All Questions, No Answers: A Story of Both COVID-19 & Transformation
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“Perhaps the purpose of problems is to give us an excuse to come together.” - Jim Keene

It took, at most, one hour into the first day of working from home for the “Turns out, that meeting could have been an email” post to scroll across my computer. I chuckled.

I am no longer chuckling. Since that post, I (and most of you) have guided students through adapting or canceling their semester plans, fielded questions from housing boards who have to make mortgage payments but want to give everything back to their members, and connected with advisors about keeping already-emotionally-distant-and-now-physically-distant members engaged. These problems have given us an excuse to come together. These problems have also given us the excuse to examine our work — including what meetings could have been emails and vice versa.

In his book “Community: The Structure of Belonging,” Peter Block says

“...the dominant belief is that better or more leadership, programs, funding, expertise, studies, training, and master plans are the way to build community. Unfortunately, trying harder at these things gives us just a little more of what we already have. They are the path to improvement but not transformation.”

Leadership, programs, funding, expertise, studies, training, and master plans. All of these methods of building community have been challenged, adapted, or altogether dropped because of this outbreak. We can’t go about business as usual, nor should we.

What if we look at transforming our work, our community, our team? What if we took a good look at our community’s needs (including building or keeping that sense of community) and what efforts meet those specific needs? When the dust settles after COVID-19, will we pick up everything that was buried by it? Or let some programs, trainings, and plans remain in the past?

I don’t have the answers to those questions, and I will own they are unfair, leading questions. Block proposes that the right questions aid in our path to transformation; questions shouldn’t be designed or phrased in such a way to change people or create a predictable future. Without the right questions we run the risk of moving today into tomorrow. I don’t know about you all, but I am done with today. I’m on my sixth Zoom meeting of the day, and I am capital D - o - n - e, Done.
Use the questions below to create a new conversation and a future distinct from our past. Consider the possibilities we have moving forward and when we return to work but not to normal. And if you want to have this conversation with someone who is also wrestling with these questions, I’m available in between readings of my toddler’s favorite Little Blue Truck book.

Questions to consider as we move forward, together:
- How do you plan to use this event to become a better professional?
- What have you said yes to you no longer really mean?
- What kind of community, office, team, etc. do you want to create?
- Where or around what are your stakeholders most engaged?
- What could this community look like in 5 months and how will you contribute to this vision?
- What do we offer to our community? What do we offer to our institution?

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Jordan is the director of fraternity and sorority life at Kansas State University and a member of Alpha Xi Delta. She has four coworkers in her new work-from-home set-up: a hubby, 2 kiddos under 2, and a very energetic pup. In between professional work and family life, Jordan orders books she will never be able to get through and adds workouts to her calendar that she’ll never do.
References