



Dr. Bonni Stachowiak is an Associate Professor of Business and Management and the Dean of Teaching and Learning at Vanguard University. As the creator and host of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast, she offers learners a space to discuss both the science and art of facilitating learning. In her podcast, and in a forthcoming book, The Productive Online (& Offline) Professor: A Practical Guide to Managing Productivity in Online Teaching, she explores ways educators can improve their productivity in order to be more present for their students and more present in their own lives.

PROFESSOR SPOTLIGHT

Podcasts in Higher Education at Vanguard University

Pushing Past a Limiting Self-Belief

With an MA in Organizational Leadership from Chapman University and Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership from Pepperdine University, Stachowiak has long studied best practices for educational technology, always seeking to provide students more agency in their learning.

When her husband Dave Stachowiak, who hosts *Coaching for Leaders* podcast, encouraged her to try it for herself in the summer of 2014, she was quickly hooked on the possibilities and recognized there were no other resources then that were strictly focused on teaching in higher education. Stachowiak believes the use of podcasts in higher education is “growing in momentum,” and will continue to do so.

The only roadblock she has found, when educators are exploring this technology to incorporate into their classrooms, is “pushing past this limiting self-belief” that can shut down imagination and creativity in our teaching. The resistance is a result of one seemingly small issue: “They have no idea how easy it is to use podcasts in our teaching.”

Learning While Walking the Back Bay

Not surprisingly, she has encountered little resistance from students who are engaging with

podcasts. While many listen during commutes, others listen while washing dishes, driving, or walking their dogs.

She takes every opportunity to allow movement during class sessions as well. In California, they can walk as a group down to Back Bay in Newport Beach, listening to a podcast on the way out, and pairing up to discuss the content on the way back. While it’s long been understood that movement enhances the learning process, there are still far too many classrooms where bodies are still, and engagement is limited.

Curation Over Creation: Seeking Out Storytellers

Most use of podcasts in the classroom, Stachowiak states, is in using other people’s podcasting, with the classroom designers and educators being “curators” rather than developers. For instance, she uses a podcast from Planet Money in her classroom, an episode about the economy in Brazil. Afterwards, she has the class break into small groups to consider what their advice would be. Prediction as a teaching device is offering deeper learning, she adds, not passive learning.

She’s also bringing in engaging and informed experts with publicly available podcasts, and

while she ensures their conclusions are backed by solid research, she prioritizes storytelling when making her selection.

For instance, when considering podcasts that she has found moving, she mentions “The 1619 Project,” which documents the 400th anniversary of the first slave brought to the US. In addition to being educational and incredibly important in terms of content, this is also a series of podcasts that offer “incredible storytelling.”

In another example of a podcast series that she finds both educational and entertaining, each of the amendments to the constitution is covered by a musician or group of musicians in song—from Dolly Parton to a feminist Mariachi group.

David Rhoads, Director of Teaching Excellence and Digital Pedagogy at Vanguard University, is a regular listener to her podcast and many others, which Stachowiak believes results from his focus on “continually growing his own excellence in teaching, as well as coaching other faculty toward that end.”

Rhoads understands, Stachowiak explains, the importance of focusing on “curation over creation,” especially when someone with far more money and resources may have already built something wonderful to use.



Podcasts in the Classroom

Rhoads notes that one of the ways podcasts can be used in the classroom is as prompts for assignments designed around listening/reflecting, which offers students a chance to “learn select subject matter in a way that models, for the student, the skill of quality communication.” Another possibility, student podcast creation, gives them a chance to research, develop a new skill, and present their new knowledge in creative ways.

He has found that Stachowiak finds the best pedagogical practices from educators around the world—not just to use them in her own teaching, but in order to share those tips with other educators through her blog and podcast.

Rhoads adds, “She has a deep desire to learn, and then share that knowledge or experience with other teachers, so they can constantly improve what they are doing in the campus or online classroom. Everything she does in her innovative practice places student learning and growth as the priority.”

Hosted by Vanguard University's Dr. Bonni Stachowiak, *The Teaching in Higher Ed Podcast* airs weekly and focuses on open education, excellence in teaching, diversity and inclusion, instructional design, creativity and productivity in teaching, blended learning, and educational technology.

Sharing Knowledge

Hosted by Stachowiak, *The Teaching in Higher Ed Podcast* airs weekly and focuses on open education, excellence in teaching, diversity and inclusion, instructional design, creativity and productivity in teaching, blended learning, and educational technology. Since summer of 2014, the podcast has amassed 275 episodes, welcomed 246 guests, and been enjoyed in over seventy countries—resulting in over 1.1 million downloads as of this summer 2019.

Her podcast is not the only place she is working to share her knowledge with peers. In *The Productive Online (& Offline) Professor: A Practical Guide to Managing Productivity in Online Teaching*, Stachowiak helps professors

who teach blended or online courses to manage their personal productivity and to avoid the trap of feeling there is never a time to press the “off button” on providing feedback and support to learners, when the content delivery is asynchronous and contact often occurs outside of normal work hours.

The text details ways to communicate effectively using synchronous and asynchronous methods, as well as tips for ways to enrich those communications. It also details methods to find, curate, and share relevant knowledge in one's courses, as well as a broader “personal learning network.” The guide also explores tools to navigate some of the unique challenges of productivity for online teaching and ways to grade efficiently while still providing substantial and meaningful feedback.

Dr. Sandra Morgan notes that using podcasts is innovative “not just for the sake of being different—but the purpose of really connecting.” She believes we all learn best when *doing* and views Stachowiak as one of the best at getting students actively involved in learning. The same innovative practices that engross students engage faculty members as well.

The Purpose of Really Connecting

Dr. Sandra Morgan, R.N. Ph.D., is the creator of the *Ending Human Trafficking* podcast and Director of the Global Center for Women and Justice at Vanguard. She uses her podcast in her classes, as part of the Ending Human Trafficking Certificate, and has been a guest on Stachowiak’s podcast many times.

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one of the best at getting students actively involved in learning.

Stachowiak will be innovative with faculty learning as well, Morgan shares, bringing gamification into events where participants may not have anticipated how enjoyable the experience would be.

Morgan recalls when Stachowiak hosted several educators from Iraq, including the Deputy Minister of Higher Education in Baghdad, at Vanguard. They likely did not expect to be using 3x5 cards and sticky notes, moving around the room as they learned—a process “completely out of their normal routine.”

Participants were fully involved, not just in the academic process, but in the movement. Morgan adds, “Bonni gets us out of our seats.”

Another benefit Morgan sees with podcasts in education is that they reach people in powerful ways; some make you laugh, while others make you cry. “Learning has to engage emotions,” she notes—sharing that Bonni and Dave have both challenged her to “leverage technology not for the sake of technology but because the subject is so important.” Now, Morgan can share information about human trafficking in many places where she would not have been able to easily travel; they have listeners in 92 countries.

“Some people find something good and guard it,” Morgan notes; Stachowiak “found something good and works to give it away.”

Removing Yourself from Centerstage

Sierra Smith was once Stachowiak’s student; currently she is a graduate student earning her teaching credential, where she commutes up to 50 miles a day in her student-teaching placement, working in three cities. She sees her time on the road as opportunities to learn, and podcasts have given her the opportunity to “extend the learning



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from my classes by having access to rich learning through podcasts while I commute.”

Noting how inspiring she always finds Stachowiak’s podcast, Smith has used this resource to learn new teaching tools as she starts her career; she’s found those experiences to spark “a deeper desire to seek creative ways to enhance learning for my students.”

The podcast is not the only inspiration for Smith. She credits Stachowiak for being an exciting, innovative educator and leader. Recalling her time in Stachowiak’s class, Smith notes, “Bonni did not always take the center stage in her classes; she incorporated educational technology in our class and allowed the technology to enhance the learning and foster student-to-student relationships. This helped me make authentic connections with my classmates.”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Dr. Rachel James Clevenger earned her M.Ed. degree from Mississippi College.

After finishing her PhD in Composition and Rhetoric, she taught and served as the University Writing Center Director for Birmingham Southern College and University of Alabama at Birmingham. Most recently, she taught Business Communications at Samford University.

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