



SAINT MARY-OF-THE-WOODS COLLEGE

“Thinking Together” – A Virtual Community of Practice Approach to a Graduate Certificate in Women’s Leadership Program

Jennie Mitchell, Lamprini Pantazi, Dan Hiltz, Eric Hubbard, Emily Phelps
Saint Mary of the Woods College

ABSTRACT

In the first Saint Mary of the Woods College Community of Practice (CoP), five facilitators worked together to build the elements for a dynamic Community of Practice. Originally this CoP was scheduled as a hybrid-emersion model (with a weekend of bonding activities, 8 weeks of online, and an ending weekend of presentations and celebrations). Because of COVID-19, the team of facilitators built a comparable level of emersion experience, *virtually*. Every detail was considered from ice-breakers (wheel decide) to lively and creative orientations, to guest speakers who used a polling system (Mentimeter) to bring a word cloud to life, to a speaker who challenged the GCWL leaders to take a journey of self-discovery. The certificate program ended with a culminating project – a **virtual poster show** complete with audio, video, and Zoom breakout rooms to answer questions about their journey. In the final webinars, it was clear that this CoP was “thinking together,” a process where a CoP will mutually guide each other in a collaborative learning process.

[Link to Video](#)

CONTACT

Jennie Mitchell, Ph.D.
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College
Email: jmitchell@smwc.edu
Phone: 812 535 1136
Website: www.smwc.edu

Community of Practice-Defined



Your Journey Begins - Virtually!

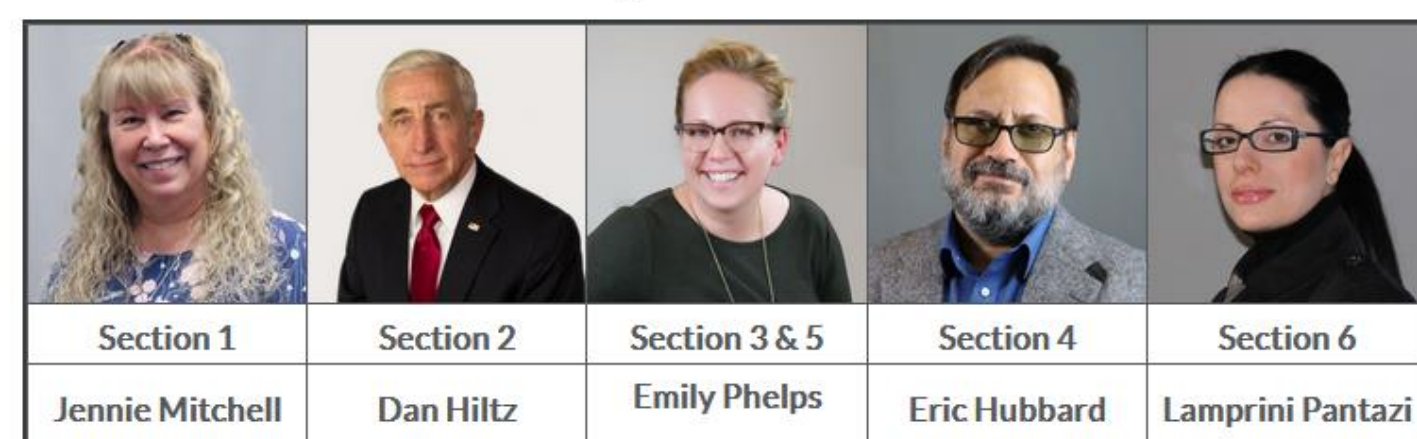
WELCOME!

This certificate program is built in a modular formation where all faculty and students will interact within a one-course shell. This structure is intentional because our intent is to build a strong community of practice. The community of practice (CoP) is “defined as a network of people who try to achieve common goals or solve common problems by harnessing knowledge and expertise” (Lester, J. & Kezar, A. 2017, p. 18). A CoP is an effective strategy to encourage innovation and build a network to support each other’s learning.

By structuring the certificate program in a single course shell, YOU also have the advantage of easy access to all course materials.

This CoP is led by five facilitators who are thrilled to be a part of this journey.

Meet your Section Facilitators!



Virtual Guest Speakers

3:30 - 4:30 p.m. Guest Speaker - Dr. Vicky Gordon



Dr. Vicky Gordon is an authority on leadership and organizational development. For over 30 years, she has served as a senior executive coach at such leading companies as PepsiCo, CNA Insurance, American Hospital Association, and Dell. Vicky’s leadership experience includes serving as Interim President and CEO of the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC) from 2016-2017. Her privately held corporation ranked in the top 3% of women-owned businesses in the US based on revenues. Prior to starting the Gordon Group Inc., she served as assistant professor at Loyola University of Chicago. Her leadership advice has appeared in the Chicago Tribune, the Harvard Management Update and Harvard Business Review on-line. Vicky is currently finalizing her book on what it takes to be an inspiring and influential leader in the 21st century.

Please feel free to visit my website at www.drivickygordon.com



Dr. Joe Albano has been observing workers and work for more than 35 years. He’s been using those observations to help businesses, professionals, and communities run more effectively and efficiently while improving personal happiness and quality of place.

With degrees in engineering, management, and organizational psychology, Dr. Joe has experience in virtually every industry. He has worked with non-profits, pre-revenue startups, scale-ups, organizational transitions (generational changes, change of control, leadership transitions, investor onboarding), and more than half of the companies that make up the Dow-Jones Industrial Average. What he brings to the table is new and eye-opening!

Website: <https://www.logika-usa.com/about-dr-joe/>

As a guest speaker, Dr. Joe will be talking about *The New Work*

RESULTS

Why was this considered a Community of Practice?

Facilitators led their assigned section of the 8-week Graduate Certificate Women’s Leadership Program (GCWL). But facilitators participated beyond their sections. Over five weeks, five students and five facilitators generated over, 71 original posts, and 223 responses. You might think the responses were mostly from students, but that’s not the case. The responses were 50% students and 50% facilitators. And the 16 webinars kept us connected in new ways.

Rich discussions are at the heart of a Community of Practice.

Students and facilitators shared knowledge; but with more depth, sharing an investment of identity, an openness to sharing vulnerabilities, and a willingness to share their journey of self-discovery.

By the final webinar, it was clear our GCWL CoP was “**thinking together**,” a process where a CoP will mutually guide each other in a collaborative learning process.

SECTION	DESCRIPTION OF GCWL SECTION
1	Leveraging Data Visualization to Communicate Across the Gender Gap
2	Building Leadership through Exceptional Self-Awareness
3	Building a Supportive, Knowledgeable, and Empowering Network
4	Understanding Diversity and Inclusion Beyond Skin-Deep Differences
5	Owning the Room, Confidence, Negotiation, and Self-Advocacy

Table 1. Sections for the Graduate Certificate in Women’s Leadership

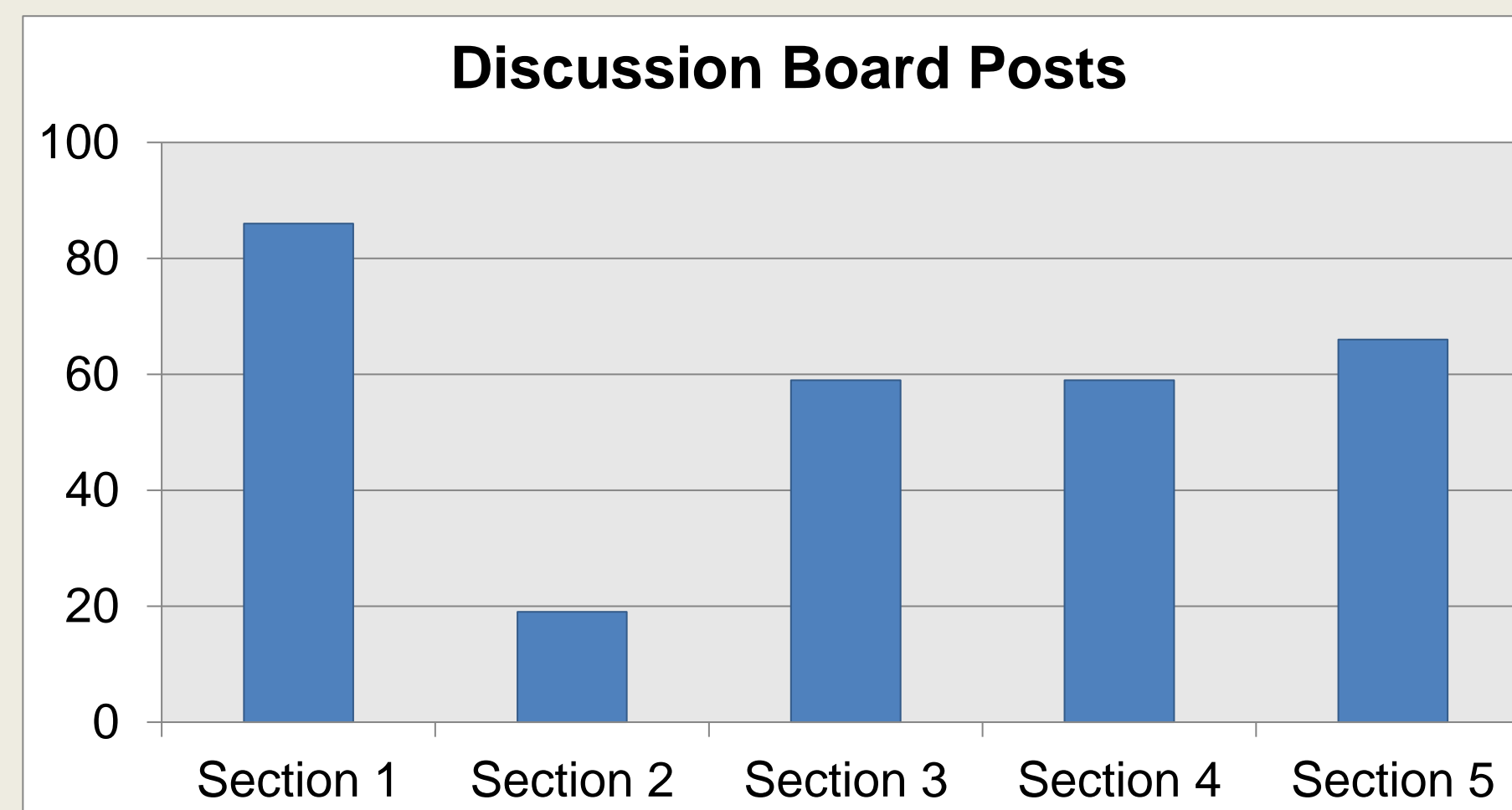
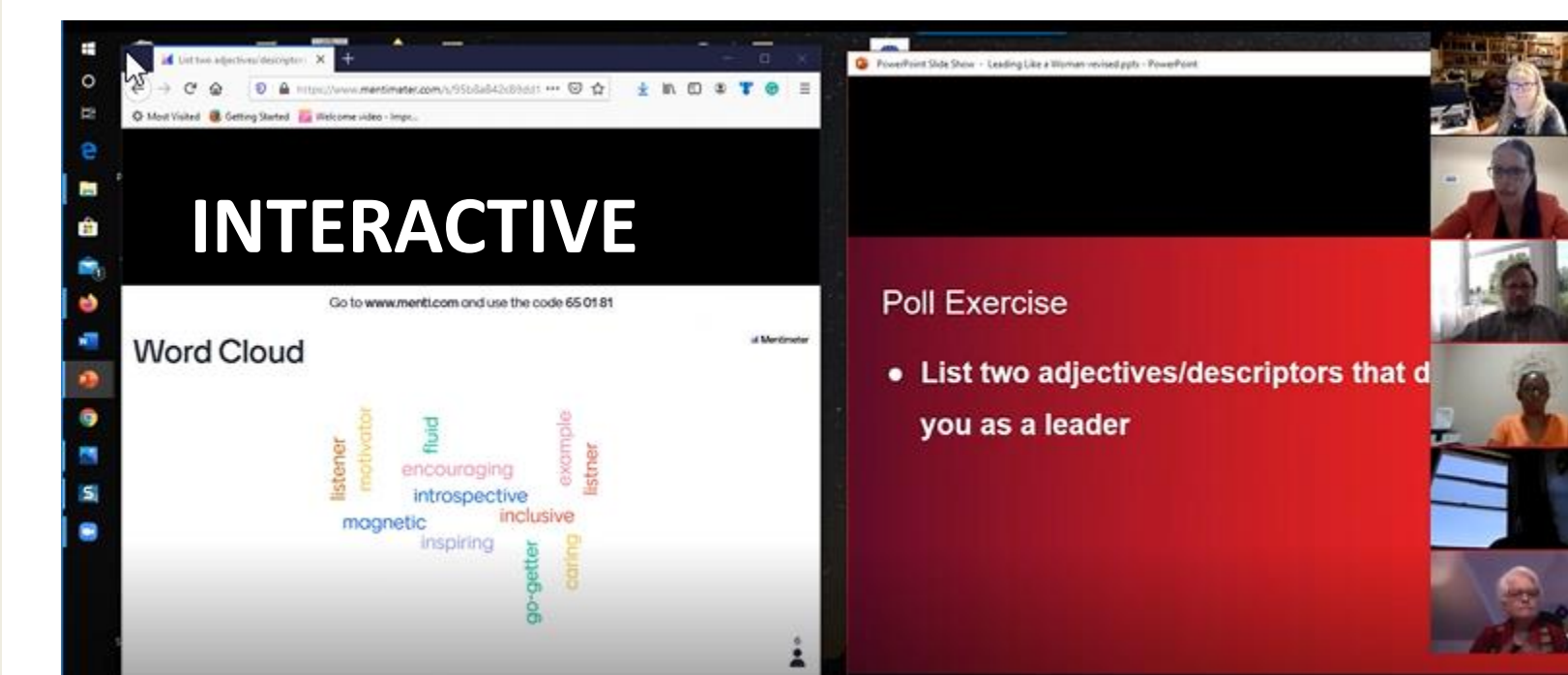


Chart 1. Five weeks of Discussion Board Posts

LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY

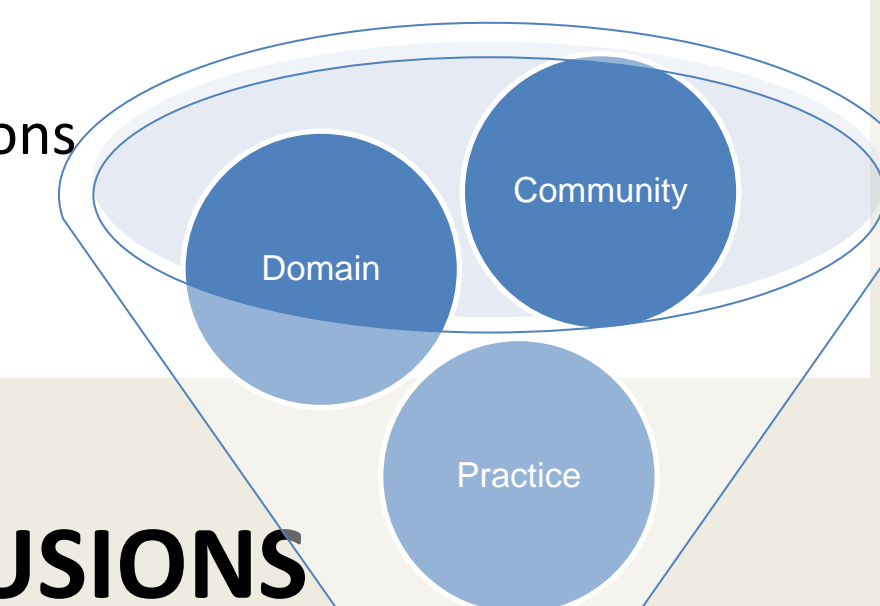
16 WEBINARS

- ✓ One ice-breaker (wheel decide)
- ✓ Two guest speakers
- ✓ One live polling session to build a word cloud about leadership characteristics
- ✓ Over 50 resources shared



ENGAGING & PROFESSIONAL CONTENT

- ✓ RSS feed that pulls articles from SMWC virtual library
- ✓ A padlet for poster show order
- ✓ Badging
- ✓ Video notes to introduce sections
- ✓ Daylight HTML5 templates
- ✓ Virtual Poster Show



CONCLUSIONS

By the final webinar, it was clear our GCWL CoP was “**thinking together**,” a process where a CoP will mutually guide each other in a collaborative learning process.

Thinking Together

REFERENCES

- Gordon, V. (2020, Aug. 8). *Leading Like A Woman – Speaking Truth to Power*. [Virtual Guest speaker]. GCWL. Saint Mary of the Woods, IN
- Albano, J. (2020, Sept 16). *The New Work*. [Virtual Guest speaker]. GCWL. Saint Mary of the Woods, IN