Addressing Imposter Syndrome with Online Faculty

Matthea Marquart, Melissa Thompson, Stephen Cummings, & Delia Ryan
Thursday, April 15th at 4:15-5:00 pm CT / 5:15-6:00 pm ET
2020139 - Addressing Imposter Syndrome with Online Faculty

PLEASE NOTE: For iPhone/iPad mobile app users, all session times remain in the central time zone. When using a computer or Android device, the time of the sessions automatically adjusts to your time zone.

Presenters: Matthea Marquart, MSSW, Melissa Thompson, LCSW, OSW-C, & Stephen Cummings, MSW, ACSW, LISW

Click Here to Access Live Session.

Abstract: In the ongoing effort to orient and support online faculty, one major barrier is the notion of “Imposter Syndrome”. Online faculty may struggle with the fear they are not adequate to the task of educating social work students. This panel discussion will include leaders in online education, who will describe their experiences addressing this issue with faculty they have oriented and mentored, and share concrete examples of how they have addressed “Imposter Syndrome”.

Image source: https://guidebook.com/q/#/guides/ollu-swde-2021/expanded-schedule/session/26517965
Your Presenters

Matthea Marquart, MSSW; Twitter @MattheaMarquart, www.mattheamarquart.com
Assistant Dean, Online Education; Adjunct Senior Lecturer
Columbia University School of Social Work

Melissa Thompson, LCSW, OSW-C; Twitter @mmt98
Clinical Assistant Professor, Online Learning Coordinator
Dominican University School of Social Work

Stephen Cummings, MSW, ACSW, LISW; Twitter @spcummings
Clinical Associate Professor, Distance Education Administrator
University of Iowa School of Social Work

Delia Ryan, LMSW
Live Support Specialist, Online Campus
Columbia University School of Social Work
What’s in this for you?

- Describe imposter syndrome and how this phenomenon may impact online faculty
- Describe examples of how leaders in online education have addressed imposter syndrome with online faculty
- Share examples with colleagues in the session, and learn from colleagues

- Share experiences
- Ask questions
- Add to your toolkits
**AGENDA**

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Introductions

Please share in the chat:

- Where you’re joining from
- What brought you to this session?

Thank you for joining us!

Please feel free to chat throughout this session
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Intro to imposter syndrome

Definition:

A feeling of intellectual self-doubt that affects many in high-achieving environments

Examples of false beliefs due to imposter syndrome:

I’m a fraud; I’m not good enough to be here; I’ll be found out
Caveat

Note: This session does not seek to put the blame on people who are impacted by racism, sexism, or other oppression that sends the message that they don’t have the same value as others.
Symptoms of imposter syndrome we have observed among online faculty

- “I am not an expert in my field”: while instructors, particularly those with years of work in the field of social work, come to the role of educator with enthusiasm about engaging students, they see themselves as inadequate to the task of teaching because they haven’t achieved a perceived level of academic achievement, even though they are working at the terminal degree level of MSW.

- “Students will see through me”: instructing requires a level of authority that new online instructors may not perceive themselves as having. This may be due to the vision of the “learned professor” that does not correspond with their own self-image.

- “I’m not good enough for this institution”: instructors may feel self-doubt around whether their work is at a calibre for the institution that has hired them.

- “I’m bad with technology”: instructors may feel self-doubt about the technical skills involved in teaching online.

- Negative comparisons to tenured/senior members of online faculty
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Example:
During training for online instructors
331 participants have passed in the first seven cohorts, and they have gone on to lead over 100 online courses/year.

Institute graduates have joined from 35 US states + Australia, Canada, France, and India.

At the end of every Institute (except the first one), we survey participants to request their feedback. Average scores out of 10 among online instructors are as follows:

Participants may earn CEUs or use this language for CVs/resumes:
Five-week, 25-hour intensive post-Master’s online institute with weekly synchronous classes and asynchronous homework, covering the design and delivery of engaging online courses that embody social work values, including instructor presence, community building, interactivity in live online class sessions, inclusiveness, universal design for learning, and the basic mechanics of Canvas and Adobe Connect.
Overview of Columbia University School of Social Work (CSSW) Online Campus Faculty Development

Foundational training:
1) Institute on Pedagogy and Technology for Online Courses
2) Institute on Technical Skills for Online Event Production

Ongoing training:
1) Annual Online Faculty Development Series
2) Intensive Workshops

Learn more about our Online Campus faculty development
More about CSSW’s Institute on Pedagogy and Technology for Online Courses

Articles:
• A United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) blog post about the Institute, by Valary Oleinik (August 2019)
• A blog post by a participant in the Institute, Laurel Hitchcock (November 2019)

Conference posters:
• UPCEA Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference (October 2020): Recruiting and Training Online Faculty via an Award-Winning, Intensive Online Pedagogy Institute
• Columbia University Center for Teaching and Learning Celebration of Teaching and Learning Symposium #cotl2020 (February 2020): Preparing faculty to teach online via an award-winning, intensive online pedagogy institute
• Network for Social Work Management #NSWM30 conference (June 2019): Recruiting, Training, and Engaging Virtual Faculty via an Award-Winning Online Pedagogy Institute

Presentations:
• CSWE (November 2020): Training Online Social Work Educators: An Award-Winning Institute for Virtual Faculty
• UPCEA webinar (February 2020): Recruiting and Training Online Faculty Members
• Social Work Distance Education #SWDE2019 conference (April 2019): Recruiting, Training, and Engaging Virtual Faculty via an Award-Winning Online Pedagogy Institute

Join the email list for the next application: https://forms.gle/bydhgHFjdHm28eRWA
#SWDE2019: Teacher as Student: Developing empathy in an online pedagogical course

So excited to hear from @spcummings and @mmt98 discussing their experiences with developing empathy in online education. #Swde2019 #swtech

Imposter syndrome is alive and well during learning processes with other social work professors, the humble wonderful leaders in the profession #swde2019 @mmt98 @spcummings @CSocialWorkEd

Learning about Teacher as Student: Developing empathy in an online pedagogical course from @spcummings & @mmt98 #SWDE2019

Image sources: https://twitter.com/DrNPJones/status/1116344187040010240 https://twitter.com/EBelluomini/status/1116344914760163328 https://twitter.com/MattheaMarquart/status/1116341266374115329
Assignment in week 1 of CSSW’s Institute:

Discussion forum on impostor syndrome, stress management, and self-care

In your groups: Discussion forum on impostor syndrome, stress management, and self-care

Note: We have created this assignment based on feedback from past Institute participants.

This week, review the slides from two past Institute participants, Stephen Cummings and Melissa Thompson, who created a presentation sharing their feelings from being in the student role in this Institute after having been instructors for many years. They presented at the 2019 Social Work Distance Education Conference on “Teacher as Student: Empathetic Development in an Online Pedagogical Course.”

Then, skim one of these brief articles:

- Geek Feminism: Wiki entry on Impostor Syndrome
- “Twice as Good” On Being a Woman of Color and Overcoming Impostor Syndrome and Perfectionism
- Feel like a fraud?
- How to Overcome Impostor Syndrome

Impostor syndrome has been described as a feeling of “intellectual self-doubt” that affects many students and professionals in high-achieving environments. Have you ever experienced this phenomenon? How might being back in the role of student in this Institute, trying to meet strict deadlines and participation requirements while balancing your job, family, and other responsibilities, influence your sense of self? What additional factors could contribute to impostor syndrome in this environment? How might feeling like a “fraud” impact your success in the Institute or in a professional role with the Online Campus? (These are rhetorical questions to reflect on; you don’t need to answer them in this discussion forum.)

You can access your group on the far left via the “Groups” button, which has the icon that looks like two people; for more info about how to view your groups, you can click HERE.

In your discussion forum post, due on Saturday morning (9am EST / 6am PST):

1. Say hello to your group (this is your first discussion with this group, and you’ll be together for the full five weeks of the Institute).
2. Share one quote that stood out to you in these readings, and why it stood out. Please mention which reading the quote came from.
3. Share one stress management technique or self-care technique you plan to use while enrolled in this Institute

By Monday morning (9am EST / 6am PST), reply to at least one of your colleagues. In your replies:

- Share something that resonated with you about their post:
- Engage with those who have responded to your post:
- Keep in mind that tone can be difficult to interpret online, so be extra careful to write your responses in a respectful tone.

The points for this assignment will be for:

- In your initial post, following the instructions (3 points)
- Submitting your responses to one of your colleagues on time (2 points)
- In your responses, following the instructions (3 points)
- Demonstrating professionalism and a supportive tone in your language (2 points)

Please note that credit will automatically be deducted for late submissions.
Themes from the discussions in this assignment

On gratitude for the space in which to share personal and professional experiences of impostor syndrome and to learn how common - and frequently internalized - it is:

● I wish there were more forums within the workplace to discuss these concepts openly. It always feels better to know you are not "on an island."

● The first reading assignments for this group have been interesting because I thought that the imposter syndrome was a feeling isolated to my lived experience. Ironically, I did not have the concepts (other than anger, frustration, demoralized) to describe how I was made to feel in certain circles until I read these articles.

On learning from constructive, respectful feedback and letting go of harmful criticism:

● I found the point of "What is someone actually saying about your work (not just what you think they are saying)," really relevant as I can often read into what others are saying--or worrying what people are thinking--of my work or my skill set within the field.

On focusing on accomplishments, not dwelling on what one had hoped to accomplish by now

● Reframing your narrative as one of concrete accomplishments shifts your focus to the presence of labor and achievement, and away from the absence of "more."

On remembering that what one DOES is different from who one IS.

● Your work might be a struggle, but that doesn't mean you are an imposter. It just means you are struggling with your work; like everyone else does from time to time.
Themes from the discussions in this assignment (continued):

On impostor syndrome as a product of white toxicity:

● The article on "being a woman of color" resonates for me on how we have to work twice as hard and aim to reach perfectionism, which leaves little room to be self empathic. At this point in my life, I aim to value my knowledge, contribution and the talents I possess to enrich the lives of others. I also think that living the life of an imposter can be extremely draining and all too emotionally consuming.

● I am still working on taking up space in spaces that were not historically designed for my ancestors and have found that when I do, I feel much more confident and effective.

● Imposter syndrome isn't a problem of the people who feel this way, it's a problem of the people who make others feel this way.
Cycle of Growth

- Navigation through imposter syndrome takes time
  - Faculty
  - Administrators
  - Culture
- Administrators and other leaders deep awareness of the cycle of growth
- New faculty experience
- Valued investment
- Strengths perspective
- Cultivation of formal and informal mentor relationships
  - Inside institution
  - Outside Institution
Stephen: The University of Iowa School of Social Work
Formal and Informal Practice Approaches to Develop Adjunct Faculty

**Formal**
- Mentorship role designation
- Semester meetings and open forums
- Adjunct Instructor Resources in the LMS

“Who do I go to for .... “
Course design - Syllabus - Technology - Classroom Management

**Informal**
- Nurturing adjunct instructors to build upon skills while following the expectations of their course
- **Focused** “checking in”
Professional development approaches

Hat tip: Dr. Lakeya Cherry, Network for Social Work Management

The professional “Board of Directors” - formalize relationships with people who you see as mentors. Not everyone knows they are on your “board”, but they serve in developing you as an adjunct instructor.

Examples of adjunct instructor support at the University of Iowa SSW:

- Regular formal meetings with adjunct faculty
- Adjunct Hub in Canva LMS (under construction to reflect new curriculum)
- Focused check-ins with adjunct instructor
  - Do ask “give me examples of what’s going well, what’s challenging”
  - Do not rely heavily on closed-ended questions. “How is it going” will likely elicit positive responses.
  - Instructors want to report they are doing well! They may have concerns about their performance but aren’t sure how to address those concerns.
Example:
Ongoing community meetings for online faculty
CSSW Annual Online Faculty Development Series: Overview

- Launched during AY2018-19
- 5 sessions/year: the first in August before the fall semester and the last in May after the spring semester
- Live online sessions (2 hours each), recorded for asynchronous make-up options
- Scheduled in the evenings to accommodate adjunct availability across time zones
- Open to all Online Campus community members
- Goals: 1) Facilitate continuous learning & development, 2) Build and sustain an ongoing community
CSSW Annual Online Faculty Development Series: Session Components

- Community agreements
- Celebrations of community members’ milestones and achievements
- Presentations from students / alumni / CSSW community
- Introductions to CSSW deans and directors
- Mini-trainings on research re: social work online education
- CSSW news & updates, including pop quizzes
- Lightning round teaching and learning showcase presentations to:
  - Elevate the voices of community members
  - Share and cross-pollinate ideas
  - Provide opportunities to present
Connection to addressing imposter syndrome

- Build community
- Reduce the isolation that can come with teaching online
- Normalize & destigmatize imperfection and even failure
  - e.g. Demystifying Publishing series this year
- Share common challenges, along with peer support & ideas to address the challenges
More about CSSW’s Annual Online Faculty Development Series

• UPCEA Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference (October 2020): [CSSW Annual Online Faculty Development Series: 2020 Faculty & Staff Development Award](#)

• The New School’s Management & Social Justice Conversation Series (July 2020): [Fostering a culture of innovation by harnessing technology to enable inclusive faculty development](#)

• In June 2021 at The Network for Social Management’s Conference: Columbia University School of Social Work - Online Faculty Development Series
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Discussion (macro, mezzo, micro)

- How can administrators create inclusive environments and eliminate barriers that exclude or devalue particular groups of faculty, e.g. women, POC, LGBTQIA+?

- How can administrators support faculty in overcoming imposter syndrome?
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References & Resources


Crawford Bias Reduction Theory & Training (CBRT). http://drdanacrawford.com/home/cbrt/


Free recordings & resources from CSSW: https://bit.ly/CSSW_WebinarSeries_TransitioningOnline
Thank you!

• All of you for your fantastic session participation!
• Everyone here who has participated in CSSW’s Institute on Pedagogy and Technology for Online Courses!
• The team who has worked on the first seven Institutes and made it excellent: Agata Dera, Ana Quiñones, Andi Snyder, Anna Maria Montes, Chelsea Walus, Delia Ryan, Elexia Lowe, Erika Wiseberg, Erin Hefner, Jennifer So, Jneé Hill, Josh Levine, Kristin Anderson, Krystal Folk, Marianna Da Costa, Meg Florio, Nicole Wong, Samantha Franklin, Sierra Spriggs, and Vitina Monacello
• Steven Schinke, Julien Teitler, Melissa Begg, Jackie Martinez, Tiffany Rasmussen, Josh Levine, Rebecca Y. Chung, Kristin Garay, Johanna Creswell Báez
• Columbia University School of Social Work and Columbia University School of Social Work’s Online Campus