

Catalyzing a Universal Culture for Life- Transformative Education at UConn: A Roadmap to Scale Across the University

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UConn

What is Life-Transformative Education?

Transformational learning:

- process of deep, constructive, and meaningful learning
- goes beyond simple knowledge acquisition
- supports critical ways in which learners consciously make meaning of their lives

What is Life-Transformative Education?

Education that simultaneously transforms lives and prepares students for satisfying careers:

Identity: Discover who they are and their place in the world

Agency: Awareness of what they can do with what they learn

Empowerment through having successfully applied knowledge to authentic problems in the world

Purpose: Societal consciousness and intrinsic motivation to use what they learn for the greater good

What is Life-Transformative Education?

Two specific learning experiences develop these three characteristics:

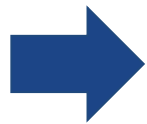
- 1) authentic learning experiences in which students apply what they have learned to real world situations, often with real clients and professional mentors, and
- 2) emotionally supportive mentors, the kind of mentor who not only advises and encourages but who shares a genuine interest in each student's hopes and dreams.

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The University of Connecticut is committed to providing all its students with a life-transformative education to prepare them to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Task Force:

- a team of visionary leaders from all levels of the university
- leading effort of creating grassroots, bottom-up change with institutional support



Make life-transformative education the foundation of UConn's educational philosophy

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Current success:

- Over 45% of first-year class involved in a Learning Community
- 9 out of 10 first-year students take a First Year Experience course
- 94% first-year retention rate
- 75% of graduates with positive outcomes reported participating in experiential learning prior to graduation
- Average graduation in just 4.2 years
- Innovative programs in specific fields, e.g. 5-year NSF grant for “Redefining Public Engagement at the University of Connecticut: Studying the Impact of an Innovative STEM Service Learning Model on the University Community”

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Identifying our problem:

- Many individual areas of excellence across the university where students are already having life-transformative educational experiences
- How can we scale this up to make sure that every one of our 24,000 undergraduates has a life-transformative educational experience without micromanaging or creating a top-down directive?

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Institutional structure:

- Creation of a *Life-Transformative Education Task Force*, including working groups to examine how we can best implement LTE for all students
- Creating a cohort of LTE leaders who will visibly and enthusiastically help colleagues engage with LTE on a peer-to-peer basis



UConn's LTE Task Force

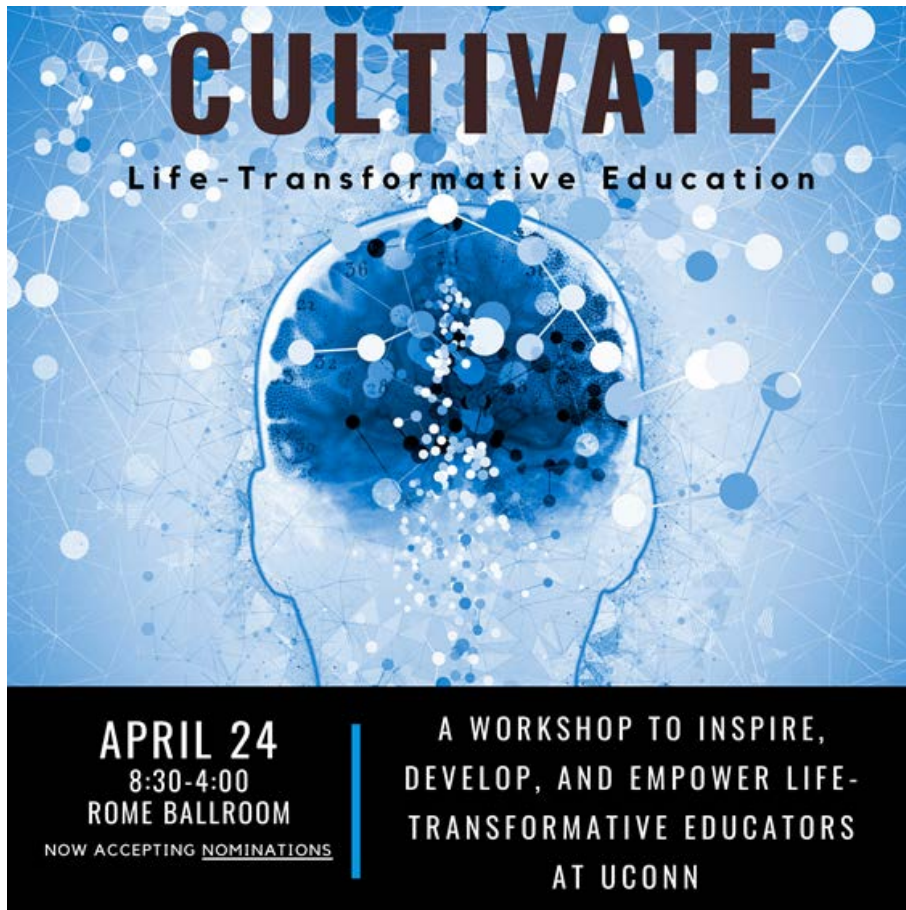
Task force includes:

- Assistant / Associate / Full Professors
- Assistant / Associate Professors in Residence
- Staff involved in first year programs, learning communities, Q-Center, libraries, Excellence in Teaching & Learning
- Student representation
- Administration (Provost's Office, Deans, Department Heads, Univ. Senate)
- Representation from diverse departments (including Ecology & Evolutionary Bio; Educational Leadership, Asian & Asian American Studies Institute; Physiology & Neurobiology; Civil & Environmental Engineering; Animal Science; Pharmacy Practice; Digital Media and Design; Literatures, Cultures, & Languages; Natural Resources & the Environment)





Cultivate: A Workshop to Inspire, Develop, and Empower Life-Transformative Educators at UConn

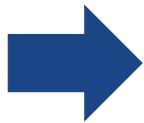


- Our framework for change is based on *listening louder* – our initial event will allow our first cadre of faculty & staff leaders to share their vision for LTE with one another and then bring peers into small group meetings as a second stage
- We will bring a visionary leader to campus to help *empower ideas* for our LTE leaders, helping build the energy and enthusiasm to be a volunteer army to build a culture of LTE at an institutional scale

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Phase 1:

- approximately 150 life-transformative educators, including faculty and staff, will participate in an **initial day-long collaborative workshop in spring 2020 (April 24)**
- creating a visible community of leaders
- follow-up series of peer-led groups



Effect change by inspiring and empowering life-transformative educators at all levels of the university to embrace this opportunity and to provide grassroots leadership for change