Report on the FWI  Soul on Fire: Narratives That Inspire Podcast Series

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Background

Personal narratives can be a compelling way to inspire and motivate. The podcast series entitled “Soul on Fire: Narratives That Inspire” is a collaborative Program for Faculty Development (PFD) and McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching (MIIETL) faculty development project that showcases the narratives of exemplary McMaster faculty educators. It aims to stimulate reflective practice in order to promote teaching, educational scholarship and academic community at McMaster University. Specific objectives are: 1. To create a legacy that showcases the narratives of inspirational faculty 2. To stimulate reflective practice in order to promote scholarship of teaching and academic community at McMaster University 3. To inform faculty development programs.

A program evaluation of this podcast series was also planned to assess its effectiveness with respect to the degree of listener uptake, impact on teaching practices and faculty development. We track online access, discussions, responses to questionnaires, surveys and interviews with McMaster faculty. The results of this evaluation will be used to inform further educational and faculty development in the use of podcasts and narratives as well as determine the continuation and sustainability of this project.

Project Development and Launch

This has been an exciting initiative. PFD and MIIETL convened a Planning Committee and held regular consultative and planning meetings. As a result of nominations from Department Chairs and Committee members, we selected 7 exemplary faculty who agreed to share their narratives as part of this podcast series. Interviews and recordings started in Feb 2015 and concluded in Nov 2015. All of the editing of the podcasts have been completed. I worked closely with Brian Hamister (webmaster, FHS public relations) to develop and launch the website that houses these podcasts. All podcast interviews are accessible by an online link (http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/on-fire/) and also accessible through the PFD and MIIETL websites. Each podcast is identified by the faculty’s photo, short quote and biographical sketch. A short survey soliciting listener evaluation of the podcast is linked with each podcast. Different versions and layouts of the website were reviewed and vetted through the participants, Planning Committee and the PFD Team and Advisory Group. We also obtained feedback from the Health Sciences Education Committee and individual faculty.

The dissemination of this project has been coordinated with the McMaster University Public Relations as well as locally through our respective programs.
I worked with Susan Emigh and Erica Balch (Public Relations) to develop a strategy for publicity and launch in Feb 2016. We launched the series with a mass email announcement to all members of the FHS and announcement on the Daily News. Erica prepared a brief feature article on the project on the McMaster Daily News. As outlined, both PFD and MIIETL websites feature this podcast series and have links to the website. The PFD website highlights each podcast interview per month. Thus far, we have featured Drs. Bruce Wainman, Joe Kim and Jean Chamberlain. This month, we will be profiling Dr. Arshad Ahmad. This project was further publicised through social media such as Facebook and Twitter, and online blogs.

I also contacted the campus radio station CFMU and discussed the project in an interview on Morningfile in March 2016. CFMU broadcasted an interview in its entirety. As students were finishing their term in April, it was decided to postpone the airing of the rest of the interviews until September 2016.

At the time of writing, an abstract of this project was submitted and accepted as a poster presentation at the International Conference for Physician Health taking place in Boston, MA on September 18, 2016. I have also presented this project at the Faculty of Health Sciences Annual Day in Faculty Development on May 4, 2016. Future plans include preparing a manuscript on our experiences with this podcast series. At the time of writing, I also have two other podcasts planned, one for May 26 and one for June 15, 2016.

**Uptake and Impact of the FWI Project**

So far the impact of this project for me personally has been profound. Because I conducted all of the interviews, I had the unique opportunity to speak with and learn from a broad interdisciplinary group of exemplary faculty members from Faculty of Health Sciences, Geography, Department of Linguistics, Chemical Engineering and Psychology. I have been inspired by their dedication, passion and insights. This project marks the first PFD-MIIETL collaboration on an important educational and research initiative. This collaboration has been immensely enriching to both programs. It also advances the mission of the FWI for building community across campus. The collaboration broadens academic dialogue, catalyzes lively, scholarly and reflective discussion and sets the stage for further creative educational and research initiatives. These outcomes are consistent with the FWI project as well as our respective programs’ objectives and goals.

It is our hope that faculty will find these podcasts inspirational for their personal and professional reflections and practices. We also hope that this series will benefit the McMaster academic community by promoting both student and faculty engagement and development. As well, the series may contribute to better understanding of the pedagogical impact of online narratives on faculty development inform future initiatives.
Program Evaluation

The effectiveness of the podcast series will be evaluated based on

1. The degree of listener uptake and engagement

The data sources will come from electronic tracking of access to the website and online discussions through social media, online blogs and discussion boards.

2. Impact on faculty’s pedagogical and reflective practices.

Data for this will come from individual podcast evaluations, a post-podcast series survey to the McMaster Faculty, and individual post-podcast interviews with participants.

The launch and publicising of the podcast series have progressed smoothly. I have received a number of positive comments on the podcast series. With respect to the uptake of the podcast series since the launch in Feb 2016, I used Google® analytics to obtain the following: To date, there have been 1,078 page views, 375 viewers with 548 sessions viewed. Of the individual interview pages visited, the top three were Bruce Wainman, Arshad Ahmad and Joe Kim. This data is promising and we will continue to monitor the progress.

Thus far, only two individual podcast evaluations were completed. This may be related to how the logistics of the format as listeners need to first notice the link to the survey on the interview page and secondly return to it after the podcast is finished.

The post-podcast series survey is currently being formatted for online distribution to McMaster faculty and students by the end of the month. Likewise, post podcast interviews with participants are being arranged. It is anticipated that the full program evaluation will be completed by the fall of 2016.

Future Plans

We are convening a meeting of the planning committee for this project to discuss future directions on June 8, 2016. As there are many exemplary faculty that we have not yet approached for interviewing as well as annual teaching award recipients, I anticipate that if the results support continuing this podcast series, that there will many opportunities to do so. I wish to sincerely thank my collaborators/co-investigators, the participants and President Patrick Deane’s Forward With Integrity initiative for making this project possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Wong