

President's Letter



Welcome to spring! This year, like most, has gone by rather quickly and summer will be here before we know it. I hope you have all had a successful and impactful semester. Our IOSS executive board has been meeting each month, with our primary focus being on planning the annual IOSS conference. This

year's conference will be held November 3 – 4, 2022 at Iowa Lakes Community College in Estherville. We are excited to host this conference once again in person and hope to see you there!

I want to encourage you to submit a nomination for the Outstanding Educator Award. This is a great opportunity to show gratitude to a colleague who has positively impacted both the students they serve and the institution they work at. Also, be sure to inform students about the IOSS Student Scholarship opportunity. This is a \$750 scholarship that is sent directly to the student to be used for college expenses. A link for both forms can be found on our website or our Facebook page.

We are still in need of two or three new members to join the IOSS executive board. Due to employment or department changes, two of our board members have recently stepped down. If you have considered joining our board, in any capacity, now is the time! I would like to thank Amanda Rodenborn and Laura Meyers for their commitment to our board. They will be missed!

Finally, I had the opportunity to attend my first in-person NOSS (National Organization for Student

In this edition

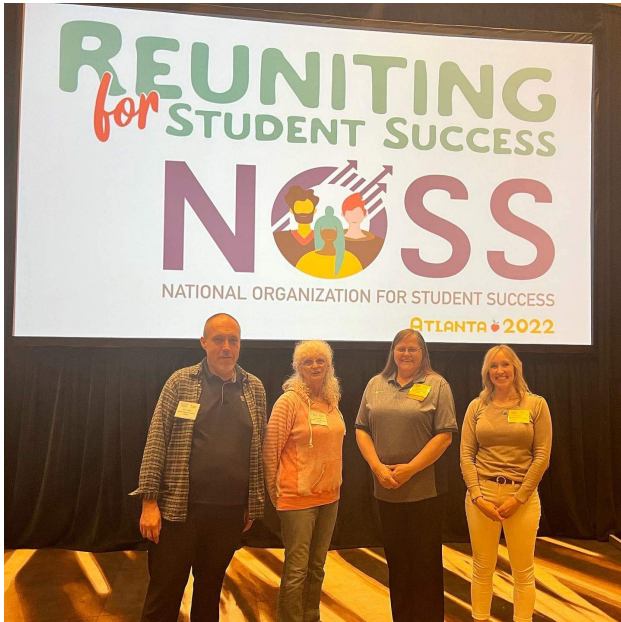
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Success) conference in March. This was an excellent conference that allowed me to learn new strategies and see what is working (and what isn't working) at other institutions. It was also great to have the chance to network with others in the field, from all around the country. Please take time to read through the session recaps in this edition of the Reader's Corner. Also, if you are not a current NOSS member, I would encourage you to become one. The mission of NOSS is to assist education professionals in making a positive difference in the lives of students. NOSS provides many professional development opportunities, free networks related to various topics revolving around student success, and resources for those who work in developmental education, tutoring, advising, etc. Check them out at www.thenoss.org.

I hope you all have a wonderful end to your academic year. Thank you for being an IOSS member!

Molly Struve
IOSS President 2021-2022

NOSS 2022 Conference Highlights



Executive Board members Mike Cagley, Kate Sanders, Bea Houston, and Molly Struve attended the conference in Atlanta and accepted the Outstanding Chapter Award for IOSS.



Mindfulness of Soft Skills

Mindfulness of Soft Skills was one of my favorite experiences at NOSS. My proposal was accepted; the technology gurus were electrifying; the room was packed, and the participants were participating. One of my responsibilities at Western Iowa Tech Community College was to redesign the Workplace Communications course for our students in the technical programs. This presentation highlighted a small portion of this redesign.

The students enrolled in various sections of this course are working to earn degrees in programs ranging from welding and construction trades to cyber-security to early childhood education. Two of the main goals were to create authentic assignments relevant to each of these professions and to engage students with communication skills involving reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking/reflecting. With relevance and skill-building as the focus, one of the more extensive assignments related to soft skills.

Students typically understand they need to demonstrate mastery for the technical skills of their trades. Students overlook the “other” skills employers and customers value...soft skills. These are skills that cannot be taught in the traditional sense. Mastery of soft skills requires deliberate effort on the part of the students to refine and incorporate into their personal, as well as workplace interactions.

Students are provided with a spreadsheet for researching soft skills most requested by employers. The skills students research include work ethic, teamwork, creativity, time management, flexibility, problem-solving, interpersonal relationships, attention to detail, leadership, and verbal, non-verbal, and written communication.

The research requires students to interview at least ten employers to determine the top three soft skills each employer seeks in new employees. Teamwork naturally occurs in the classroom when students request the opportunity to work together to divide the interviews among each other. (In the classroom, this is de-valued as “cheating”. In the real world, this is valued as “collaboration”.) This portion of the assignment requires at least ten days for most students, especially non-traditional students, to complete. Time is also needed during class sessions to allow this collaboration and sharing to flourish. Accountability is rooted in trust that students place in group members to not fabricate their findings.

When the research is completed and results are shared, class time is utilized to determine patterns within and between various professions and discuss commonalities and/or un/expected findings. Each student is required to write a five-paragraph report with a thesis statement identifying three major points or learnings from this work. Various grammar, syntax, and semantics of Standard English are identified, and the paper is evaluated through a 4-point rubric.

Soft skills awareness is not concluded with this research project. These skills are incorporated throughout the rest of the semester in the following ways.

Work ethic/time management: respecting class times and due dates.

Flexibility/time management: re-adjusting meetings/dates, as needed.

Teamwork/interpersonal relationships: group work, think/pair/share.

Attention to detail: revising assignments is allowed and encouraged.

Problem-solving: syllabus quiz w/anticipated obstacles and solutions.

Communication: verbal, non-verbal, written, discussion, critiques...

Leadership: opportunities / encouragement for collaborative work.

The final project involving soft skills is to discuss incorporating those into resumes, job applications, cover letters, and other employment documents. For more information or further discussion, contact Katherine.sanders@witcc.edu

Kate Sanders
Western Iowa Tech Community College

College Algebra Boot Camp: A Pathway to Success?

Presented by: Leslie Davidson-Rossier – University of North Georgia

Like many schools, my college has recently been focused on strategies to assist students who do not test into college-level courses. There are many co-requisite program models available but this session at the NOSS conference presented the idea of a “boot camp” class structure, which is different than the regular co-requisite model that we have all heard so much about.

The goal of this boot camp was to prepare students for college-level math courses, in a very short amount of time. This course was not for credit (i.e., free of charge!) and no grade was awarded. Students in this cohort were selected based on the following criteria: GPA of less than 2.4, did not want to take the placement test or scored too low for college

algebra entry, and had taken a math class prior to or during the covid shutdown.

In this model, instructors worked with students in this cohort for just three weeks, typically four days a week, for up to two hours each day. Students were also asked to watch two instructional videos each night and complete practice problems before class the next day. In order to collect data on progress or success, students took a pretest at the beginning of the course and the same pretest after the three-week course has concluded. On the fourth week of the semester, students began taking the College Algebra course, which lasted for the remainder of the semester.

Results from this program: In Fall of 2020, 6 of 10 students passed the exit placement exam and 5 withdrew from the class. In the Fall of 2021, 10 of 23 passed the exit placement exam and 4 withdrew from the class. With the limited data that has been collected, it is hard to tell if this boot camp style of developmental education is a pathway to success or not. As we all know, there is a myriad of reasons why students may underperform or withdraw from a class so it is hard to pinpoint the main reasons some of these students did not do well. This boot camp style may work well for some institutions, though, and I applaud them for trying something new and keeping data to track this change.

Molly Struve

Iowa Lakes Community College

IOSS President, 2021-2022

5th National Mathematics Summit

I attended the 5th National Mathematics Summit during the period that occupied a kind of pre-conference space before the 46th Annual NOSS Conference: Reuniting for Student Success. On the first day of the summit, I opted for the session

entitled “Institutional Transformation” presented by Kathleen Almy from Almy Education and Pamela Woodbury and Scott Adamson, both from Chandler-Gilbert Community College. At the door into the session, Pamela Woodbury asked me to draw a card from a hand of cards, all face down. I drew the four of clubs and went to a table waiting for the session to begin.

When the session officially began, Scott Adamson directed us to whiteboards spaced roughly evenly on the walls around the room, with our respective whiteboard destinations dependent on the card we had each drawn. So all people who had drawn a two of any suit went to the whiteboard space with a two, and so on. Adamson then directed our attention to juxtaposed car dashboard photos, ostensibly of the same car dashboard at different points in time. At first, the speedometer was blacked out in the photos, with only the odometer and tripmeter visible. The odometer had advanced from 99,999 miles to 100,000 miles, and the tripmeter showed a change from 269.4 mile to 269.6 mile, or a change of 0.2 mile. Then we were allowed to see the speedometer, which appeared constant or near-constant in both photos at 77 miles per hour.

While we were repeatedly encouraged to analyze the photos for differences and develop questions relevant to the photos, ultimately we were asked to calculate how much time had elapsed between the photos. But most importantly, we were also expected to show all our work in coming to an answer while also mathematically justifying every step we took. My partner and I used dimensional analysis to quickly come to the answer of approximately 9.350649 (entire decimal repeating) seconds, which we rounded to 9 seconds while still leaving all our work on the whiteboard. Every other group had an answer of approximately the same value. However, every other group I observed had used the formula $d=rt$ and manipulated the formula for their purposes. No matter the method used, we

all had derived the correct answer with only differences in the rounding.

Further granular detail of the session might be interesting to some readers, but the main point of the detail shared thus far is this: the problem thrust upon us required reasoning based on the evidence available and reliance on knowledge we already had accumulated. This was our introduction to the Teaching for PROWESS approach, based on a National Science Foundation grant focused on PProficiency, OWnership, EngagemenT, and Student Success.

The rest of the session really emphasized active learning in a Teaching for PROWESS model, with the presenters framing much of their approach with the work of Peter Liljedahl in *Building Thinking Classrooms in Mathematics, Grades K-12: 14 Teaching Practices for Enhancing Learning* (2020). However, in emphasizing active learning, Kathleen Almy, CEO of Almy Education, discussed the challenges of making institutional change. Almy has experience in consulting with and aiding institutions during institutional change. The greatest challenge to innovation is the long-term cultural change necessary to support innovation. Even if one manages to get an entire department or large number of faculty, staff, and administration excited and motivated for innovation, the energy will usually result in a great start to the innovation while significant cultural change over time is necessary for innovation to sustain. The latter cultural change is much more difficult to generate than the former energy at launch.

Woodbury, the director of the math department at Chandler-Gilbert Community College, spoke about the challenges specific to her department in getting both administration and faculty on board. Some faculty can be resistant, but Woodbury was in a fortunate position as director in her department. Thus, she essentially hired only those who agreed

with the innovations or who would agree to learn the innovations; she otherwise expected faculty already in the department to support the innovations. Woodbury further got administration to support physical space changes, such as full whiteboards all the way around the rooms used by math faculty. Therefore, all math classrooms could then accommodate students to do activities like the one described. Moreover, the whiteboards generally force students to stand in groups for the work, which also changes dynamics for active learning. Standing creates a less hierarchical space where both students and instructors are standing while also improving the engagement of students when compared to question-and-answer sessions while students are seated.

The session presenters further emphasized that math classes often utilize the “Now, you try it” approach, during which teachers demonstrate how to do a math problem and then ask students to try one. The presenters explained that about half the students just mimic the teacher’s steps without critical thinking or reasoning. Approximately a third of students exhibit one of the following behaviors: lack of motivation, fake understanding, or avoidance of the work. Perhaps twenty percent or so actually apply reasoning. Therefore, if we want at least half our students to apply reasoning when learning and doing math, the traditional “Now, you try it” approach is not the best choice.

In closing, my takeaway from the session was that good math instruction needs to include active learning with problems that force students to apply reasoning while using skills they have learned, but the problems also need to be presented in novel ways that limit the extent to which students simply mimic an instructor from beginning to end. For example, in the exercise at the start, we had to understand the vehicle had traveled 0.2 mile at the speed of 77 miles per hour before we could even begin to solve the problem. Then we had to choose

how we would solve the problem, with most groups choosing the formula $d=rt$ while my group chose dimensional analysis. The planning by teachers for these activities can be time intensive. Even if teachers can find the time for the planning, institutional challenges will likely persist, evident in the following: can every institution be fortunate enough to work with someone like Almy, who understands the logistics of such reforms; Woodbury, who demands new and existing faculty adopt the reforms; and Adamson, who implements the reforms in the classroom effectively?

Mike Cagley

Western Iowa Tech Community College

America Reads 2021-2022



IOSS is pleased to continue our participation in the America Reads program in 2022! We have chosen Duncombe Elementary in Fort Dodge as the recipient for our organization's donations through the summer of 2022.

IOSS members can donate children's books as chosen by teachers and librarians at

Duncombe from this Amazon Wishlist:

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/BV2K0UO45KSQ?ref_=wl_share

IMPORTANT: When checking out, on the *Choose a Shipping Address* page, make sure to select "Stephanie Harvey's Gift Registry Address" so your order will go directly to the contact person at Duncombe.

Student Scholarship

The Iowa Organization for Student Success (IOSS) Executive Board is accepting applications for a student who has excelled in developmental coursework. Please take time to share this scholarship opportunity with students at your school. Below is the link where students will find the information needed to apply for this \$750 scholarship. Applications are due by June 1st.

<https://forms.gle/xCNaYzGe71iGcUNa7>

Outstanding Service to Students Award

We are excited to have the opportunity to celebrate and recognize an educator who demonstrates outstanding service and impacts student success!

We encourage each of our members to review the criteria on the form available on the [Member Resources](#) page of the IOSS website at and nominate a deserving faculty member, staff member, and/or administrator for this honor. You will find the full process and award details, as well as the online application, on the [nomination form](#) at

<https://forms.gle/4mfmFWMQYafT2K1n6>

Submit nominations by June 1, 2022.

Please note that nominees do not have to be current members of IOSS to be eligible for the award.

Take time for your own professional renewal through IOSS and NOSS conferences.

Save the Date!

Fall 2022 IOSS Conference

**Thursday, November 3 –
Friday, November 4**

**Iowa Lakes Community College,
Estherville Campus**

**Reconnect with colleagues
from around the state.**

**Share your triumphs, projects, and
concerns in a breakout session or
roundtable**



Join the IOSS Conversation

- Have you recently attended a conference of another professional organization? Summarize a session relevant to our membership for the *Reader's Corner*.
- Has your institution revamped its placement policies, developmental studies offerings, or academic support program? Provide a quick update.
- Have you located a great academic resource for student or faculty to use? Share the wealth.
- Have you transitioned to a new position or received special recognition for your professional accomplishments? Let us celebrate with you!

To submit articles or information for future editions of the *Reader's Corner*, please send to:

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Katherine.Sanders@witcc.edu

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Stay in Touch with IOSS and NOSS IOSS Website:

Check the IOSS website for 2021 conference updates; student scholarship information; Executive Board contact information; and member resources, including IOSS meeting minutes and materials from conference presentations.

www.dmacc.edu/ioiss

The NOSS website:

<https://thenoss.org/>

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