



Dear HESAL community,

Offering Loving Kindness as Refuge

It is not the perfect, but the imperfect, who have need of love.
It is when we are wounded by our own hands, or by the hands of others, that love should come to cure us -
Else what use is love at all?
-Oscar Wilde¹

In undergrad as an English lit major, I was a huge Oscar Wilde fan. However, I am not writing to discuss Victorian ideals or a passion for literature, but rather to call our attention to a need for love to create refuge from suffering. While love might not be a common topic in higher education, these past few months at UNC have been full of challenges and opportunities that, to me, have called out for open-heartedness. Here in HESAL, we've had many hard conversations about what will be the impact of budget cuts and how can HESAL respond best to changing institutional missions and goals to best serve our students and the profession. I am confident that in the end, these will strengthen the program and how we contribute to our communities. Yet, how we go on this journey to meet our outcomes matters greatly. Amidst all the many institutional conversations and open forums, I have been struck by an absence of greater care and concern for the impact on each of us and our fellow colleagues, both those sitting next to us and those across the institution whom we may not know or understand their experiences. As such, I wish to dedicate this Coordinator newsletter to the topic of loving kindness – and yes, how apropos given it's the month of February.

As I write this, I reflect on many conversations and observations over the last few months where I have witnessed suffering or hurting that shows up in an increased amount of stress, bitterness, and anxiety. I have overheard conversations about trying to protect one's area from cuts, often at the expense of others. I have engaged in discussions with those concerned that they will lose their jobs or who question if they should look for new positions before the cuts come. I have listened to people's doubts about their ability to cover their monthly bills with the increasing health insurance costs. These examples are just some of the suffering that comes from a place of fear of change and the unknown. Perhaps this suffering resonates with you, too.

To process through this suffering and get to a place of compassionate action, I borrow the concept of loving kindness from meditation practices. **Loving kindness** means to foster a kind heart towards yourself, others, and all sentient beings. It is to be a gentle friend. To provide assistance. To show care. To find relief from pain. To offer refuge. We can all think of ways to show care and support for friends. Thus, let's focus on this concept of **refuge** for a moment. When we think of refuge, we may think immediately of offering shelter and protection to those

¹ From Wilde's play, *An Ideal Husband* (1895)

who need it, from outside a country or within our local communities. Refuge is about taking care of, showing compassion for, and offering support to self and others, all with a spirit of love.

Refuge has been on my mind and heart of late for various reasons and from various perspectives. Just the other week in HESA 665 (International), we had an engaging presentation and conversation on the status and experiences of refugees around the world. It was enlightening and heartbreaking. Therefore, I would be remiss not to implore you to consider supporting the non-partisan work of these local organizations, [Immigrant and Refugee Center of Northern Colorado](#), [Bear Pantry](#), and [Weld Food Bank](#) that all offer support and some refuge in our local community.

Yet, the other perspective on refuge I want to highlight is **creating space that offers relief from suffering here in higher education**. Suffering in higher education shows up with worrying, stressing, increased anxieties, and other harmful behaviors that can get exacerbated at times of change and reduced budgets. What refuge or relief can we offer ourselves and others, even if it is only momentary? What about those next to us who are suffering silently inside themselves? How are we showing care for those around us who have been worried about losing their jobs and their security or who are experiencing anxiety over the unknown changes? In higher education and student affairs we often focus our loving kindness on students, but what about a community of care for each other? I ask each of us to reflect on these questions, find ways to connect with others, and create space away from the busyness.

A Call to Loving Kindness

I encourage all of us to shift our focus to that of loving kindness. There are many ways to do this and I offer a few ideas below.

1. **Foster loving kindness within.** When I am in meetings and I start to feel stress and anxiety creeping in, I try to pause and focus on my breathing. I may also repeat a calming or centering mantra – a mantra is just a phrase or sentence repeated to distract the mind from its worries. Regardless of if you practice mindfulness of any kind or not, anyone can engage in repeating a mantra or refrain. The following is a simplified version of a loving kindness mantra that I use to foster peace and compassion:

May I be filled with loving kindness.²

May I be well.

May I be safe and at ease.

May I be happy.

Then it can be turned outward:

May you be filled with loving kindness.

May you be well.

May you be safe and at ease.

May you be happy.

I repeat once or as many times as I need to tap into that feeling of compassion and love.

² This version is taken from Jack Kornfield's (1995), *A Path with Heart: A Guide through the Perils and Promises of Spiritual Life*

2. **Do for others.** Research shows that the act of giving to others aids the giver as much, if not more, than the receiver. With that said, at times of stress I often remind myself to do for others from a place of love and compassion, even though I may want to turn more inward and isolate from the stress. Recently, I realized I was allowing myself to be negatively impacted by the stress of all the changes at UNC. After an honest and observant student commented to me on how “salty” I was over it all, I realized that person was right and it was my responsibility to change myself by creating something positive for others. [Thank you to that person if you’re reading this! I appreciate your direct communication that I took in without judgment.] Since then I’ve been coordinating with others around campus to create a new initiative, Employee 2 Employee, where staff facilitate free sessions for other employees on stress reduction, meditation, yoga, and other contemplative practices. It feels good to give to others! More details to follow!
3. **Engage in loving self-care practices.** Revisit your tools for self-care and examine if they foster love and kindness for yourself versus escape or avoidance. As much as I have enjoyed Netflix binge watching, I realized that it was a form of avoidance rather than true self-care. About a year ago when I acknowledged this, I turned my evening time to journaling and meditation as gifts of love to myself. I encourage you find what ways you show yourself loving kindness in your daily rituals.
4. **Have conversations about love and refuge in HESA.** What are your favorite ways of expressing love for those around you? Can you discuss in your next staff meeting about how to support or offer refuge, not just those in your unit, but other members of our community? What does a community of care look like for staff and faculty in higher education?

Finally, I leave you all with the lyrics of the great Tina Turner (cue the music):

*What's love got to do, got to do with it
What's love but a sweet old fashioned notion
What's love got to do, got to do with it
Who needs a heart when a heart can be broken.³*

The answer, Tina, is: Love has everything to do with it and our work in HESA is pure heart!



LOTS AND LOTS OF UPDATES

1. MA Comprehensive Exam, March 18th, 2019 – updated location

For this year, students will have TWO options: the 4 hour timed version, or the take home version where you have 1 week to answer 3 questions. When you register with Tansi to take

³ from the song, “What’s Love Got to Do with It,” on the album, *Private Dancer* (1984)

comps you must select one of these options. Submit your comps paperwork to Tansi by March 3rd, if you haven't already.

For the take home version, registered students will receive 3 questions via Canvas on **Monday morning March 18th, 2019** (the scheduled day for the timed test) and with their **3 essays due by noon on Monday March. 25nd**. The 3 questions will be grouped to address the required coursework with an option to bring in electives as applicable - this is similar to the existing format of the timed version.

The 4 hour timed exam will be **8a-noon on Monday, March 18th, 2019** location, McKee 101E.

HESAL reports results to the Graduate School by Friday, April 5th, 2019. You will be notified once ALL results are in – please avoid asking Tansi to share your results early as this places her and your peers who don't know in an awkward spot.

2. HSO will be hosting a HESAL MA Hooding Ceremony, before graduation on Friday, May 3rd, 3-4pm at University Center, Spruce Suites. More details to come from HSO. Family and supporters are invited. Bring your regalia and cameras.

Also, HSO will be having elections soon – watch for more information to come!

3. Budget updates for HESAL and CEBS. Unlike many student support and services areas, 96% of the College of Ed and Behavioral Sciences budget is in people, as per Dean Sheehan. As such, a 5% cut will be approximately 780K for CEBS and applied across all academic departments somewhat evenly. These conversations are ongoing within programs, departments, and the college. For HESAL, as we have no padding, it will mean not refilling a faculty line post-retirement and, likely, a reduction of GA positions next year that the Graduate School allocated to us (not filling vacancies rather than removing people). Other departments will look to reduce GA's, as well, but also adjuncts and overload course pay. More details to come as we know them.

4. HESAL Interview Days, Feb 21/22

HESAL has extended invitations to prospective students to participate in upcoming Interview Days at the end of the month. Interview Days follows a similar format to years past with collaboration from various units across campus. They will take place in the UC. If you're interested in getting involved, please contact me at tamara.yakaboski@unco.edu.

5. Formalized Field Experience/Internship Opportunities at UNC

HESAL has worked with units across campus to create more formalized job descriptions to offer experiential learning opportunities to incoming and continuing students. Prospective students can interview for Field Experiences/Internships that would start in the fall. Continuing students can check out these opportunities and apply for them now directly through the hosting site or on [Handshake](#). Areas participating in this initiative are: Office of Student Life, Gender & Sexuality Resource Center, Housing, and New Student Orientation. Please see the job descriptions at the bottom of the GA Initiative page under [Internships](#). Any student can apply to any of these Internships and have them count for HESA 675 credit upon agreement with your faculty advisor.

Of course, there are Field Experiences/Internships opportunities that come up at other institutions and students are always encouraged to create their own within areas of interest.

6. HESAL Degree Recruitment – Help Needed

We continue to recruit, especially for the PHD program. If you know of UNC colleagues who have talked about getting a degree, now would be the perfect time to start. Feel free to refer them to Tamara for a conversation.

Additionally, if you work at another CO institution, we would love to do a recruitment presentation about HESAL programs or even a more general presentation about the decision of getting a graduate degree in HESA. Please contact us! We recently visited Colorado School of Mines and will be at Aims Community College on Feb 27th.

Are you attending conferences this spring (I know, budget cuts) – but if you are, please come see us and grab some program flyers and business cards to pass out!

7. Employee 2 Employee Program (new initiative)

As I mentioned earlier, I've been working to coordinate a new program for UNC employees to help with stressful times.

The Employee to Employee (E2E) program is an initiative of UNC employees fostering a sense of community on campus by supporting peers' personal wellness and through mindfulness, yoga, and other physical contemplative practices. UNC faculty and staff offer these free sessions and have donated their time and expertise out of care for their fellow employees. The Employee to Employee (E2E) program is a grassroots initiative that developed out of a desire to hold space for each other and offer grounding moments in the middle of busy weeks.

This program will be offered Tuesday and Thursday's during the noon hour starting at near the end of February, mostly in the UC and outside. Tuesday's will be meditations and Thursday's will be wellness found through physical activities, such as yoga, guided walks, etc.

Are you an employee who has skill or training in some contemplative or mindful practice? Do you wish to facilitate a session in this program? Contact Tamara to check for available time slots!

The Employee to Employee (E2E) program is coordinated by these UNC units:

Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership program
Human Resources
The Center for Applied Contemplative Studies
Campus Recreation

8. Coordinator Chats

I am not continuing monthly Coordinator Chats because, honestly, no one took advantage of them last semester. However, I do maintain an open door policy (except, of course, when I'm not in the office). Feel free to set up 1on1 appointments with me via

<https://yakaboski.youcanbook.me> to chat about what's on your mind with your program, courses, or higher education.

9. Summer 2019 course schedule

Enrollment Management will be taught early summer – this is an elective course that works well for both MA and PhD students. It will run Monday to Friday, May 6-17 from 5-9p. Field experience will also be available. Registration opens April 1st, 2019.

10. HESAL Social Media

Be sure to like our HESAL Facebook page to stay up to date on events and good news:

<https://www.facebook.com/UNCBearsHESAL/>

Like and follow the HESAL Student Organization (HSO):

<https://www.facebook.com/UNCHSO/>

We recreated our HESAL Twitter account! Find us here: @UNCoHESAL



On behalf of HESAL,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tamara Yakaboski".

Tamara Yakaboski

Professor of Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership