

Forever Young

*Adults are just bigger people who are still developing and learning.
TC is helping them do that in a range of new ways*

by Jonathan Sapers



A retiring executive wants to help his organization's people learn to be leaders. A principal wants to retain prized faculty, recruit others and help everyone learn on the job. A pharmacist wants to add "diabetes educator" to her list of capacities. A professor wants to convene colleagues from different areas of the institution for a multidisciplinary project.

All of these people, in different ways, are in search of what is most commonly called adult learning—and each of them is finding help at TC, which is fast becoming a center of excellence in this evolving field. A new Global Learning and Leadership Initiatives (GLLI), just being launched by Professor of Education Victoria Marsick and Associate Professor of Education Eleanor Drago-Severson with backing from a TC Provost's Investment grant, will focus initially on K-12 educators, though it will eventually serve other audiences. The Columbia Coaching Certification Program (CCCP)—a partnership between TC and the Executive Education Division of the Columbia Business School led by Terry Maltbia, a faculty member in TC's Department of Organization and Leadership—meets corporate needs, with more than 170 students having already participated from Cisco, NewMont Mining (a Fortune 500 company), LEGO, Mercedes-Benz, FranklinCovey, NRG Energy, Kimberly-Clark, McKinsey, Genentech, Wells Fargo and the U.S. Department of State, among other organizations. The online diabetes education course for that pharmacist is also just getting off the ground, the result of efforts by Kathleen O'Connell, TC's Isabel Maitland Stewart Professor of Nursing Education, and Joyce Vergili, a nutrition education graduate student, together with John Allegrante, Professor of Health Education and the College's new Deputy Provost. And within TC's Gottesman Libraries, the Creative Solutions arm of a unit called EdLab, created two years ago by library director Gary Natriello, the Ruth L. Gottesman Professor of Educational Research, is trying to help collaborative teams (including O'Connell and Vergili) conduct and document their projects, with the goal of fostering organizational learning at TC and beyond.

To get a handle on it all, *TC Today* spoke separately with Marsick, Drago-Severson, Maltbia, O'Connell, Allegrante, Natriello and Lyle Yorks, Associate Professor of Adult & Continuing Education, whose interests span several of these areas.

K-12 EDUCATION

WHY HAS ADULT LEARNING BECOME SUCH A HOT COMMODITY?



VICTORIA MARSICK: In 1972, the former French Prime Minister Edgar Faure led production of a far-sighted UNESCO report, *Learning to Be*, which foretold a future of "lifelong learning" and "recurrent education"—a world where people would need to learn from cradle to grave, both through formal education and informal learning. Today, people *live* lifelong learning—and it's not just corporations offering professional development and learning opportunities to attract and retain top talent. Many European countries are establishing systems of recurrent education and seeking ways to provide credit for learning gained through experience, and thus recognize it in ways similar to credentialing and degree programs.



ELEANOR DRAGO-SEVERSON: A whole family of development theories have come out in the past 35 years, changing our understanding of the way adults learn and grow. Until fairly recently, many people considered development to be essentially complete at age 18 or 21. In other words, once a person became an adult, they were considered to be—and expected to be—*all grown up*. In fact, what has been found is that adulthood can be a period of significant growth and development just like childhood or adolescence. When I went to graduate school, I didn't even know there was a field called adult development. Most school folks—if you talk to principals and assistant principals—have never had a course on theories of adult development or theories of adult learning; it's all new and much needed. When I work with school leaders, they constantly talk about how much they need to learn about how to support adult development in their schools. Why? Because schools and school

systems are becoming more complex, and the demands educators face require more from everyone. I've found that this desire to grow is a common yearning around the globe.

WHAT IS AN IDEAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR ADULTS?



LYLE YORKS: Adults can develop a range of new capacities, and they can grow to see themselves increasingly as independent actors and to understand the nature of the world's complexity. But not all adults do.

It really depends on whether their learning experiences are ones in which they and their educator operate as co-learners—engaging with each other, helping to support each other—and whether they were given the chance to reflect on their experiences.

ELEANOR DRAGO-SEVERSON: In order to grow and develop, people need to have both high-level support in place and high-level challenges. People really do want to grow and they will if they're in an environment in which they're being developmentally supported and challenged. Do you remember Ibsen's *A Doll's House*? When Nora is trying to tell her husband that she needs to leave because she needs to find herself? And he asks her, 'Can't you just find yourself while you're here?' It's a gut-wrenching scene because the environment they've shared no longer holds the new person she's becoming.

So at GLLI, we're hoping principals, assistant principals and teachers will come in teams, so that they can develop a shared language and understanding of how to support adult learning and development. We'll offer them a range of perspectives on how to do that and also provide them with a space to reflect and apply those ideas to personal action plans. We think that this will enable them to actually go back and implement the ideas in their schools.

VICTORIA MARSICK: For adults, learning often happens outside of classroom environments—as principals work with teachers and other adults in the school environment, for example. So effective organizations create a learning environment and a culture of learning that supports that. Perhaps they find ways to design work so that people can learn as they're addressing work challenges. We're thinking of our role at the GLLI as helping people build learning communities,

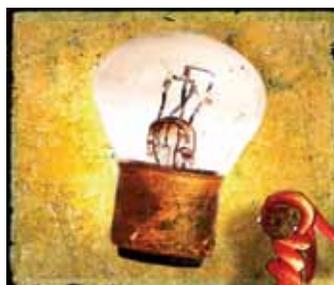
modeled after communities of practice or interest, that nurture continuous learning among natural interest groups. We use an action research model in which people experiment with new practices and work together to understand the impact of their interventions so they can fine-tune practices, leverage supports in the organizations to get better results and address barriers to success.

Another key emphasis of our work is transformative learning, or helping adults examine fundamental beliefs and assumptions that shape the way they make meaning and view the world.

WHAT NEW KINDS OF CHALLENGES ARE PEOPLE FACING? WHAT NEW KINDS OF SKILLS OR STRATEGIES DO THEY NEED TO ACQUIRE?

ELEANOR DRAGO-SEVERSON: The world is becoming more complex. Ronald Heifetz [an expert on learning leadership at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government] uses the terms 'technical' and 'adaptive' challenges to distinguish between two sorts of problems we face today. Technical challenges are challenges for which, even if I don't know how to solve them, I can hire an expert who does. But adaptive challenges, which are becoming increasingly prevalent, are challenges for which neither the problem nor the solution is immediately clear. Learning is required. In other words, what is needed is the *developmental* capacity to live or learn your way through the ambiguity and complexity such challenges create. These kinds of adaptive changes require us, as adults, to be able to manage complexity and ambiguity. Research has shown that most adults need to grow and develop in order to be able to manage adaptive challenges adaptively. So I define adult development as increases in our cognitive, affective or emotional, and interpersonal capacities that enable us to better manage the complexity of work, leadership and life. Supporting adult development is critical in today's world since it can help us do that better and also help us to manage adaptive challenges adaptively.

For example, I was recently in Amman working with a group of 400 school leaders who teach in American schools. An adaptive challenge they face is that their schools have grown so large and they have so many kids and so many expats who come over and want their kids to go to school in that part of the world, that they've begun to be short on teachers. It's





never been the case before—they always had a surplus—but they started last year short by about 500 teachers. Another example of an adaptive challenge is the accountability required by No Child Left Behind. Not all students start out at the same place, not all teachers teach under the same conditions. Some people say you can pin down teacher effectiveness to a number, but what does that number really mean? Supporting adult development connects to increases in student achievement. So development is really about perspective-taking—growing our capacities to take bigger and different perspectives on ourselves, others, systems and the world. And the broader my perspective—on you, me, us, our team, our school, our society, our system, how it connects with other societies in the world—the more able I’m going to be to take in, prioritize, be responsible for, reflect upon and manage not only my own life, but help other people to grow and develop as well.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

WHAT IS ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING?



GARY NATRIELLO: At the library, we start with the very Deweyan premise that adults learn in the context of action, when something is important to their lives. People discover for themselves when something makes sense for them. And we try to share the knowledge that’s generated when people do that in groups. We work from a networked perspective. How do networks of people learn from one another and how do the different people within a particular network learn from one another? We look at the kinds of environments that lead to unplanned learning. We ask how we can create environments where people interact and how we can make learning of that kind richer than it might otherwise be. And a big part of that is helping to gather the right people around the table. In composing groups, we try to ensure that everyone has something to contribute and everyone will take something away.

WHY IS GROUP LEARNING IMPORTANT?

GARY NATRIELLO: Most of us, if asked to innovate, have a steep learning curve. We have to learn new content, but also new processes and new ways of learning. Take me. I’ve been in the Sociology of Education program for years. I’ve run and participated in a program. You’d think I’d know how to create one. But, no, there’s a great deal for me to

“Adulthood can be a period of significant growth and development, just like childhood or adolescence.”

~ ELLEN DRAGO SEVERSON

learn in each new instance, from developing a program in a current way as a piece of the curriculum, to understanding finances, internal governance processes that weigh in, how state regulatory rules might affect things. And if all I’ve done is run my own program, there’s no way I’d know that.

So if I want to innovate, how do I get the learning I need? I find the best people on and off campus.

WHY IS A UNIVERSITY LIBRARY THE PLACE TO FOSTER ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING?

GARY NATRIELLO: The library is the ultimate adult learning tool, but the needs it addresses have changed. In the old days, if someone came to us with a particular question or problem, the way to address it would have been to go into the stacks and pull out books. We still do that, but people increasingly don’t need that done for them. So now, we help address the question: What different people, what different kinds of expertise and experiences, would you like at the table for your project or question? For example, we’re working with Carole Saltz and the Teachers College Press to think about where book publishing is going—particularly in the digital realm, and particularly in the areas the Press serves. Who are the potential consumers, how are people getting information that used to be in books, are books still a solution, are people experimenting with e-book readers, is the packaging going to be different in the future? It’s hard for one person to think of all the right questions and answer them, but with a group, it’s easier to imagine.

DID YOU KNOW?



The field of special education was created at TC by Elizabeth Farrell, who also inspired creation of the organization that became the Council for Exceptional Children and created the Individualized Education Plan now required for all special education students.

And we'd do that for any group at the college. We're also working with Lyle Yorks, who helps people rethink how they're doing staff development for corporations and other organizations. In this case, these clients are interested in thinking about what to do in an online environment. Lyle is the expert they'd go to, and we host the effort and draw on Lyle and other experts for particular tasks at hand. We're suited to this role, because we've had the experience of people



within and outside the College using our digital archives to explore and collaborate around knowledge.

SO YOU'RE SORT OF LIKE A RAND OR A MCKINSEY?

GARY NATRIELLO: Yes, those are good examples. But given who and where we are, we take a particular, education-oriented perspective. McKinsey will give you a business perspective. We'll give you perspectives from education—we'll give you the most powerful and well-aligned perspectives from the TC community and beyond.

LEARNING IN THE CORPORATE WORLD

WHAT DOES LEARNING LOOK LIKE IN CORPORATIONS—AND WHY HAVE THEY BEGUN CARING MORE ABOUT EDUCATING THEIR EMPLOYEES?

LYLE YORKS: In the past, someone higher up in a corporation would decide a group of people needed certain skills and would hire a talking head to do a presentation. Everyone would listen, take notes and pretend this was a productive thing. But—particularly in today's world of intensifying global complexity—adults need to be able to think critically. To be a functioning citizen you have to be able to learn through problems. Corporations have realized they need to support their employees in acquiring these skills—but they're also increasingly realizing that unless adults see a connection between what is being offered to them and what they need, they won't see the relevance and will just go through the motions. So it's become a priority in a wide range of different occupations

to make learning opportunities available that people understand they need.



TERRY MALTBI: In 1996, there was a book by Robert Kaplan and David Norton called *The Balanced Scorecard*, which for the first time described the four pillars of business as financials, operational excellence, customer intimacy and learning. For a book about business and leadership to say that learning is one of the four pillars really set the foundations, and indeed, one of the reasons we launched the coaching certification program was the growing evidence of support for coaching in organizations. Annual spending on coaching increased from \$1 billion in 2004 to \$2.4 billion in 2006, with more than sixty percent of organizations intending to increase usage in their five-year plans. Executive coaching is increasingly viewed as a perk, and we've seen steadily less use of executive coaching for remedial situations and more of a focus on using it to develop and retain high-potential, high-flying employees.

SO FOSTERING THAT KIND OF LEARNING ACROSS DIFFERENT FIELDS STILL INVOLVES TARGETING LEADERS IN ORGANIZATIONS?

TERRY MALTBI: The people in our program either want to be a 'professional executive and organization coach' or to include that capacity as part of a broader practice. For example, we've had people who work for major executive search firms such as Korn/Ferry International interested in using coaching to help newly hired executives get a quick start. We've had attorneys wanting to add a more collaborative, coaching dimension to their practice. And we've even had medical doctors committed to using a coaching approach for the business dimension of their practice or to help other physicians with similar transitions.

The client base for our participants varies by sector, yet in general our coaches work with leaders and managers in organizations, supervisors, high-potentials, high-performers, directors, vice presidents, general managers, department heads, chiefs of staff, chief operating officers, division heads, principals, school heads and superintendents. These are all one-on-one coaching clients. It is also not uncommon for our coaches to work with leaders and their direct reports or with senior leadership teams such as executive committees and boards of directors.



PEOPLE THINK OF TC AS EDUCATING TEACHERS. DOES FOCUSING ON THE BUSINESS WORLD REALLY FIT WITH OUR MISSION?

TERRY MALTBYA: Look at the names of some of our buildings. Thorndike was one of the early people who said that learning is a social process and that it's important to make connections between learning and experience in any field of endeavor. He was saying that should take place with others and involve learning how to reflect and ask colleagues critical questions. That's just as important in the business world as it is in other areas.

HEALTH EDUCATION

WHY DOES IT MAKE SENSE FOR TC TO FOCUS ON PROMOTING HEALTH EDUCATION AMONG ADULTS—AND WHY DIABETES IN PARTICULAR?



JOHN ALLEGRANTE: When you look a decade or more out, there's no question what the U.S. population will look like. There will be very different demographics. In all likelihood, Caucasians will no longer constitute the majority. California is already there, and by the time we have completed the 2010 census, Arizona, Texas and Florida are likely to look similar, perhaps with no single majority, but with minorities together comprising a majority. If you couple that with changing disease patterns among native Americans, Latinos and African Americans, you begin to see how the major chronic disease killers and disablers will emerge as the driver of costs in our health care system. Diabetes and other obesity-related conditions will be at the top of the list. In fact, over the past 30 years we've seen a doubling of overweight and obesity in school-age children, and later in life those same people will suffer from lesions for heart disease, hypertension and so on. This will place a major strain on the health care system, and the long-term costs, which will reside with the treatment and management of these chronic diseases, will be enormous.

So we need a new focus in medicine, one in which the professionals who work most closely with patients in their day-to-day lives—nurse practitioners and pharmacists—become skilled in behavioral self-management of chronic disease. There's a lot of interest on the part of the American Association of Diabetes Educators [AADE], with whom Professor O'Connell of our department worked, in prepar-

ing a larger group of people to do this at the master's degree level. So with backing from our Provost's Investment Fund here at TC, Kathleen has been working on a master's degree program in diabetes education and management.

WHAT DOES DIABETES LOOK LIKE, FOR PATIENTS AND PRACTITIONERS?



KATHLEEN O'CONNELL: The most common form of diabetes is type 2, which people can develop at any age. Whereas people with type 1 diabetes don't produce insulin, people who suffer from type 2 diabetes over-produce insulin, but there are problems with their insulin receptors. As a result, they have a high level of glucose in their blood, which can ruin their kidneys and their eyes and can cause vascular diseases, heart attack and stroke. It can also cause neurological diseases that lead to people getting injuries they don't know about because they've got no sensory nerves left. These people—and all people with diabetes—need to be taught to function, in essence, as their own pancreases, by regularly testing and regulating their blood sugar levels. And they have to learn how to modify their diet, because they can't eat too many carbohydrates.

HOW WILL THE NEW TC PROGRAM WORK?

KATHLEEN O'CONNELL: We are proposing to offer people who already have clinical training—nurses, nutritionists, pharmacists, physicians assistants and diabetes educators—online courses leading to a master's degree in diabetes education. This master's degree will, it is hoped, prepare them to get certified and therefore to have their services covered under Medicare and possibly other health insurers.

We are developing five new courses, which we'll put together with existing health education and adult education courses at the college. We want our participants to emerge with knowledge of the pathogenesis and physiology of diabetes; the management of patients and treatment of their illness; of the socio-cultural contexts for diagnosis, management and treatment; and the conduct of advocacy at the national, state and local levels.

Nobody else in the country—that we know of—is doing this. Part of what makes us unique is that our target group is multidisciplinary. Nursing schools, for example, would only want to be involved with nurses, and even then they would be offering a more general degree in medical surgical nursing or something like that. Our people are focused on diabetes. 🍌