John Sumpter 0:00

We are recording. So fantastic. So Jana. Yes, Janet. Well, thanks ever so much for being with me today and spending some time on the podcast. Firstly, could you tell us your full name, where you're from and a little bit of background about yourself, please. So my name is Dr. Jana Gerard. And it's still a little surreal for me to say that because I defended 12 days ago. I did notice that on your LinkedIn, congratulation, you defended.

Jana Gerard 0:30

Dr. Fantastic. So I actually work at Southeast Missouri State University, which is in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, it's in a relatively rural area, we serve as sort of the hayride hub for that whole corner of Missouri. So we have 55 school districts in our in our region. And

I've been in the position I have now my my position is officially coordinator of what we call the evolution Center, which is a technology and innovation lab. I work for the College of Education, Health and Human studies. So I work very closely with our education preparation students, but I also work with nursing students, athletic training students, dietetic students, psychology students. So we have seven departments, and only two of them are ed. So it's been really fascinating to me, coming from the education world, I used to be a classroom teacher, to now not only work with pre service educators, but to work with all these other students as well. I've learned a lot, I'm sure, yeah. So I think something that makes our university unique is even though we are a small regional school, we have some very forward thinking people at the university, the evolution center, is it's very unique in that we don't belong to the whole university, not that other people can't come in and use our services. But we specifically belong to the college. So I serve not as a student service, but we I and my staff serve as a co curricular service to our students, which is very different. Some of the things we do they can find elsewhere on campus, but not with the curricular focus that we bring. Right. So that's what makes what we do unique. Okay, well, so that, I mean, firstly, sounds like, really interesting. And clearly, you've, you've got a lot of work to do there. And it must, must take up a lot of your, your time. And what I really interested to kind of drill down on to is, as we spoke a moment ago, the area that we're kind of focusing on is around digital transformation and digital leadership. Yes. So from your perspective, how does that take shape at your university in the work you do? So that that is something very unique again, to what we do, because we are very focused on innovation and emerging technology. And so leading the change through transforming how students and faculty are teaching and learning with technology. So that is actually a very big focus for us. So my job specifically, one of the hats I wear is to do research and go to conferences and you know, talk to be plugged into the network of emerging technologies. So that as new things are coming down the pipeline, I'm looking at them, I'm investigating them. So if we feel like it has value for teaching and learning, then we can start that transformational change by incorporating that in what we do. So for example, light boards, those were those are kind of a new thing, especially for higher education. They're amazing for hybrid learning. They're amazing for video creation. Could you just explain to our listeners what a Lightboard is? Yeah, so a Lightboard is actually, at its core, it's very basic, is a pane of glass that has LED lights in it, and you write on it with neon, dry erase markers.

But what makes that so transformational is when you use a camera with it. The code we use actually has integrated software, so that software flips the writing around. So for the people that are face to face class, you hook that to your screen. Yeah. And while you can still see your students, they are seeing the writing flipped around so you don't have to write backwards or any right and for video creation, obviously it's flipping. But what makes it even more interesting is you can bring in slides you can bring in PDFs P and G's web pages, YouTube videos, you can play video inside your video. You can do all of those things. And you can also run zoom threat. So especially for hybrid learning environments. You are still having face to face contact with your students. Yeah, but you're doing all those

things that if you don't use the lightboard, you have to do on a separate computer, or you have to turn around and use your dry erase board, you're turning your back on your students, or you're having to, okay, here's my face to face students, here's my online students, there's no and going back and forth. Whereas with the lightboard, it's all much more fluid and integrated and less of a separate thing you've got to do, it's a less frantic environment for the instructor, because they're able to concentrate on the one piece of technology. Okay, well, that sounds really interesting. And I can, I can picture it now. And I can understand the benefits that could bring, what I'm quite interested to know about is, it's a piece of technology. But as you'll probably agree, you know, with transformation, it's about the people, and it's about the curriculum as well, and how they design their learning and how they make those changes. So how, how have you gone about doing that, what's the processes you go through to help those people make the change? So first, I demonstrate it, I model it, I show them, you know, because for me, technology is about purpose, in everything we do with technology should have meaning should have purpose, it should be integrated in a meaningful way. So I model that I show them in your context, this is how you can do this. So if you're teaching math, here's ways this could help you teach math, if you're teaching English, there's here's ways this could help you teach English. And then once I've modeled it, I bring them in and I, you know, as as hands on as they need if they need me to actually kind of handhold them and you know, be very step by step with them I do if they need me to just kind of say, here's how you do it. And they go, okay, cool. I've got this, you know, really meet them where they are, then I basically train them to then become the leader with it. They go they show it to their peers, they train the trainer, really, they show it to their so my my role I consider very much a supporting role. I am the supporting actress and all of this. Yeah, so my the way I lead change and lead transformation is through enabling other people to lead change and lead transformation. Okay, well, that's really interesting. And yesterday, in another podcast, I was having a conversation around a kind of similar type of scenario. And I'm just wondering, you, you sit there how that you, you kind of do the demonstration, and then you support them and hold them in that in that change? What about after that, and it once they've taken up? And they've understood that this fits into how they want to teach in their practice, and they can see the advantages. How do you go beyond that? So how do you make it kind of more kind of large scale transferable? And so then that's once I have the sort of implementers that have started doing that, then I can say, Hey, did you know Dr. So and so is using this in their classroom? How can I help you use it in yours? Did you know that this student went out in the field and used this video that in that classroom in this school? Yeah. How can I help you do that? And so it's really it's kind of the building blocks. I think a lot of it is also baby steps. So you used it for 10 minutes in this lesson? Yeah. Let's see if there's something that you could do that would maybe use it for half an hour. Yeah, you used it to create this two minute video. Let's see if we can create a five minute video, you used it to use annotate slides. How about bringing in 3d modeling? Right, you know, so, again, meeting them where they are and building on those babies? Well, that's really interesting, because that echoes exactly the conversation I was having with T low heart yesterday about incremental steps and kind of growing on those as well. So it's interesting to see kind of a similar approach. It's about building confidence. Yeah, honestly. I mean, because if you just take something and you throw them into the deep end of the pool,

John Sumpter 9:08

they panic.

Jana Gerard 9:10

But you know, they have that overwhelmed feeling of, I don't, you know, this is too much fear of the unknown, it puts them off. So if you start in that shallower end and then build that confidence, you may soar. And they're all yes, yeah, absolutely. Wait, you know, I expected this to be the case, but it kind of mirrors you know, how things happen in the UK quite closely.

John Sumpter 9:33

So, again, thinking about kind of transformation. You obviously we're talking about practitioners there that you know, the people with those students, what about higher up on trying to help kind of senior faculty money management

Jana Gerard 9:51

understand what these opportunities are and and how'd you get there by him. So I do this I'm actually very lucky. I'm

I, my boss is the dean of the college. And I have a one to one with him every month, right. And so I get 45 minutes of undivided attention from him. And so I am very careful to prioritize how I use those 45 minutes. So especially when I have, like a new technology I want to introduce or I have a new idea, or you know, something I'm very careful about, you know, Hey, Dr. Poodle, I have this amazing idea. And here's how I think we could roll it out. Yeah. And then so I start with him. And then like how the lightboard actually became popular on our, on our campus, and how it's kind of spread outside of the center. There's other colleges getting them now is I started, I got one for us. And then I was like, Hey, Dr. Poodle, come down, and let me do a demo. Hey, and then the next time I met with them, hey, so here's what's happening. And he actually hadn't had a dean's council meeting in the center so that I could then demonstrate it to the other deans. And then the other Dean's got ahold of their faculty and said, hey, you need to go talk to her. So it's about spreading the word in that positive way. From your dean. Yes. And then also, I try to be very collaborative. So again, you know, I don't say, our centers only for our students. It's for whomever. And we've also serve as a center for the regional stakeholders. So community educators come in to us. Okay, so that's also kind of and so they the leadership hears it out in the community. Oh, yeah, we were, you know, they say, oh, you know, I'm at SEMA. Oh, you know, we were at evolution center. And we did this amazing thing. And, you know, they let us check out their equipment and take it into the school. And now my daughter is totally into robotics. And so yeah, you know, it being a smaller community and being a more rural area, you run into people at Walmart, you run into people at the grocery store. Yeah. And so by making sure they're having these positive interactions, yeah, that, you know, it trickles up, it trickles up. Well, again, really interesting. And something that we talk about.

John Sumpter 12:03

Many institutions struggle with, they do in the UK, and they do across the world. But we talk a lot in the digital leaders program about, you know, there is always an issue with silos, institution, yes, fall into this trap of working in their own silos and not sharing and working across faculty, and also leads into, you know, skeptics and enthusiasts we talk about, and how can we work and support those? And how can we kind of not hold back but get the best out of those that are really enthusiastic, but running off into the sunset without considering everybody else? Or institution? So, as far as you know, trying to break down those silos, it sounds like your approach is to be incredibly collaborative, and supportive. Is there any other things that you do to kind of break down those walls? Interestingly, so this is something that we actually took from the health professions. Okay, so the health professions actually have this idea of interprofessional education. Right. Okay. And so, our college being education, and health and human studies, we actually have a college interprofessional education committee, and I fully credited the dean for this idea. He's like, you know, what, you should be chair of this committee, because then you are, you know, you get this face time with faculty from all seven departments. And we have actually had some really great initiatives that have come out of this interprofessional education committee. So that is one way we're really pulling faculty out of those silos is we do a something we host something every fall called the research Think Tank. And so people in the college talk about the research they're doing to people outside of their department outside of their program outside, you know, they talk to you. So we've had some amazing collaborations come out of that. A communication disorders Professor wound up talking to a nursing professor, who also wants to tuck into a dietetics. Professor, and they're all from different programs, right. But now they do this really awesome collaborative project for students and with students about swallowing. So the nursing students get to see how you know, these other people handle the swallowing part and the dietetics. And the community, they all get to see these different parts, and they do this whole collaborative thing together. So the research Think Tank is one way we do that. Yeah. And then we've also started the in the spring, we do what we call a Resource Exchange. So this last year, this last semester, we did Diversity, Equity and Inclusion resources. So it was how are you know, what resources are you using and how are you using them? And we did. It was sort of like roundtable discussions. So people who come and then they shared those resources. Could you give us an example of some resources where you talk so like one to one perfect

Jana Gerard 15:00

Sir, who, who's whose area this actually is they studied diversity and inclusion was talking about some simple materials they use as icebreaker materials, where the students kind of talk about, they actually take a piece of paper, and they answer some questions about, like, where they're from, was it roll? Was it urban? Was it you know, if they're comfortable? How do they identify in terms of gender? And it's all about comfort, you know, you don't have to answer any of the questions. But if you're comfortable, write these things down, you know, how do you identify gender wise, what's your ethnic background, those kinds of things. And then they crumple up the paper, and they toss it into the middle of the room. And then everyone has to retrieve a piece of paper and you can't retrieve your own. Okay. And then you get into groups and discuss how those people are similar and different to you with, but it's not attached to a name.

So it's very anonymous, but it gets people starting to think about how people of different genders have people of different ethnic backgrounds, all of that, who grew up in different environments are similar yet different from them. Yeah, so important for that bonding at the beginning, starts as building blocks of having a respectful classroom, right. And so that's a really good example of a resource that then going back to what you were saying the beginning, is then kind of put on this platform with others to share and learn from others. But that's really another way we're working on building breaking down those silos. Yeah. And then for me, personally, I actually, I'm, next month, I'm meeting with our online program to start, we're actually going to do some work. We're calling it Digi hawks, because we're the Red Hawks. Okay, so we're, we have a, we've had a really great conversation about, we actually have a class a face to face class for, you know, seated students yelled UI 100, which is basically Welcome to being a college student. What does that mean? You know, how do you what do you need to know to be successful as a college student, we don't have a version of that for our online students. And we assume that our online students come to us with a certain level of digital competence. To be successful as an online student, you have to have that level of digital competence. Yeah, so now I'm working in collaboration with our online learning program, to make it to figure out a way to maybe have like a, we use Canvas as our as our learning management system, maybe we need a canvas module that's required for all of our online students, that if you know, if you're digitally competent, then you're gonna fly through that module. But if you're not digitally competent, working through this module is going to help you have that level of digital competence that's going to help you be successful. Yeah. So those kinds of initiatives across campus are a way to also break down silos. Yeah, that's, that's really interesting. And

those building blocks being then being in place is just so key to anybody's learning experience for the educators as well, isn't it,

particularly around technology?

John Sumpter 18:03

I'd like to go off on a slightly different tangent, if I if I test,

something that we find without our members, which is higher education institutions and their staff across the UK, is there is often a

requirement of one to for them to put in place, a digital strategy, for example. And the idea of that strategy is to obviously put in place a set, you know, a mission statement, a vision and a series of steps that's going to get the university towards embedding technology better, yes. But what we find a lot in the UK, is that that process will quite often kick off without any real research or understanding of the current situation. So where, what is the digital experience now at that institution? And also at the other end of the spectrum? Where is it they want to get to in say, 10 years? What is that future forward? Vision?

Jana Gerard 19:08

And so we put in place a number of things to kind of help institutions around that. Would you recognize that? Yes, so actually, that is something we are intentionally working on, at least in our college, and we're hoping that it will then grow University. Okay, so we started with building, we have a college technology committee. And so one of the things we really worked hard on as a committee, so that means me and, you know, seven faculty from all the different departments, so everyone's voice was heard. Yeah. We wrote digital Strategic Technology goals. Just like a mission statement. Yes. That's part of it. We actually have goals for the college and it is based in digital competence. So digital fluency, digital literacy, digital citizenship, together, okay, you put those three together.

You get your digital competence. And we have digital competence for our faculty and staff. And we have digital competence for our students. And we actually have concrete examples of how you demonstrate digital competence, right, as faculty, staff, and students, and we made it as, like, that's why the voices were so important of having. So as a psychology faculty, what would that look like as a dietetic student? What was specific to their? Yeah, I mean, we try not to make it but we made it. And so being digitally competent for an educator is going to look very different than being digitally competent as a nurse. Yeah. And so that's why we wanted to make sure we were thinking of just not one size fits all, that there's, there's ways to demonstrate these competencies that are that are specific to the needs of faculty and stuff really interesting. Just to interrupt and just to say that, in the UK, we consider and talk about digital capabilities, you know, there's question marks about, you know, defining the language about what that actually means for the institution. And those sorts of questions. But really interesting to hear that you're, you're tailoring it to those specific areas as well. So it's not one size fits all digital capability. And sorry, carry on Nope. And so, every month, when we meet as a committee, every department kind of, I don't wanna say gives a report because it's not quite that formal, but we have conversations about how the goals are going, how they're being implemented by program by department, how you know, how people are reaching those goals, or even talking about I mean, you know, when we started, people weren't even talking about digital competence. So even having conversations, as faculty in these department meetings in their program meetings, is progress.

And what's interesting, and one of the ways I kind of got an in with the faculty was the first time we talked about these strategic goals, I said, please go back to your programs, accreditation standards, and see where they talk about technology, or everyone came back and said, Holy cow, our accreditation standards do talk about technology in some way, like what you know, if for students to be ready for their field, whatever that field is, yeah, yeah, here's skills they need. So the education, the dietetics, the nursing, they all had some kind of technological competence, in their accreditation standards required for him when they go into that field, and they finished colleagues that are going to need that. So by doing that, I was able to show faculty that that had very practical purpose. This isn't just some theoretical, you know, know, your accreditation standards, say your students need these skills. Yeah. And so this is how digital competence ties very specifically to you and your field and your students. Well, that's really interesting. And we've in the UK, there's some examples of something that something similar to that. One thing I'm interested to to ask you about is, how do you, I don't like the word enforce. But it's clear from what you've just described, that that it would be obvious to those educators that

matching up the correct digital skills to the kind of curriculum and the role that they are looking to go towards is an obvious thing to do. It's, it's a win for everybody.

John Sumpter 23:32

But not everybody all the time wants to get on board with these things. So how do you not enforce but encouraged? Is there any tie in with, I don't know, personal development reviews each year and things like that. So the Dean actually has tied some of it to professional development funds. So if someone demonstrates progress, there's some professional development money tied to that. But also, really, where I had to really get the buy in was with the chairs of the departments. So because, you know, for us, it's the dean, and then there's the chairs of the departments, and then there's the program leads, and then, you know, that's kind of the structure, and I'm kind of outside of that structure. I report directly to the dean. Yeah, so um, you know, I have no authority. I don't want any authority.

Jana Gerard 24:28

Sitting on the outside, I don't evaluate I you know, so I'm, I'm outside that structure. So fortunately, the Dean very much believes in what we're doing. And so he allowed me to face to face time so they have chairs meetings every other week. So he'll love me face to face time with the chairs where I really sat down with the chairs and said, Look, this is why we're doing what we're doing. And this is how we're doing what we're doing. And this is what it means to you as a chair. This is what it means to your department.

This is what it means for your students and their six are very personal approach. Yeah. I, again, I come from the education world. Before I left the P 12. World, one of my I taught full time but one of my roles while I was teaching full time is what we called an instructional technology specialist and IDS at my specific building. Yes, it was literally my job to help my colleagues integrate technology into their teaching, whatever that looked in the UK, we would call them kind of learning technologists that's similar sort of, yes. And so one of the things I learned early from that was it had to be contextual, to get buy in, they had to understand and it wasn't like a selfish thing. It was I have so much time and resources. And I have to allocate them appropriately. So for me to be willing to invest in whatever it is you're asking me to invest in, I have to understand how it's going to benefit. Me and my students. Yeah. So it's not abstract. It's not something that just doesn't really fit them. It's got to be this will make an impact on what I'm teaching. And they want to see that so that you get them engaged. So it has to be very practical and very contextual. Yeah. And so that's, I think, really where I, you know, what we're doing is able to have an impact is by making it practical, practical and contextual. Yeah. Okay. Well, that is I mean, fascinating. And what I'd like to do if it's okay is kind of end by asking you just one question if that's okay. So what would you say is one lesson that you've learned in your, your role that you think would benefit others in a similar position? There's a quote that I have hanging above my desk. Okay. And it's from Dan Millman. It's from a book. And I'm not going to give you the verbatim quote, because I'd be afraid to get it wrong. But basically, what it says is to create change, you can't focus on changing the old, you have to focus on the new. Wow. And I find that very impactful. Yeah. Because I can't worry about well, so and so is doing it this way. And they won't change. That can't be my focus. Yeah, I need to think about what what we're trying to do and why we're trying to do it. Yeah. And that's where my energy needs to go. And if that goes well, that will hopefully bring on those people who are maybe

John Sumpter 27:27

in traditional ways that need more encouragement to come forward. So like I said, I know that's not the verbatim. Well, that's fantastic. Well, thank you very much indeed. Jana, that's fantastic talking to you. So thank you very much. Thank you for having me. No problems. Thank you.

Transcribed by https://otter.ai