to understand and reframe one's own story [7], Wilson's 30 minute intervention to improve struggling students' performance [8, 9] to demonstrate techniques to nudge stories.

II. SESSION DESCRIPTION

A. Session Goals

The goals of this session include:

- To help CSET Education change agents build their skill set in a safe and encouraging environment.
- For CSET Education change agents to be able to "read" the story of an organization or a situation in order to understand barriers to and opportunities for sustainable improvement.
- For CSET Education change agents to nudge the stories they read to redirect the narrative in the direction of sustainable improvement.

To achieve these session goals, participants will work in small groups to practice finding the stories around them (seeing something) and then nudging the stories they identify in different directions (saying something).

B. Anticipated Audience

The anticipated audience for this workshop consists of all members of the FIE community interested in improving their ability to create and sustain transformational change in CSET education.

C. Expected Outcomes

This special session has expected outcomes both for the participants and for the facilitators. The participants will increase their skill in making change happen in their departments, institutions, and professional communities, thus increasing their ability to achieve the goals we share for improving CSET education. The facilitators will use the results

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of this special session to continue building evidence-based interventions that support CSET education change agents.

D. Reporting Out the Outcomes

This session is part of a series of change agent skill-building opportunities that includes our workshop on Building Your Champion Change Team at FIE 2017 [10]. All of the work in this series will be available to members of the general community through a action guide under development. Participants in the session will be invited to review and provide feedback on the workbook.

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