

Dave: [00:00:00] In today's episode of Teaching in Higher Ed, number 128, Bonni Stachowiak shares about her experience at the Online Learning Consortium conference.

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Dave: [00:00:21] Welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. This is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to increase our personal productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

Dave: [00:00:47] All right Bonni, how'd I do?

Bonno: [00:00:49] You did fabulous. But I wonder if people are confused who are you.

Dave: [00:00:53] Who's this crazy person who's taking over your podcast?

Bonni: [00:00:57] For those of you who are listening for the first time usually you hear my voice in the beginning. This is Bonni Stachowiak normally the host of Teaching in Higher Ed. and I am all the way out in Orlando Florida and it's always better to have the person is hard wired to the recorder who gets the best sound being the host of the show and so I decided why not have the person that I am married to that I completely love and trust in terms of being not just a podcast host but you know Father of our children you know all the good things.

Dave: [00:01:29] Yeah just those minor details.

Bonni: [00:01:32] Dave Stachowiak. [laughing] He has been on episodes before but it's been a while.

Dave: [00:01:35] It has been a while. I'm so glad to be back on the show. And I'm anxious to hear because you know I haven't really talked much this week and I'm anxious to hear about what you've been up to and where you're at and what you're doing and why you aren't at home helping me care for our children? Who Have been adorable all week. So it's actually been so much fun to hang out with them. But yeah. So tell us about where you're at in the conference and what's what's going on.

Bonni: [00:02:02] I'm at the Online Learning Consortium's Conference it's called the OLC Accelerate Conference and again out here in Orlando Florida. And there are about 2000 attendees. It's actually just wrapping up just today Friday November 18th. And many people are now headed home.

Dave: [00:02:22] And what kind of folks are at this conference and what are the kinds of things that are being talked about?

Bonni: [00:02:30] It brings together a lot of different people sometimes it's people who are in instructional design roles or faculty development roles. There are some professors here although actually I met fewer professors than perhaps I intended on meeting. And of course people that work for all different types of institutions everything from small four year private schools like the one that I teach at all the way up to the really big ones and everything in between.

Dave: [00:02:58] You aired a show last week where you went over the main talk you were giving at the conference this week. But I knew you were doing two other panels of my remembering correctly and I was wondering if maybe you could share something of that of what was discussed and what conversation was.

Bonni: [00:03:15] Well the first panel that I was on it decided to give an overview of each one of their tracks. They don't call them tracks. They call them strands. And because it sort of tracks where you think about going down the same track they think of it as a strand of thread maybe 10 different sessions from different strands and learn about different themes and they decided to give an overview of each one of the strands and have some of the presenters go and share a little bit about what their sessions were going to be like I guess they selected a best in strand presentation from each one of those and we got to hear from those people as well that we're on the panel as part of a panel of three for the strand on learning effectiveness.

Dave: [00:04:02] And you also did a panel and I remember I saw a tweet of you with a number of other podcasters was there a podcasting panel, too?

Bonni: [00:04:09] Yeah this was the largest attended session that I was a part of, either as a presenter or on the panel, and it was really great fun to be connected with five other besides myself five other podcasters who are all doing something a little bit different. I wrote a little bit about it for my institute of faculty development blog at our institution and was writing about really everything from the spectrum of there's a few women who host a podcast.

Bonni: [00:04:38] It's actually more like a YouTube live streaming session that they only just last week decided to throw a feed up to iTunes with just the audio but they're called Women Who Wine in Education and that is not W H I N E but it's w i n e and they get together over a glass of wine and go to the YouTube live streaming channel and just hit record and whatever happens happens. And so that would be sort of the more informal type of podcast there's also some broadcasters who I would loved getting to meet in person who are experimenting with periscope which is the live video streaming service that Twitter recently bought out and all the way up to the more formally produced podcasts like our podcast Teaching in Higher Ed as well as Katie Linders research and action podcast and she and I were definitely more on the formality as having show notes for every episode and having a little bit more planned conversations that type of thing a little bit more of a structured format.

Dave: [00:05:43] One of the things that's always interesting to me whenever I go to a conference is just what what shapes my world view - both what are highlights and what are you know maybe things that are unexpected that come out of a conference but also what what you leave thinking or doing differently than you did before you got there. I'm curious. Maybe starting off first with what are some of the highlights from your experience over the last few days.

Bonni: [00:06:07] There were a couple of them. I know I just talked about the podcast panel but I loved getting to connect with them and then also getting to connect with some people that listen to this podcast. They came to the session that was kind of a surreal thing to have one of the women who had come and attended said and I quote you've saved my bacon a number of times Bonni she said it's just interesting for her how she'll listen to one of the episodes and somehow the very next week she'll end up having someone ask her about and she's found it to be a great resource and it was just great to hear from people and to get a sense some of the people came because they

wanted to start podcasts of their own and then others just came again because they listened to their various shows I wanted to connect with us and hear from us.

Bonni: [00:06:48] And I just loved that it was just great because when we're doing podcast you have a podcast too of course Dave. It's much more of a one to many kind of conversation and it's not too often that we get to hear back although both you and I have community is that we've established outside of just the podcasting format but it's still just great fun to see people in person and to get to connect that way. And then I really think they do a wonderful job at this conference of having Yes a very very big focus on the breadth and depth of what's available there were so many different almost too many I if you will sessions I think on any one of the strands there were between 30 and 40 breakouts that you could choose from.

Dave: [00:07:33] Oh wow. That's a lot.

Bonni: [00:07:34] Yeah. But they're also they have the technology test kitchen and there were two ways you can play in there you could go and they have a whole process that's built around design thinking. And you go in they have tables that are set up with Play-Doh and sticky notes and all different kinds of toys that you could kind of play with a little bit as you're conceptualizing ideas. And then a big magnetic whiteboard with I don't know if you've seen those poetry magnetic words where you can arrange them you know on your fridge if you actually have a fridge magnets attached to it so they sound like they have that. But with instructional design types of words. And they had a whole map of design thinking creating a recipe because they're all going off of the theme of a kitchen.

Bonni: [00:08:24] So how do you create a recipe to solve different challenges that we have in higher ed and specifically in blended learning and online learning. There was just really fun because you could go and not just be talked at but you could go and talk with people and brainstorm with people and that's really fun. And then they also did I have never actually seen one of these shows that's like a I think they once called Top Chef the cooking challenge show like reality TV but it's cooking.

Dave: [00:08:51] It sounds familiar. It will become painfully apparent to our listeners how much chef work. We do in the house.

Bonni: [00:09:05] Every time. Sandy Morgan our dear friend comes over who Dave co-hosts the Ending Human Trafficking podcast with and she's been on the show before so if you've been listening for a while you've already heard of Sandy but she lived in Greece for more than 10 years and cooks amazing Mediterranean food and she'll come over and just shake her head. You need to sharpen your knives you need to sharpen your knives. I think I've never sharpened that. I mean I think we own a knife but I don't think I've ever actually sharpened one so yes not a lot of that but anyway so they went with the whole reality TV. Top Chef kind of contest idea and they would have these little contests throughout the conference. And I got to see one of them in action where they presented a challenge to four different teams. And then the four different teams have 15 minutes to come up with what their solution was to the challenge.

Bonni: [00:09:59] And I really liked the particular when I got to see because it was all around communication and the different stakeholders in an institution that need to be aware of what's happening with online learning in the institution. And they all had a really different and creative way of approaching that problem and it was really fun to see and they would mix up vendors who were there with people who were actually working at institutions and that was also fun to see as well.

Dave: [00:10:26] Fabulous. How about low lights anything that wasn't as fun or or or maybe unexpected.

Bonni: [00:10:33] Yeah. Probably two themes to this. The first one is certainly no fault of OLC was just an interesting juxtaposition. You and I are recording this on Friday November 18th and so it's just slightly more than a week after the election results came down and having some conversations with students at my institution and with colleagues and just hearing about some of their fears.

Bonni: [00:11:01] And I had someone just a couple of days ago email me about DACA, which is the opportunity that President Obama had put in place for undocumented students to be able to have the ability to go to college and to have work permits and so on and just the fears that people have over that going away so just the juxtaposition of of that and not really being ready to shift over into what sometimes felt to me like more of a commoditized sort of conversation.

Bonni: [00:11:37] I mean and again it's not their fault. I don't think that they could have necessarily planned for this but I wanted to be engaging in conversations

about some of the underserved populations in higher ed. And I didn't see as many sessions but maybe I didn't look hard enough you know but just the idea of if I'd go into the vendor hall it just felt a little bit too much of you know "here's the latest and greatest" - it felt like you know you go into Costco and they have one of those seven hundred dollar blenders. You know and I would think like, "we could never afford the \$700 blender at our institution." And I don't know how relevant a conversation with you is going to be you know that kind of so it's just an interest in sort of juxtaposition and then I talked about the depth and breadth of what's available as a real highlight to me.

Bonni: [00:12:25] But it also was a little bit of a detractor because it just felt like I was at this huge buffet of food. And it's too much you know. And then I sort of don't want it to go to waste too and I want to find more ways where we can take what we're learning and actually think about how we could put it into action at our institutions. And it just felt like too much. I guess for me it's just where I was at that moment.

Dave: [00:12:50] Well yeah I can see that being just in the context of the news and everything going on that a hard thing to navigate around and plan for like you said not something that could have been controlled necessarily.

Bonni: [00:13:02] And then the other thing that came up and this came up a little bit on Twitter there was a keynote speaker from a organization called Minerva. And there are actually three different parts of Minerva. There's more Minerva Schools. That is actually the framework that he was describing. It's a university I'll talk about it in just a second. But there are there's Minerva I forgot what the second piece of it is. But then there's also the the first two that I'm mentioning are nonprofit entities.

Bonni: [00:13:32] But the last one is an LLC and they're set up to take their proprietary tools and actually perhaps then sell them to other institutions and make them more scalable and replicate them at other institutions so they have like intellectual property that they're starting to look at selling.

Bonni: [00:13:53] But anyway so he spoke and he started his talk out by describing this amazing framework that they have for their school where they have zero lectures they it's all about more of an active learning type of approach and have demonstrated their their software in their system that they use to perform this type of service. And you know there's this educational approach for their students.

Bonni: [00:14:21] But he started out by saying we don't allow lectures but yet I'm going to lecture to you for the next 45 minutes. And I just thought that just you know I mean I realized that you couldn't necessarily replicate because they have a class cap of 19 no classes or more than 19 students. And by the way people should definitely go and look at Minerva's website. I'll put a link to it and show notes so people can go look at.

Bonni: [00:14:49] I'm not even doing it justice. It's absolutely an incredible educational model and I had some friends and colleagues who had gone to the educators conference and had been able to hear from him then. So it's neat, just two weeks later to be able to hear from him and get a sense of why they came back to our institution very energized by what he had to say.

Bonni: [00:15:09] But just this incongruence of so many of the presenters that I have a chance to see where it is just a traditional lecture format. And I thought you know 'We're at a technology conference.' And why are people not asking me to pull up my phone and participate in polls or do something that involves the technology that it was funny because my session actually did that. I talked about that in last week's episode. Take out your phones and it's so refreshing to say the room full of people by the way the room is not full of people. To the people who were in the room let's rephrase that. Pull out your phones and go to this Web site and type in this code and no one had any problems at all you know that was kind of a refreshing change from when I did that at my institution that's sometimes you know a broader type of person comes and so you have people that have more difficulty operating their phones than at a tech conference of course at an Educational Technology Conference.

Bonni: [00:16:09] But anyway I just found it interesting that there was this incongruence - two ways really - just one with not having the kind of involvement that I would have expected in the sessions. And then two not having the presentation materials the PowerPoint and such to really be designed the way that I've come to understand is most effective when delivering online and that's to have less text less bullets and more images. And I saw a lot of text to whole a lot of bullets still and having people reading off of screens as opposed to the audience reading off of screens as opposed to just coming up with the visual that would convey that. And we've talked about this on episodes before but for anyone that wants to explore this a little bit more Slideology by Nancy Duarte is a phenomenal cure for what I'm describing.

Dave: [00:17:01] Agreed. That's such a great book. And there's still as much as you and I think about the power of good facilitation, instruction, and training

and probably a lot of it's informed by our or are experts in the training industry is that there's still so much more to do in higher education of bring that into a lot of classrooms so I feel your pain around this and at the same time I'm also thinking like you know it's a it's a really important opportunity for us to have probably even more conversations about that on both of our guests.

Bonni: [00:17:30] Last week there was a lot of Twitter flurry about another conference called The OpenEd conference and there was some celebration about the fact that at least one of the sessions had involved students who were presenting but there was also lamenting that there hadn't been more student involvement and there was this call for don't ever go to a conference and without bringing students with you they should be an integral part of the conversation and that was certainly front and center in my mind as I thought you know it just felt sometimes like there was just too great of a distance between our students.

Bonni: [00:18:11] I don't want to go to a session and not hear about students and their experience and their learning. And it just felt like sometimes there was too much of a distance between those things. But again I might just be in a weird place and I might feel a little jaded but it's been tough. It's been tough.

Dave: [00:18:27] Well that actually might be a good transition into our recommendations if you're ready unless you have something else to share on the conference.

Bonni: [00:18:35] I'm ready to go. Thanks.

Dave: [00:18:36] Well the reason I was thinking about that is because I was actually going to bring up the election as well and I was you know I think that so many of us have been really captivated both good and bad ways over the last few weeks with everything that's going on with politics and news and in our country here in the States and I know people around the world have been following it as well. And I think about Stephen Covey's model - Stephen Covey's the you know the really well known author from the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People one of my favorite all time books - and he talks about the distinction between for each of us our circle of concern and then a concentric circle inside of that that smaller called our circle of influence and the circle of concern of course is all of the things going on in the world: politics, news, presidential elections, sports things said rightfully so we're concerned about we want to know about what's happening and yet we don't have a lot of direct influence over at least ourselves, most of us.

Dave: [00:19:42] And our circle of influence is the things that are. That's a smaller circle but it's the things that we have more direct control over in our lives and if not control at least we're able to influence the outcome not only for ourselves but for the people around us and our families and our communities and our classrooms.

Dave: [00:20:00] And I think me like a lot of other people have spent a lot more time than we'd like to in the last couple of weeks in the circle of concern of thinking about all the things that are going on in the world. And what does the news mean for all of us and the work we're all trying to do. And I have been reminded that you know that's a natural human reaction when there's big world events that happen. But I'm reminded of the importance of getting back to the circle of influence and Bonni you know this and some of your listeners know this over the last three years our parent company Innovate Learning has affiliated with one of the folks who's a great leader on helping leaders to develop their skills named Michael Hyatt he has a podcast as well I know some of your listeners listen to him, too.

Dave: [00:20:46] And he's been doing of course over the last several years to help people to do annual planning and we've affiliated with him again this year and he's offering a free eBook titled "Achieve What Matters Most in 2017" to get people thinking about how do you start putting together your annual plan in order to be more effective going into the new year of really zeroing in on that circle of influence.

Dave: [00:21:11] And so if that is something that sounds of interest to you you can get access to it at link on my website at coachingforleaders.com/best2017 . And I think that it's a good starting point for getting the street to think about how do we really zero in on that circle of influence and people to then grow that circle of influence. I think I left that piece up by the way if you do a better job of staying in the circle of influence your circle of influence gets bigger.

Dave: [00:21:41] And so I think that's one of the key things that I always try to remember when I have any time of frustration in my life is like, "OK what can I... How can I focus on things I can really have influence over?" Because that's going to ultimately help me to be more valuable to other people. So that's my recommendation for this episode.

Bonni: [00:21:57] I was talking about earlier the juxtapositions that I was experiencing and one that I didn't mention but I well now was how I started my travel on the way out from Southern California out to Florida.

Bonni: [00:22:10] First of all Dave's parents had graciously used their frequent flier miles to upgrade me to business class. But in a Dave explained to me that in a plane like I was on that pretty much the default for a first class so I'm in the second row of the plane in a very luxurious seat with all kinds of delightful concoctions being brought to me at everyone's beck and call. And I take that as the perfect time to read - finally read - Ta-Nehisi Coates' "Between the World and Me" which if you're not familiar with it he has an African-American father who writes this book as a letter to his African-American son.

Bonni: [00:22:53] And let's just say that it was rather interesting to be sitting in first class and just to top it all off served on at least the last half of my trip by an all African American female set of Flight Attendants. And I mean you can see what I was reading by the way that would have made it perhaps I don't know maybe it would have opened up conversation or I don't know if it would have been awkward or not but it was on the Kindle and it's just a beautifully written, heartbreaking, important read for us to be reading but it was interesting timing to be doing that. And I read that actually two books on the flight out of totally different veins.

Bonni: [00:23:40] Sarah Rose Cavanagh who is has written a book that's part of his series that James Lang is the editor for and her book is called "The Spark of Learning: Energizing the College Classroom with the Science of Emotion". And it's a wonderful book I'm so excited we're already scheduled to have an interview together in December. I'm not sure when that episode will air but feel free to email me with any questions that you want to ask her about emotion and learning energizing the college classroom with the science of emotion it was a wonderful book.

Bonni: [00:24:19] It is rich with practical ideas that we can put into place but it's also a quick read. So it doesn't you know it's not something that it's going to take weeks and weeks to read it just really it was a funny juxtaposition. So reading those things sitting in first class but I totally recommend both of them.

Bonni: [00:24:36] And then my last recommendation is just to put the top on the strange juxtapositions. As Dave knows the last time that he and I traveled we took a trip with the kids to Chicago. I was over the summer right. We went to a podcasting conference for that because the kids were traveling with us. We

had my large suitcase and then my smaller I guess medium sized suitcase or whatever both the wheeling kind and on the same trip. The wheels just came apart on all of them. They literally just turned into. They looked like Flintstone wheels. Just try to roll them and they just were sort of almost turning into shape shapes of a square or a rectangle it was really really funny.

Bonni: [00:25:20] But yeah what is the chances of that that the wheels on the same exact trip just completely give out like we're done. You've had those for too many years. It's time for you to get a new suitcase. And so one thing I want to recommend is called the Wirecutter web site and the Wirecutter is what Dave and I use a lot of the time when we're not sure what is the best such and such to buy. I think Dave you looked for our washer and dryer set on the Wirecutter if I'm not mistaken.

Dave: [00:25:48] I did and I bought a headset recently from the Wirecutter and it's a really it's hard to describe. It's I guess it's like a curated site where it just basically they go out and they find the best of whatever it is you're looking for. Or for looking for a set of headphones or a TV they just they've gone and done all the research and they say here's the best and here's the second best and and they just got purchased by I think the New York Times and my remembering that.

Bonni: [00:26:13] I don't remember who it was but I think you're right they did get purchased by someone.

Dave: [00:26:17] It's been such a successful site. Yeah.

Bonni: [00:26:20] Yeah, it's exciting. And unlike Consumer Reports which used to be my go to my perception is that they've kept up a little bit more on the tech side and Consumer Reports kept up with their model of a pay to view type of a service - a publication - versus the wire cutter makes that money by oh here's the suitcase and by the way here's a link to buy it on Amazon where we're going to make a cut of your purchase for example so that their model was a little bit more current I think for today's times.

Bonni: [00:26:52] And of course I'm not necessarily interested in purchasing a subscription to something like that until the very time when I need it. I don't mind that they get the referral so I do. I recommend the wire cutter web site and author of that I did find a wonderful suitcase and it was hysterical because the kids first of all it's one of those spinner suitcases you want to excite your kids just

put them in front of a spinner suitcase. That is going to provide years of entertainment. I am sure of it. It's hysterical. They absolutely loved it.

Bonni: [00:27:24] And so it's the Travelpro Platinum Magna 25 inch express. And I loved the review that they had on their web site about it. And now here I am having taken you know half of a trip and everything's going great and it's a great suitcase. And I suspect I will have it for years to come.

Dave: [00:27:42] So you went from your suitcase falling apart on the last trip sitting in the last row of the airplane to this beautiful First Class great new suitcase experience this time. Now you just need a knife sharpening set and you're going to beat it. You're going to be set. Going to go on the Wirecutter see if we can find ourselves a good life's sharpening set.

Bonni: [00:28:00] Except that we have a knife sharpener somewhere I just have no idea where it is. We have an interesting kitchen situation.

Dave: [00:28:09] See it's it's now. Now we have so many. Everything's coming back to kitchens up so it's going to be a kitchen episode for us for whatever reason. I think that about wraps it up. Let's let's say goodbye to folks and Bonni you want to give folks a heads up on what's coming up.

Bonni: [00:28:26] On future episodes?

Dave: [00:28:28] Yeah. Do you know?

Bonni: [00:28:30] There's an episode with Bill Dogterom that's coming. Who is someone I admire greatly, talking about mentoring in an upcoming episode.

Dave: [00:28:38] Fabulous. And of course we hope you'll go on to the teachinginhighered.com website. And to subscribe to the weekly update Bonni sends out a article each week along with the show notes that comes on Wednesdays and you also get access to the free e-book, too - right, Bonni?

Bonni: [00:28:56] That's correct. 19 tools to help you use technology in your teaching and for greater productivity.

Dave: [00:29:02] And that's a teachinginhighered.com/subscribe. Right?

Bonni: [00:29:06] That'll do it.

Dave: [00:29:07] All right. See? I'm finding my way as the Teaching in Higher ed host, standing host.

Bonni: [00:29:14] Thanks so much for listening everyone.

Dave: [00:29:15] Thanks thanks for letting me do this. Look forward to seeing you tomorrow.

Bonni: [00:29:19] Thanks Dave.

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