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The Teaching and Learning Center is pleased to present the *Ten Questions for Faculty Series*. The series is dedicated to helping faculty to stay connected with one another while working remotely. Every week, a faculty member will have the opportunity to answer ten questions about themselves and about navigating the changes brought about by COVID-19. This week, we are pleased to feature Professor Heather Olson from the School of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences.



**Heather Olson**  
**Professor, School of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences**

***Where are you from?***

I'm originally from Naples, Florida.

***Which college or university did you attend?***

I attended Edison Community College for my AA and Education Certification credits, FGCU for my BA and MA, and I'm currently enrolled in Capella University's Psychology PhD program.

***When did you begin teaching at FSW?***

I started teaching at Edison Collegiate High School in 2010 and switched to full-time faculty at FSW in 2014.

***What made you become interested in your academic discipline?***

Thanks to a wonderful Ted Talk I've learned that I'm a multipotentialite. My first academic discipline was English. Reading was always my favorite, and I'm still mystified by the capability to open a book and know people and go places that are not otherwise accessible. I decided to study literature simply because

I loved reading. As an overworked high school teacher, I started practicing yoga to manage stress, ended up with a few more certifications, and was captivated by meditation and mindfulness. This interest led me to pursue a Ph.D. in Psychology. I have lived experience with the positive change yoga can make in mental and emotional health, but I wanted to understand the science behind it.

***What is your favorite food and favorite local restaurant?***

My favorite food is a toss-up between curry and rice and beans. My favorite restaurant is my kitchen. To mix it up with the occasional pandemic takeout, I tend to order from Ninja Thai, India's Grill, and Lan Xang.

***If you could have dinner with any historical figure, who would it be and what would you ask them?***

I would love to have dinner with Victoria Woodhull. From business to politics to activism, she absolutely fascinates me and totally embodies the spirit of multipotentialites .

***What new things have you learned or done as a result of COVID-19 & working remotely?***

I've learned that I'm a workaholic, and I'm working on that. When working outside of the house, I was always on the run and didn't realize the number of hours I worked each week. Grading at night and on the weekends was what I considered downtime. Working from home with my partner and seeing that he works about ½ the hours that I do helped me realize it was ok to say no and clear my plate a bit. As much as I love all things FSW, I also have a wonderful home life, and I want to spend time enjoying it.

***COVID-19 has increased online learning, and as a result, the need for promoting inclusivity in virtual learning environments. What ideas can you share with your colleagues about how to ensure inclusivity in the virtual classroom?***

I'm teaching fully online, and I've learned to love the virtual classroom. Discussion boards, Peardeck, and Flipgrid are fantastic for promoting inclusivity. In the online classroom, every student has a voice. Students have to reflect, revise, and think critically before participating in class. The online classroom creates an inclusive space for rich communication.

***What are you doing (exercise, cooking, reading, etc.) to take care of your mental and physical health during social isolation?***

I'm kinda hooked on self-care and loving it. I practice yoga or work out (thank you, Pop Sugar fitness) six mornings a week and meditate daily. My dogs get to go for at least two substantial walks a day. I'm rinsing the dust off my paddleboards in the gulf or a local river on a much more regular basis, and in the interest of staying socially distant and learning something new, I've taken up golf. I've also found jigsaw puzzles to be a fun counter to screen time.

***What advice do you have for your colleagues on how to navigate social isolation and changes from COVID-19?***

My advice to colleagues is to stay present each day and look for things to enjoy at home. One of my all-time favorite quotes is from Maya Angelou, "If you don't like a thing, change it. If you can't change it, change the way you think about it." Instead of thinking about what can't be changed in the world right

now, focus on what can be changed in day to day activities. Really listen to students, develop awesome lectures or assignment prompts, enjoy collaborating with colleagues in new ways, and take time to appreciate your immediate surroundings. I watched Soul over the weekend, and there was a lesson that stuck with me: A fish was asking for directions to the ocean, and another fish reminded it that they're already in the water. Enjoying the water may require some serious perspective-shifting, but it's a choice I'm going to try to make every day.

If you would like to be featured in the *Ten Questions for Faculty Series*, please contact Kelly Westfield, Coordinator of Marketing & Technology for the Teaching and Learning Center: [kwestfield@fsw.edu](mailto:kwestfield@fsw.edu)



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