Philosophy Bakes Bread, Episode Twenty-Seven, with Whipps, Ricco, and Lake

# Leadership and Civic Engagement

*Transcribed by Muriel B. at Rev.com, November 1, 2017.*

For those interested, here's how to cite this transcript or episode for academic or professional purposes:

Weber, Eric Thomas, Anthony Cashio, Judy Whipps, Mike Ricco, and Danielle Lee Lake, "Leadership and Civic Engagement," Philosophy Bakes Bread, Episode 27, Transcribed by Muriel B. at Rev.com, WRFL Lexington 88.1 FM, Lexington, KY, June 6, 2017.

**[Opening music]**

**Radio Announcer:** This broadcast is brought to you by WRFL, Radio Free Lexington. Find us online at WRFL.fm. Catch us on your FM radio while you're in Central Kentucky, at 88.1 FM, all the way to the left. Thank you for listening, and please be sure to subscribe.

**Eric Weber:** Hey, everybody, thanks for listening to WRFL, Lexington 88.1 FM. This is Dr. Eric Thomas Weber here. It is about 12:02, almost 12:03, and we're about to get started, jumping in right away with Philosophy Bakes Bread, and this episode is on Leadership and Adult Learners. It's about community engagement and team building, and an exciting program that is going on at Grand Valley State University, in Michigan. Without further ado, here it goes.

**[Theme music]**

Hello, and welcome to Philosophy Bakes Bread, food for thought about life and leadership, a production of the Society of Philosophers in America, AKA, SOPHIA. I'm Dr. Eric Thomas Weber.

**Anthony Cashio:** And, I'm Dr. Anthony Cashio. A famous phrase says that, "Philosophy bakes no bread," that it's not practical, but we, in SOPHIA, and on this show, aim to correct that misperception.

**Eric Weber:** Philosophy Bakes Bread airs on WRFL Lexington, 88.1 FM, and is distributed as a podcast next. Listeners can find us online at PhilosophyBakesBread.com, and we hope you will reach out to us on Twitter, @PhilosophyBB, on Facebook @Philosophy Bakes Bread, or by e-mail, at PhilosophyBakesBread@gmail.com.

**Anthony Cashio:** Last, but not least, you can leave us a short, recorded message with a question or a comment, or bountiful praise, we always like that, bountiful praise, that we may be able to play on the show. You can reach us at (859) 257-1849, that's (859) 257-1849.

On today's show, we're very fortunate to be joined by three guests. We're really, really teaming up today, and this is a team participating together in the 2017 Public Philosophy

Journal Collaborative Writing Workshop, there's a title for you, taking place in mid-May, in Hickory Corners, Michigan. The first of these guests is a friend of the show, Danielle Lake. How are you doing today, Danielle?

**Danielle Lake:** I'm doing great.

**Anthony Cashio:** Thank you for joining us. Danielle Lake is from Grand Valley State University. Dr. Lake, of course, has been on the show before, specifically on Episode 12, on Wicked Problems and we had a nice follow-up breadcrumb episode after that, as well.

And, along with Danielle, we are also speaking with two of Danielle's colleagues at Grand Valley State University. Dr. Judy Whipps teaches in Philosophy and Liberal Studies, and Mike Ricco teaches in the Seidman College of Business, at GVSU as well. Our guests today have worked together to create a leadership and community engagement program for adult learners in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

**Eric Weber:** Oh, fun. Is everyone enjoying the writing workshop, so far?

**Judy Whipps:** We're just getting started.

**Mike Ricco:** Just got here.

**Anthony Cashio:** Just got here? Maybe ...

**Eric Weber:** Just got here, and we're twisting their arms to do a show here already.

**Anthony Cashio:** Well, you know, do a show, drink a glass of wine, do some writing. It's a nice life.

**Mike Ricco:** That's right.

**Anthony Cashio:** It's a nice life. So, we've got a nice quote we were going to start the show with this time. It's from Dwight Eisenhower, and it says, "You do not lead by hitting people over the head. That's assault, not leadership." So, on this show, as we say at the beginning of every episode, and at the end of every episode, "This is a show about life and leadership." Usually, we emphasize the "life" a lot more and kind of subtly slip the "leadership" in, but, this episode we're really going to hit more explicitly the leadership aspect when talking about philosophy baking bread.

**Eric Weber:** That's right, and so, Danielle, Judy, and Mike, we call this first segment, "Know thyself." So, we invite you to tell us a bit about yourselves first, and we want to hear about that. Then, if you would, tell us about how you got into philosophy, or how you got into this particular element of a philosophical project that you're working on, which, in this episode, is about Leadership and Community engagement, a program that you made for adult learners, in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

But, before we get to that, tell us about yourselves and how you got into Philosophy Next, or into this project. Then, finally, what is philosophy to each of you, we want to ask. But, since

Danielle has been on the show before, we'd love to ask Judy and Mike to start us out. Just tell us about yourselves.

**Judy Whipps:** All right then. I came into philosophy with a pretty strange route, really. Maybe many of us did. But, I was a child of the '60s, so, when I graduated from high school and went on to college, it was in that time when people were really wanting to change the world, but really having uncertainties, given all of the assassinations that happened in the '60s, and the failure of a lot of the grassroots movements for social change.

So, I went to college. The first time I encountered philosophy was in college. I remember just being stunned with the Allegory of the Cave, and just left that class thinking, "Is that possibly true," and thinking about, "Well, if my world wasn't real, what else was real," and thinking about, "How does one discover that?

That feeling, that sense of being in that first class, my first philosophy class, in my first semester of college, stayed with me, but after a year and a half I dropped out of college and went and lived in a religious commune ...

**Eric Weber:** Huh? Oh, my.

**Judy Whipps:** ... because, that's what you did in the '60s and '70s.

**Anthony Cashio:** Everyone was dropping out and joining communes.

**Judy Whipps:** Yes.

**Mike Ricco:** They weren't all religious communes.

**Judy Whipps:** So, really, we thought we could create the world better, and certainly that was connected with my philosophical feelings or understandings of the unreality of the world as it was given to me, so, trying to figure out a way to do it better. As things like that go, we did, of course, recreating all the ills of society at a micro level and much worse. I spent 15 years in that society, separate from the world, distanced from any media, any TV, any radio, really pretty much isolated.

**Anthony Cashio:** 15, you said 15 years?

**Judy Whipps:** 15 years.

**Anthony Cashio:** Wow.

**Judy Whipps:** 15. Yes. So, when I did leave, and when I did leave, it was really about a philosophical issue of knowing that I could know for myself.

**Eric Weber:** Oh.

**Judy Whipps:** Yeah, so, that was a really struggle for me, because, when you're in a society dominated by a particular powerful voice, not knowing whether you can know for yourself is, it's

interesting. So, when I left, I was, well, I was 18 when I left. I was 33 when I left, so, I didn't have any job skills, I didn't have any education, I didn't have any paths, really, forward. I started working in a job and then my sister said, "You should go back to college and take this one class with this one philosopher," [Stephen Rausch 00:07:54]. She had had him when she was in undergrad, and so I went back and took this class with Stephen Rausch, and it really changed how I thought about the world.

So, I ended up returning to college. I graduated from college when I was 41, still with the question of, "How does society become better? What changes the world?" Philosophers weren't always asking that question, about how philosophy change the world, at that point. I hadn't found the American philosophers. I hadn't found some of the people that I love and read by then, so I actually went to divinity school, not being religious, but going to divinity school because I thought, "Well, religious ideas do change the world."

I went to the University of Chicago and did my master' there, and I felt like my brain was being isolated from the real world. I felt like I wasn't engaging with my whole person.

**Eric Weber:** I'm noticing a theme here.

**Judy Whipps:** Yes.

**Eric Weber:** Fighting against isolation, it seems to be.

**Judy Whipps:** Yes. So, then I went to Union Institute, which a more non-traditional program, and worked with Elizabeth Minnich, who is wonderful philosopher, and did my Ph.D. then, in American Philosophy, studying Jane Addams and John Dewey. I was 47 when I got my Ph.D., and become a tenure-track professor a department, and then Chair of the Department of Liberal Studies for 10 years. Then, more recently, three years ago, we started this program in leadership studies for adults, returning adult students.

For me, leadership is about the same sort of thing that we've always been talking about, which is changing the world, values, finding one's self, and being present in the world. So, that's how I got to where I am right now.

**Anthony Cashio:** Yeah, terrific. That's wonderful. Mike, do you want to tell us a little bit about yourself?

**Mike Ricco:** Sure. Not quite as exciting as Judy's, though. I'll simply add, I'm coming from the dark side of the forest here, among this trio. Spent really all of my professional career in business, and one of the connections here to our program is a lot of those years in leadership as well. I have over 40 years of business experience and moved around quite a bit. Worked in the commercial aviation industry, and international tourism, etc.

I do recall, I have to admit, one of the most memorable courses I had, certainly in undergrad, was a philosophy class, and Lin Yutang seemed to stand out within that course. This was very interesting instructor from Russia, actually, so a lot of that stuff stuck with me, but, a lot of years in leadership, or trying to get leadership, and then advancing from there.

My academic background is actually all in business. Well, I originally started in engineering and physics, moved to marketing, marketing management, and my doctoral degree is basically in leadership. So, I took four degrees along the way. Like Judy, also a nontraditional student. On the doctoral level, I had over 25 years between my MBA and my doctorate degree. I know the feeling of getting back in the classroom.

But, whatever happened, I can hardly truly explain it, I suppose a lot of it was luck and timing, but really advanced pretty much all my professional career. Left a large corporation and went to a family-owned business, using that side of the coin, if you will, which was in international leisure tourism sector. I was starting up companies basically outside of the U.S., to bring tourists inbound to North America. So, I was traveling a lot. I had clients in over 50 countries around the world.

Made a lot of money for our owner, our shareholders along the way, but really what I was always looking for is, I was always looking for a new challenge. And, as I share with my students, I'd now had 25 different jobs in my life, so, I'm a good example of how to get a job, but not necessarily how to keep it.

I've had a lot of different experiences and you do develop various philosophies, per se, about people, people in business, people out of business, and how to grow an organization, and the leadership aspect, fundamentally the effective philosophy of leadership. So, I just got to a point where I was looking for yet a new challenge, again, highly-profitable organization, but I was traveling as a road warrior for about the last 15 years in business and I was looking for basically, speaking of philosophies, it really came from my family, the philosophy of giving back in a big way. Each of my brothers do that too, one way or the other.

I resigned my highly-paid corporate VP position, general manager position, international division, went back to school, earned my doctorate. I was starting to teach part-time. I was a full-time doctoral student. I was teaching sometimes full-time. Started my own consulting business, which is primarily in strategic planning, business development, but I felt that teaching would be an area to give back.

Many moons ago, after I earned my MBA degree, it was just one of those things that fell into my lap. I taught an evening class, and I was like, "Hmm." It was kind of like what John Lennon once said, when he first saw Elvis Presley, "Hmm, that's a good job." So, I thought, "Maybe, one day I'll come back to teaching," and, as it turns out, I did. I've been teaching 11 years now, in a variety of institutions. Grand Valley has been good to me in a lot of different ways, and I've been good to Grand Valley.

I've been fortunate to work with these two young ladies in this program for about the last two and a half years now, right? Our program is ... Part of the theme is interdisciplinary, so, I'm part of the business interdisciplinary effort, joint effort. At the same time, it's a quite highly-integrated program. So, good to be a part of it.

I love working with "nontraditional" students. Along those lines, I'm actually getting a little tired of that phrase. I think a better term is, "contemporary" students, rather than "nontraditional" students.

**Anthony Cashio:** I like it. I like that.

**Mike Ricco:** Contemporary students, the reality is [crosstalk 00:14:40] today, who is going to up for higher ed.

**Eric Weber:** Very interesting. And, Danielle, if we've got one minute for you to say, "Here's Danielle Lake," what would you say to remind people?

**Danielle Lake:** Oh, to remind them? I think what is relevant here, since I've already talked about my philosophy background, is the interdisciplinary nature of the program, of the work that we get to do and the place-based, engaged work, that's real, the programming that's scaffolded. I'm really interested in this idea of leadership, of empowering students and ourselves to work together on the problems we're confronting in the world and that's exactly what this program was designed to do, with Judy's lead.

**Eric Weber:** So, if we have 30 seconds in which to say, "Here's what philosophy is ... "

**Anthony Cashio:** Challenge.

**Eric Weber:** ... do we have a taker? Judy, what's philosophy?

**Judy Whipps:** I think philosophy is about knowing one's self and knowing what you don't know, right?

**Eric Weber:** Ooh. I love it. That tells you why we start with, "Know thyself," and it connects exactly with your answer. Nicely done. Well, listen, everybody. I hope you have been enjoying, so far, this first segment of today's episode of Philosophy Bakes Bread. You've been listening to me, Dr. Eric Thomas Weber, my cohost, Dr. Anthony Cashio, as well as three wonderful guests, Dr. Judy Whipps, Dr. Mike Ricco, and Dr. Danielle Lake. After a short break, we'll be right back.

**Anthony Cashio:** Welcome back, everyone, to Philosophy Bakes Bread. This is Dr. Anthony Cashio and Dr. Eric Weber, and this evening we're sitting here, having an exciting conversation with Doctors Danielle Lake, Judy Whipps, and Mike Ricco.

Our guests have started a leadership and community engagement program at Grand Valley State University, and this segment we're going to talk about that program. We'll talk about what our guests mean by the leadership element of their program, and how they've made the effort to foster leadership. So, in the last segment, we got to know you guys a little bit, but, what I want to know is how you guys got to know each other. How did you come to know each other? How did you come to create this awesome program about leadership and public engagement you have going?

**Judy Whipps:** I was on sabbatical and started thinking about how best to frame what I feel really passionate about, which is liberal education, which is transformative education, in a way that makes sense for adult learners. I really am committed to access. I think that we all, no matter where we end up in life, should have the ability to get educated, and in an education that's transformative, and not just skills based.

I started talking with some people about how we could reframe education in a way that makes it adult-friendly, and so we started thinking about accelerated courses, courses that meet

just once a week, courses in a cohort. So, we have a program that ... Every class is five weeks long. All the classes are interdisciplinary, and they all focus on leadership.

We started from there and went through the curriculum system, which actually went pretty smoothly, and were able to start offering this program, which is ... We don't have a program like it at Grand Valley for undergraduate. I mean, there are graduate programs that are more geared to adult learners, but for returning students who weren't able to finish their degree, to figure out a way to do that.

So, we put it together. We figured out what classes made the most sense, in terms of both re-meeting our degree requirements, but also tried to scaffold it in a way that we built on each other's courses and communicated some messages. Not messages, but built on each other's learning, so that the students could see the connections between the courses as they move from a course in Leadership for Social Change, to Mike's course on Teamwork, to the next course, Visionary Thinkers, to the next course in Public Administration, but all of it around this central topic. So, that's what we do.

**Eric Weber:** That's fantastic.

**Anthony Cashio:** Yeah, terrific. What year did the first course get offered in this program?

**Judy Whipps:** Fall '14.

**Anthony Cashio:** Okay, 2014.

**Judy Whipps:** We have offered four different cohorts, and the program is 19 months long, and we'll start our fifth cohort in the fall.

**Anthony Cashio:** Wonderful, and when someone completes this, is it a certificate, is it a degree? What do people get out of it?

**Judy Whipps:** They get a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Studies, with emphasis in Leadership. So, they have to have a significant number of credits coming. We don't do the whole four years in 19 months, but, we coach them and do advising, so that they're ready to start this and finish it in 19 months.

**Eric Weber:** This is a substantial program though. This is a bachelor's degree?

**Judy Whipps:** Yes, absolutely ...

**Eric Weber:** Wow, terrific. That's wonderful.

**Judy Whipps:** ... and, it's changed students' lives.

**Anthony Cashio:** What kind of adult learners are usually enrolled in this program? Do they have a certain kind of characteristics or interests that pull them together as a general cohort?

**Judy Whipps:** Most of our students are in their 30s and 40s. Almost all of them have kids and families. Quite a few of them are just at points in their careers when they know that they need a bachelor's degree to move forward. They're not always sure about a liberal education approach. You know, adult students often mostly return to school because they need additional skills, but they discover, really, in the first class, how important it is, that personal reflection, that really encountering big ideas is, and then we move from there into community, and how important it is, as a leader, to know one's community, as well as knowing one's self.

**Eric Weber:** Terrific. Now, here's a question for all of you: What do you mean when you use the word, "leadership," as a key element in your program? What do you mean by it, and what do you do to cultivate it?

**Mike Ricco:** Well, I guess I'll chime in here a bit. "Leadership" is really built around the notion of achieving things, whatever your goals are, your objectives are, through others. So, that is a common theme here of, here, the students, as Judy mentioned, one of the things they're seeking is completing their degree, so they can perhaps move in or up further within a management, leadership role within their organization, or move on to new organizations and experiences, if you will.

Leadership has a lot of facets to it, from my perspective. Since I teach the Team Building course within this curriculum, one of the things I strive for and see that's happening with these students is leaders need confidence, confidence in their ability, confidence in their organization, sometimes confidence in their customer, and really, fundamentally, what are they doing here? Why are they here? What are they doing, which is more the philosophical aspect?

I would say, without an exception, each of our graduates have graduated, having grown their self-confidence and their confidence and abilities to lead, see the path ahead of them, and to find and make a way on that path. So, that's pretty essential at that level.

**Eric Weber:** Yeah.

**Danielle Lake:** I would add to that, that I think we're trying to encourage them to recognize their capacity for change, to change themselves and their communities through this program. What's incredible is they often start to see that within the first five weeks.

**Eric Weber:** Um, that's cool.

**Danielle Lake:** To be honest, I was most reluctant to engage in this program, because I was concerned that it combined, really, the trifecta of challenges for engaging students in transformational learning. "We're going to accelerate that learning, yeah, five weeks. We're going to do it online, with returning adult students, who have careers, young kids, aging parents, and we're going to engage them in place-based community work. This is impossible, right? I'm not sure ... " Up until that moment, I had avoided doing all of that in one class, at the same time.

**Eric Weber:** That's very ambitious.

**Danielle Lake:** Yes, and after my first experience, my first five-week course in that program, I went back and said, "I want to teach in this every year." The students are incredible, the commitment, the model. I see it as the countermeasure to what's wrong in higher education

all the time. As faculty, we design the program together, right? We're listening to students. We're engaging in our communities. We're doing real place-based work with others, and it's transformational that quickly. So, I've been amazed by what's unfolded in two and a half years.

**Anthony Cashio:** So, now that invites the question, what exactly are you teaching them, and how do you see the difference you do seem to see in them?

**Judy Whipps:** Our first class is called Introduction to Liberal Education, or, now it's called Reflect, Connect, and Engage, and we start with Plato. We talk about The Apology, The Allegory, The Cave. We talk about what education is and why we do what we do, in terms of what they've been indoctrinated with in their K-12 education, and what it means to do more of a liberatory approach to education, and we start talking about social issues.

The class meets once a week and the rest of it is online, but they're in a cohort where they're working really intensely with each other, so part of it is this examining these questions in an environment where they know each other quite well, and that continues throughout the 19 [weeks 00:25:01]. That's how we start, and usually that's the class that convinces them they need to be able to reflect, they need to be able to engage with their communities and they need to make the connections with themselves and with others.

So, students who come in sometimes thinking, "This is just the fastest way to get my degree," usually wake up, because adult students usually come into education determined to get it right this time. These are people mostly that failed, you know, they didn't succeed at education in their first time through ...

**Eric Weber:** Interesting.

**Judy Whipps:** ... and so, they want to get it this time, and they're really wanting to have this knowledge. So, it's so exciting for us, as faculty.

**Anthony Cashio:** Wow, so, they like the Plato, to start right off the bat?

**Judy Whipps:** Yeah. I teach the last class, and they were talking about the things that really made a difference. Many of them were talking about The Allegory, The Cave, and The Apology, things that really were key learning moments in their 19 months. So, it was really fun. I mean, there's other key learning moments too, but certainly there is a few of us who are philosophers, that connect to that too, and we connect that to the practical skills as well.

Yeah, it's a particular approach to philosophy. We're not doing analytical philosophy, but we are doing the value-based, meaning-based kind of approach to philosophy.

**Eric Weber:** One of the things that Plato famously argued is that it may be the case that it's best to study philosophy when you're 50 years old, right? When you're older, and do you find that he's right about that, that there's something to that? Are you seeing something different in these older, adult learners?

**Danielle Lake:** Absolutely. The commitment, there's a lack of resistance, there's a wealth of experience and maturity. I'd been doing engaged community work with students for three years or so before engaging in this program, and it causes a lot of anxiety and stress, or it was. And,

the commitment from the returning adult students, the nontraditional students, the willingness to engage, the readiness, the levels, were just different, and the transformation, again, I thought, "How could we possibly engage in transformational learning in five weeks? What can I accomplish," right?

**Mike Ricco:** Right.

**Danielle Lake:** But, that commitment, the care, the caring, the experience, all if that came to bear and, like I said, I wanted to stay committed to this program.

**Judy Whipps:** And, there just are people for whom philosophy makes more sense when you're 40, than it does when you're 18.

**Eric Weber:** That makes sense.

**Anthony Cashio:** You need that life experience. I think that's kind of what Plato was getting at, right? You've got to have something to pull on, to think about, when you're philosophizing.

**Mike Ricco:** Another comment throughout the year with our program is, not just because I teach the team-building course, but we have team-based assignments all the way through the entire train of cohort-bases courses. So, not only are these adult, working, parents, students, etc., they're also needing to coordinate and collaborate with their team members on their assignments in each of these accelerated courses, so it's pretty intense for these students, and you have to really tip your hat to them, to not only hang in there, but to excel at what they're doing.

The teams do rotate, among some of the courses, anyway, so, that team-building aspect is pretty critical. I think adults, perhaps, have a slightly different perspective to teamwork, especially in an academic context, than the 18 to 22-year-old undergraduate student, if you will. And, right, there are some students who say, "No, I'll do all my work by myself," sort of thing, "I'm fine with that," but, finding themselves in this context of needing to collaborate.

So, our students, by and large, they're getting together physically quite often, like on Sunday or Saturday evenings, as a team, to work on their team projects. There's a lot of time that goes into this, and they've really come together, getting to know each other, and, hopefully, collaborate in an adult fashion and building their teams and achieving the community engagement that we challenge them with, to make a difference.

**Anthony Cashio:** Awesome.

**Eric Weber:** Yeah, that sounds terrific. Well, we have some more questions about that for you, but, we're going to come back after a short break on Philosophy Bakes Bread, and have some more questions for Dr. Judy Whipps, Dr. Mike Ricco, and Dr. Danielle Lake. This is Dr. Eric Weber, and my cohost is Dr. Anthony Cashio, with Philosophy Bakes Bread. Thanks, everyone, for listening. We'll be right back.

**Anthony Cashio:** Welcome back, everyone. It your privilege this afternoon to be listening to Philosophy Bakes Bread. This is Dr. Anthony Cashio and Dr. Eric Weber, speaking with our awesome guests today, the Doctors Danielle Lake, Judy Whipps, and Mike Ricco. In this

segment, we're going to talk about community engagement, the community engagement aspect of our guests' leadership and community engagement program that they put together for adult learners. If you listened to the last segment, you know this is an ambitious, but very exciting project they're all involved in.

**Eric Weber:** That's right, and before we jump in, I do want to say thank you, especially to Chris Long, and everybody working with the Public Philosophy Journal Project, because we are here together, in the same room, four of us anyway, because of a great event, here in Michigan. We are in Hickory Corners, Michigan for the 2017 Public Philosophy Journal's Collaborative Writing Workshop. So, I'm delighted to be able to grab these people and twist their arms to come into a room to a little interviewing with us.

As we heard in the last segment, we heard a little bit about leadership and now we're going to ask questions about community engagement. But, at the end of that last segment, I still wish I had heard a little bit more about examples of what exactly you're proud of, in seeing your students succeed, and I'm sure you have examples and things in mind. In this segment, we're going to focus on community engagement, and it may be that what you see in terms of successful leadership has to do with the community engagement you're seeing in these students.

So, why don't you tell us a little bit about what you're proud of, in terms of your students' success in your program, with respect to leadership. How do you know you're cultivating leadership, and is it seen in terms of the community engagement that you see in your students?

**Judy Whipps:** Yes. Is that sufficient?

**Anthony Cashio:** That'll work.

**Eric Weber:** We can go home now.

**Judy Whipps:** In our first class, when we're talking mostly about philosophy, the students are exposed to the work of Paulo Freire, and his work in the community around education. We had decided last year to take a design-thinking approach to the community engagement piece. So, in that first class, the students actually visit Harrison Park School, which is an urban school, and tour the school, actually have their class in the school, meet with some of the leaders in the school, and talk about the issues that the kids are facing, and that the community is facing.

That is mostly the "empathy stage," what we call the empathy stage of design thinking, of really listening to the community. The students become aware that there's so much that they don't know about their own community, and that is eye-opening for some of the students, and some of the students who even lived really close to that area and had no ideas of the struggles that the kids and their parents were dealing with.

Then, after that, that first five weeks, they have both these ideas that they're holding intention, which is that education can change lives, and the real struggle that kids are facing, and parents are facing, around education in our contemporary school system. From there, they go to Danielle's class.

**Danielle Lake:** And, again, we engage that tension between how education can serve to empower and stifle at the same time, both in our own place, and we look at the history of this

within the United States. We go back into the schools, we listen, we start talking to parents and students about how education is empowering them, how we're creating a college-going culture in Grand Rapids, or not, and what the constraints and risks to life in this place are. They leverage that into their class on leadership for social change, and they start to imagine how we can come alongside the community to shift any of the problems that we're seeing.

**Judy Whipps:** Then, the third class is my class on leadership for social change, and we start with reading about Jane Addams and about, like Danielle said, coming alongside of people in the community, not trying to bring your ideas to them, but to try and have ideas develop through that listening and that understanding piece.

We start by reading some exemplars of leadership and social change. Addams is, of course one of them, but others, like Mary Parker Follet, some people that really made a difference in the world, in the civil rights movement. They have now this background from two of these classes and they do some ideation around these issues, and say, "Well, what could we do to assist in this community problem? What could we do to alleviate it? What could we do?"

They form teams, they start working on ideas that they have, and they go back to the schools, and they go back to the neighborhood association that they've made contacts with. So, we've connected them with some of these resources, and start to develop an idea that they then present to the community partners at the end of their first semester, and then they go to Mike's class.

**Mike Ricco:** Mm-hmm (affirmative). Continuing also with the design-thinking model then, is to get into the prototyping and actually developing their plan and testing that to serve the community, as defined by each of those student teams, what they want to do. So, it may be the same community partner with the school system, and how you bring about real results within the community based upon their ideation, and, "Here's a proposal to go in this direction or that direction to support direct community engagement."

It takes leadership from this team, our students, to create this, speak to decision makers in the school district, etc., and actually start truly trialing what their plan was, that each of these teams came up with. So, there's multiple teams, multiple ideas to help take steps in solving some of the challenges that exist in reality, especially for students, but to a certain extent, it sometimes focuses on faculty in the K-through-12 system, as well. So, that's worked out pretty well.

As Danielle mentioned, it is five weeks of accelerated classes, things go by fast. So, with our series of four programs, they've got 20 weeks to go through the design-thinking model and actually make an effort to make a real impact on the community, and it's pretty rewarding. One of the things I do is, I do leave an option at that fourth stage, if students wish to, they're really in love with some other project other than that particular school, to do that, so we've had some interesting outcomes there.

One that comes to mind is a team that recognized within the community how so many people are basically forced out of their homes, as they become immobile through surgeries or injuries, age, or some combination. You know, there's 1001 stories there, which, basically, a lot of people in society are forced into senior citizens' homes. Because they cannot enter or exit their own, they can't really live at home.

This team came up with a notion, "Why don't we help support those individuals in the community that are in this circumstance," in other words, to stay at home? One student was an engineer, so he developed plans to build a ramp, and, if you've had to have a professional ramp built for your house, it can be $15,000, $20,000, getting the work permits and meet zoning requirements, and materials, the labor, etc.

So, this team came up with a cool idea. They designed it. They got approval from the zoning management. They worked with local suppliers for the lumber to ... In some cases, were donated at cost, for example. They worked with other groups, including themselves, to actually do the construction, that donated the construction, kind of like a Habitat for Humanity concept, but it's specific to this.

Just in our part, here in Western Michigan, there's 4000 individuals that have that situation. Imagine 4000 individuals potentially remaining to live at home, in their own home, rather than essentially being forced out of their own home due to a variety of reasons, medical reasons, etc., but it's basically mobility aspects. So, they came up with a solution that brought it between $3000 and $4000, and a lot of the headache and the project management was all taken care of.

**Eric Weber:** That's really fantastic.

**Mike Ricco:** You know, community engagement for that sector, that subset of the community.

**Anthony Cashio:** Yeah, you know, this really hits home to me. I have a daughter with special needs and she needs a wheelchair, and most people have no idea that if a person can't live at home that generally means that they need to somehow be in a public facility. That can be incredibly expensive to the public, and yet we're often unwilling to do certain sorts of things to help people get by living at home, even though that would save us tons of money, you know what I mean?

But, beyond that, you don't want to live away from home, if you can avoid it, right? You don't want to live on total assistance from something else, let's say, just to be able to get in your door. You'd much rather just be able to get into your house, where your family, who loves you, lives and everything, right? But, on top of that, there's a public benefit that's huge, and the money saved of not having to have someone cared for at a full-time facility.

So, that's an enormous piece of this puzzle, that suggests that $3000 to $4000 is nothing, compared to what things can cost, and so that is a really terrific and very ... Well, I was going to say "concrete," it may be made out of wood, solution. I like that. That's an excellent example of what I was hoping to hear about. Thank you.

**Mike Ricco:** I really kind of bring the loop back to this collective work we've been doing in the K-through-12 system, Grand Rapids has a program that if you graduate from the Grand Rapids Public School System, your college tuition is paid for.

**Eric Weber:** Oh, wow.

**Mike Ricco:** So, think about the reward of students that we're working with in the middle school to be successfully bridging into high school, and then, at the end of rainbow is that

college degree opportunity as well. I mean, talk about, the real reward is that opportunity for formal education that a lot of these students may not have had otherwise, if they don't stick to "the program," and a lot of our students' projects are directed at that.

**Anthony Cashio:** And trying to increase completion for K-12 education?

**Mike Ricco:** Right.

**Anthony Cashio:** That's terrific.

**Judy Whipps:** What we've discovered, as a community, is that it's not enough to just give people money to go to college. If people don't come from a culture that supports going to college, with parents that understand what that means and to create the home life and the education that they need in order to get into college, it's a long process, which is why the Challenge Scholars Program that we work with starts at sixth grade, and tries to work with all of these issues. It requires a certain attendance in order for that to happen and a certain grade level for that to happen, and there's a lot of issues that people face in trying to get their kids to college, just get their kids to school, that a lot of us don't realize.

**Eric Weber:** I've got one question and we've got about a minute left, so, of course, it's an enormous question for you. My question is, how do you identify the interests of a community or a public, how do you identify their interests? When you've got a cohort of students looking to pick a project of what they're going to work on and help with, how do they know what the community needs?

**Judy Whipps:** We started with working with the Grand Rapids Community Foundation, and they convened a group of community nonprofits and the schools, a small group, about 15 people together, and we listened to their issues and their suggestions, and we took it from there. We then had the problem, which is how to support a college-going culture, and then we had these other resources that the students were able to tap into. So, it went in a lot of different ways. It went in housing, it went in working with children, it went in working with teachers. There's a lot of different ways that it can go, but we had the community connections that enabled us to do that.

**Eric Weber:** Terrific.

**Anthony Cashio:** That's good.

**Eric Weber:** That's a good answer. It turns out there's a community and you went, and you asked them. That seems like a good idea.

**Anthony Cashio:** That's radical.

**Eric Weber:** All right. Well, thank you so much, Dr. Judy Whipps, Dr. Mike Ricco, and Dr. Danielle Lake, for talking with us in another segment of Philosophy Bakes Bread. We're going to come back after a short break, me, Dr. Eric Weber, with my cohost, Dr. Anthony Cashio, and conclude with one last segment with you all, on Philosophy Bakes Bread. Thanks, everybody, for listening. We'll be right back.

**Anthony Cashio:** Welcome back to Philosophy Bakes Bread. We've been talking this evening with Dr. Danielle Lake, Dr. Judy Whipps, and Dr. Mike Ricco, all of Grand Valley State University. Now, we have some big, final questions for our panel here, as well as some lighthearted thoughts, and with a pressing philosophical question for our listeners, as well as how to get ahold of us with your questions and comments.

**Eric Weber:** And, of course, their bountiful praise.

**Anthony Cashio:** Of course. That goes without saying.

**Eric Weber:** All right. Well, the last big-picture question about the material we've been talking about for today is just to ask you what have you learned from putting together this leadership and community engagement program that you have put together for adult learners?

**Danielle Lake:** I'd like to start with that. I am no longer that interested in trying to do this kind of work on my own in the classroom, under the limitations of one semester, with 20 or 30 students. What I absolutely love about the program is the opportunity to do it across an entire program of study. If we're going to engage in real challenging, complex problems, we need more than 15 weeks. We need more than one instructor. We need to collaborate and work together.

We need to give students the opportunity to take what they're learning and apply their leadership skills, and foster relationships in the community, and do something of value. It just takes more time. It takes more collaboration, more teamwork. So, I see it as everything that I want to do moving forward. I want to continue those kinds of relationships, and continue these projects, so that the work we do really can make a difference in that community space. That's what I've learned.

**Anthony Cashio:** Great answer.

**Eric Weber:** Indeed.

**Judy Whipps:** For me, just a deep understanding of the complexities of some of our students' lives, that adults face in terms of trying to get educated, some of the financial, personal, child-based, just the complexities of pursuing their dreams. We try and support that, but it's daunting sometimes, to try and deal with what Earl Shorris called "the surround of force." You know, the forces that each student is trying to deal with, yet trying to make sense of their lives, and trying to get educated. I just had a deep respect for the students and their struggles, and they don't always succeed. They'll come back, but, yes, it's not easy for them.

**Eric Weber:** That sounds about right to me, leadership isn't going to be easy, right? And, the program you're putting together, if it's meaningful, it's not going to be easy either, right?

**Mike Ricco:** Right.

**Eric Weber:** But, important things rarely are, right?

**Anthony Cashio:** Yeah.

**Eric Weber:** Mike, do you have any final thoughts about what you learned through this program?

**Mike Ricco:** Well, I agree with Danielle that ... Well, we all agree, is cohort process is important. It is a life experience, really, to go through 18 and 19 months of this with, more or less, the same students. Different instructors along the way, but I think we've seen some great examples of students who have turned their direction. They've found a new direction through this program, of some who become so enamored with community engagement that they've redirected their professional career towards nonprofit endeavors, where they may not have ever been before this cohort, and this belief that they can make an impact on the community, which they may or may not have had when they ...

"Day number one, course number one sort of thing," you know, sort of a believing, it's a belief aspect. I think a lot of that comes through continual reinforcement that, "You just completed another course. You learned from it. You're applying it." So, through that application I think there's a lot of self-reinforcement process that these individuals have changed. When you see them first day, or, actually, we have a kind of a kickoff before the classes start, a couple of weeks before the classes start, and when you see them at graduation day, it's the same physical person, but inside they're different.

**Eric Weber:** Ooh, that's nice.

**Anthony Cashio:** That is good.

**Eric Weber:** In this final segment, we have a couple of things we like to finish with, and one of them is a question that comes from the idea behind the show. Anthony, do you want to ask it?

**Anthony Cashio:** Does philosophy bake bread? What do you guys think? This is the famous saying goes that "philosophy bakes no bread." So, what do you think? Does it bake bread? Does it not bake bread? If you think it does, what do you say to people who say, "Nope, not philosophy?" We want to know what you guys think.

**Judy Whipps:** On Friday, I was talking with a person who is a vice president of a very large, global corporation, he's head of human resources, here in West Michigan. When he found out I was a philosopher, he asked if I would come and talk to his leadership team ...

**Anthony Cashio:** No way.

**Judy Whipps:** ... about philosophy and leadership. He said, "It is about philosophy," and I said, "Yes, because it's all about values," and, he said, "Absolutely." So, I think people understand at some level that philosophy is about becoming a person in the world that does bake bread, does produce results, does change our communities. Yep.

**Eric Weber:** There you have it. Mike, what do you think?

**Mike Ricco:** Yeah, I would say I smell the bread in the oven, and there's certainly in the corporate world that ... Certainly, because I've spent, to a certain extent ... I own my own consulting business, is that all great leaders really have a philosophy, one way or the other, one kind of the other, and it's not just reserved for the "visionary leaders." There's a lot of

transformational leaders, and leaders of a variety of leadership styles out there, that are effective.

There are some that are ineffective too, but, fundamentally, it's a philosophy and you see it in the organization culture that they create and lead, and nurture, and grow, hopefully, and is maintained over an extended period of time. That really is a philosophical approach to what an org culture is, and what it should be, and why that is, and why does that matter. So, there's a direct connection here and we see it. You know, we apply it in our program.

**Eric Weber:** Mike, I have a quick follow-up. Since you work with businesspeople a lot, maybe you're mentioning that you're teaching in this program, and then do you ever get pushed by them? Do they ever say, "Well, why are you teaching them philosophy?" Does that ever come up?

**Mike Ricco:** It doesn't, because I have an instant gimme, because I teach the team building course, and no organization functions without effective team building. So, that, in itself takes a bit of a philosophy. What will be the philosophy of that team? How will be a high-performing team? So, the team needs to collaborate on what are our constitution, effectively, as a team? No, businesspeople get team building and collaboration straightway.

**Eric Weber:** It may be an easier sell there than I had imagined. That's good.

**Mike Ricco:** Yeah, lots of bread baking out there.

**Anthony Cashio:** Excellent. Well, Danielle, do you have anything to add? Since you've already been on our show to talk about this a little bit, anything related to this program in particular?

**Danielle Lake:** Yeah, I would say just a gentle critique. I think philosophy should and can bake bread. This is an instantiation of it doing so, but precisely because it's engaged. Because it's interdisciplinary, but also trans-disciplinary, we're crossing the divides between various disciplines, but we're also engaging our community; we're engaging with different businesses, we're doing something. So, this is public, and to that extent it's definitely doing that work, but I would encourage other philosophers to consider how they can continue that.

**Eric Weber:** Terrific.

**Anthony Cashio:** Awesome. I smell a new buzzword, "trans-disciplinary." It's going to be good. My provost is going to come talk to me about trans-disciplinary teaching soon.

As you guys know, on this show, we want people to know that there's a serious side of life and serious side of philosophy, and philosophy does a lot of really important work, but that philosophy also has a lighter side, hopefully. At least, that's what we argue every week. So, in this last segment we'd like to take a moment for what we call, "philoso-funnies."

**[Pre-recorded bit promo]**

**Eric Weber:** Say "philoso-funnies."

**Sam (3-year-old):** Philoso-funnies.

**Anthony Cashio:** Say, " philoso-funnies."

**Sam (3-year-old):** Philoso-funnies.

**[Laughter, end of pre-recorded promo]**

**Anthony Cashio:** Right, so, we'd love to hear from you guys. Do you have any funny stories from doing philosophy, or stories about philosophers, or maybe working in this adult leadership program, or just a good joke you'd like to share with us?

**Eric Weber:** Or, just anything about philosophy?

**Judy Whipps:** Should I tell a story about Jane Addams?

**Eric Weber:** Yes, please.

**Anthony Cashio:** All right.

**Judy Whipps:** Jane Addams, she went to visit Tolstoy, who is a great intellectual, and Tolstoy said that you had to work in the fields every day in order to be a thinker. So, on the way back on the boat, she decided that she, too, should do that. So, she decided that she would bake bread at Hull House every day, because her father was a miller and she grew up baking bread. That was something that they had to learn by the time they were 12, is to make the perfect loaf of bread.

She went back to Hull House, and she spent a week making bread and then thought, "The world needs me in a different place."

**Anthony Cashio:** Oh, Eric, I think this goes ...

**Judy Whipps:** Not making bread.

**Eric Weber:** That's perfect. That's just right for this show.

**Anthony Cashio:** I've been pushing for a whole Jane-Addams-themed episode coming up soon.

**Eric Weber:** We need to do that. Maybe a couple, we'll see. Well, hey, every time, Anthony and I find a couple of things that are silly or that we can relate to philosophy, or that are just fun, and so in this case I think we just found a couple that are just fun. What about,

Anthony, what's the difference between ignorance and apathy?

**Anthony Cashio:** I don't know. What's the difference?

**Eric Weber:** Don't know. Don't care.

**Anthony Cashio:** Rrr, rrr.

**Eric Weber:** Rrr, rrr, okay.

**Anthony Cashio:** Do you want me to tell this bear joke?

**Eric Weber:** Yes.

**Anthony Cashio:** A bear walks into a bar and says, "I'd like a bourbon and ..... a Coke." The bartender says, "What's with the big pause?" The bear replies, "I don't know, I've had them all my life."

**Danielle Lake:** Yay.

**[Laughter]**

**Eric Weber:** You could tell the story about philosophy and ambiguity, but that's all right, we'll leave it there. Well, in every episode, we like to ask our guests for a question to pose for our listeners, because, when we get an opportunity and enough responses, we make a segment we call, "You tell me," and we have people either send us e-mails or their tweets. Or, we have some voicemails from time to time, and we get together and we talk about those again and give some thoughts about what people said to us for our "You tell me," segment.

So, we'd love to hear your thoughts, Judy, Mike, and Danielle, to see if you have a question that you propose we ask our listeners, anything about leadership, engagement, community development, adult learning, anything. What question do you think it would be good for our listeners to think about?

**Mike Ricco:** I guess I have a brief one. It's really for listeners who are not actively engaged with the community, however you define what community is. What's stopping you?

**Anthony Cashio:** Oh, that's a good one. Oh.

**Danielle Lake:** Yeah, and to build on that, we often fail to engage in these issues to make a difference because we don't think we can, or it's somebody else's responsibility, because then we have to take charge. We have to risk failing, so, to ask ourselves how we can lead from wherever we are. "What can I do today, and what can I do tomorrow, and what can I do next week? Instead of using those constraints as an excuse to not get involved, how can we work around them? What can we do now?"

That's one of the great things about design thinking, is to encourage us to take that risk and just to learn from our mistakes and to continue forward, and so, considering what you can do from your place, in this moment.

**Judy Whipps:** And, leadership is risky, and learning is risky, because leadership changes the world, and learning changes who you are. So, at the end of the day, are you willing to take the risk to make things different than what they are right now?

**Eric Weber:** Very nice questions.

**Anthony Cashio:** That's great.

**Eric Weber:** Three very nice questions.

**Anthony Cashio:** Yep.

**Eric Weber:** Indeed.

**Anthony Cashio:** Well, I want to thank our listeners this afternoon, for listening to Philosophy Bakes Bread, food for thought about life and leadership. Your hosts, Dr. Anthony Cashio and Dr. Eric Weber, are so grateful to have been joined this time by Doctors Judy Whipps, Michael Ricco, and Danielle Lake, again. Thank you all for joining us.

**Danielle Lake:** Thank you.

**Eric Weber:** That's right. Once again, everybody, you can reach us in a number of ways. We're on Twitter, @PhilosophyBB, which stands for Philosophy Bakes Bread. We're also on Facebook, @Philosophy Bakes Bread, and check out SOPHIA's Facebook page while you're there, @Philosophers in America.

**Anthony Cashio:** I hope everyone here goes and enjoys the rest of their week at the workshop. I think you're going to have a lot of fun.

**Eric Weber:** Our listeners can, of course, always e-mail us at PhilosophyBakesBread@gmail.com, and you can also call us and leave a short, recorded message with a question or a comment, that we may, I fact, we will probably play on the show, at (859) 257-1849, that's (859) 257-1849.

Join us again next time, on Philosophy Bakes Bread, food for thought about life and leadership.

**Radio Announcer:** Hey, there. If you're enjoying this podcast from WRFL, Lexington, you may enjoy our live radio stream, at WRFL.fm, and, of course, via radio at 88.1 FM, in the Central Kentucky area. We have a wide variety of programs you're sure to enjoy. Just go to WRFL.fm/schedule, and see what programs appeal most to you. Thanks again for listening to this podcast from WRFL, Lexington.

**[Outro Music]**