

Episode 2: Sandy Skelaney on Leading Students from Awareness to Empathy, Engagement, and Changemaking

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>> STEPHANIE: You are listening to Making Global Learning Universal, conversations about engaging diverse perspectives, collaboration, and complex problem solving in higher education, on campus, online, in local communities, and abroad. I'm your host, Stephanie Doscher, Director of Global Learning Initiatives at Florida International University and coauthor of Making Global Learning Universal, Promoting Inclusion and Success for All.

>> SANDY: Even on a very personal level, engagement is so important. It's about just being able to look at somebody that you wouldn't normally connect with or talk to and actually be present with them in that moment and understand and empathize with what they are going through. And I think if the whole world was able to be a little bit more like that, we would see a lot of improvement in these problems that we have.

>> STEPHANIE: Those powerful words were spoken by nationally recognized anti-trafficking expert and FIU professor Sandy Skelaney. Four years ago Sandy developed a brand-new global learning course "Sex Trafficking Building Solutions." The first semester she taught it, she had eight students enrolled. This past semester she has over 100. Now if you're currently teaching a course that focuses on a social issue and you want to guide students towards hands-on solution making, in this interview Sandy lays out step by step how you can lead students from awareness to deep empathy, true collaboration, and innovative problem solving and engagement. And if you're a professional working in the field and you want to bring your knowledge and expertise to college students, Sandy lays out the plan for doing just that. I really can't wait for you to hear about this course. So here is my conversation with Sandy.

You know what just popped into mind was the first time we met each other. Wasn't that in the library over here?

>> SANDY: It was in the library.

>> STEPHANIE: Right. And if I remember correctly, our friend Nicole introduced us to one another because I remember her telling me you have got to meet this woman.

>> SANDY: Right. She said the same thing to me.

>> STEPHANIE: She is so mission focused like you are. And so we sat and we just started riffing and talking about what each other does. So maybe we can kind of go back to that, because I remember I was sharing about the work I do with global learning, and then you started to share with me about your work, and I think we need to let the world in too, into your work.

>> SANDY: Yeah. And this was a great meeting because I was really brand new at FIU, and you were the first person I met. I really got excited about what you were doing.

>> STEPHANIE: Awe! That makes me feel really good, and I felt immediately the same way. So let's get the world excited about the work that you do. So maybe if you could just tell us, share what drives you, Sandy, because you have a very strong motivating and driving force.

>> SANDY: Yeah. So, you know, I have been doing work in the field of sex trafficking for 15 years. I have a very strong passion for justice and injustice issues. But when I look at kind of how to solve those issues, those major social problems, a lot of that boils down to engagement, people's either lack of ability to engage with each other or engage the right community to be able to solve these problems and not have people slipping through the cracks and experiencing human rights abuses and things like that.

So even on a very personal level, engagement is so important. It's about just being able to look at somebody that you wouldn't normally connect with or talk to and actually be present with them in that moment and understand and empathize with what they are going through. And I think if the whole world was able to be a little bit more like that, we would see a lot of improvement in these problems that we have.

>> STEPHANIE: How did you -- how did you come to that realization that change happens not so much through the individual's efforts but through that space between people, through that relationship and that connection making?

>> SANDY: You know, that was -- the years that I spent in the field working on issues of sex trafficking, I was building programs that provided services directly to girls that were teenagers that were being exploited in prostitution and sex traffic. And you can't do that job well without that connection because they have experienced so much adversity in their lives and they have so many vulnerabilities when they are kind of scooped up by pimps and traffickers, manipulated, really lured in with these promises of a better life and all of these ways that they get drawn into trafficking.

If you want to combat that, you have to have an actual connection with them. You have to be able to connect with them on more than just a surface level. And a lot of the system that's out there is kind of bureaucratic or you have to do this particular intake and get asked these questions, and there's a process and then this person and then you meet up with that person and then maybe you have a prosecutor you have to talk to.

So in that process it's really easy to lose the personal aspect of it, that personal connection. And these are people that are the most vulnerable people. So a lot of times they have lacked that connection. They have had parents who were incarcerated or they have been abusing drugs or just generally dysfunctional abuse of homes.

So those personal connections, that sense of belonging, is so integral to their healing, and it's something that they feel like they are getting from a trafficker a lot of times when they first meet them.

So if you're going to help them get out, then you need to also be able to help them replenish that sense of belonging in a healthy community, and to do it you have to be present with them. There's no way around that. You have to be 100% walking in their shoes, empathizing with their situation, able to make that connection through engagement.

>> STEPHANIE: Yeah. But how do you -- what does that look like? How do you do that if you come from a background that is maybe 180 degrees different from that? You haven't experienced those particular experiences. You don't know what that experience is like. How do you transcend or get into another person's shoes?

>> SANDY: I mean that's a really interesting question. I think some people are more naturally empathetic than others. But I think empathy is something that you can also learn, and you learn

it through experience. Your whole mission with the global learning is really leading to that. You experience different points of view. You experience voices from survivors. You kind of get all of those details of what that looks like, what is that process.

So it's not just this is the thing. When I'm teaching my class, it's not just this is what it is. I want you to know all about it. I want you to know the root causes of it, what is driving people, how the brain works, how does trauma impact the synapses in the brain. I go into everything so that people get this full picture of what drives the people that they might be helping, the survivors or the victims.

>> STEPHANIE: Okay. Now you're starting to get into you built your own sense of empathy and your skill set around being present through your own professional experience. So now the question is how do you do that in the classroom? So what courses are you infusing this study and this topic and this problem into? And then what are the kinds of experiences and content that you expose your students to to build this sense of empathy that they can then apply in their own lives?

>> SANDY: So here at FIU I teach Sex Trafficking Building Solutions.” It's not just sex trafficking. I actually add the building solutions because it is an applied learning class where they are building solutions. And the very first thing I ask them to do is write a journal about their own understanding of sex trafficking, their own experiences, any kind of feelings, thoughts, concerns they have, because I want to get a sense of where my students are at right from the start. I want to know what kind of biases they come with or if they even or if they are survivors themselves.

I have had people in my class who have known people or have had family members who have been trafficked and things like that, and all of that is really important for not just me to know but then I can shape the course and how I talk about certain things around those experiences, and we can bring out the expertise of the people in class themselves. And then it helps them to be able to recognize themselves what they are bringing as well. They probably know more than they think they do.

And a lot of times throughout the course I start -- people start making connections. They are like oh, I remember I saw that, or oh, this happened to me. I had one of my students say, now, after she went through these courses, she realized that she was almost, she was, there was an attempt at recruiting her into prostitution one time when she was at a bar. She met somebody. She didn't go with them, but she realized after being in my class that that was what that was, and she didn't know at the time.

>> STEPHANIE: Oh, wow! So you're talking about beginning with an empathetic imaginary. So starting to think about how do I think about these things, what do I maybe already know about it, and also maybe from the beginning, I can imagine what this might be like, starting that journey towards being present and empathy in a journal.

>> SANDY: Yeah. And, you know, a lot of people, almost everybody has experienced some kind of adversity. So in the class, throughout the class, they can see themselves in different bits and pieces of what I'm teaching. Not necessarily that they are 100% vulnerable to sex trafficking, but we have a whole class that we dedicate to risk factors and vulnerabilities. So we list a bunch of different vulnerabilities that we often see that lead to possibly becoming trafficked, and probably most of the students can relate to one or two of those.

>> STEPHANIE: Exactly. Let me ask you this. Do you think there's a difference or that there could be a difference in the fact that Miami, South Florida is ground zero for sex trafficking? Just in the news a couple of days ago there has been this uncovering of the massage parlors as a vehicle for that, and we're reading about it in the newspaper every day and meshed and embedded. It's all around us. Do you think that makes a difference in the way students come to the course or the way you teach the course versus if it were taught in a city that didn't have this dynamic going on as much and it was about kind of the other?

>> SANDY: That might be a stumping question. You know, I don't know if that really matters much. What I have noticed over the years is the difference in perception of what trafficking is.

So I actually have several students now that have come in with -- their concerns have been that they have been brought up in a culture where they were told to look out for vans in parking lots and things like that. So students have been taught to be afraid of trafficking of themselves. It's a younger generation. And that was never the case when I was growing up. I mean maybe abductions or something like that, but they are literally -- our society is literally framing it as human trafficking, and I find that really -- that's really interesting.

So I think that maybe partially draws people to the class. Definitely people who have experienced it or have it in their family or who are looking to work with very at-risk populations. I have a lot of psych majors, psychology majors that come to my class, and that definitely draws them to the class. So it's really --

>> STEPHANIE: So after the journaling experience, how then do you take students on the journey through the class?

>> SANDY: So the class, the structure, the way that I set up the class, I start with kind of theory. Looking at theory, looking at what is it, what is human trafficking, the basic stuff, the 101, the definition of trafficking and all of that. And then we go into like the deeper theory. How is race involved? How is race both a precursor and a factor that perpetuates trafficking? How is trafficking a gender issue? How does trafficking impact the LGBTQ community?

So we start looking at some of those more deeper systemic issues and just to get a sense of how this is on the root level. What goes into this. Not just your own individual. You have a history of abuse and all that stuff that makes you vulnerable. But if you have a history of abuse and you are in certain social groups that are disadvantaged and things like that, it's going to increase your vulnerability. Let's put it in perspective.

That's what I'm trying to do. We're going to frame it the right way. We're going to get rid of the stereotypes. Let's stop being afraid of those vans in parking lots, because half of those things you see on Facebook are hoaxes. Let's frame this correctly so that we understand who are the people more likely to be vulnerable. It's not that it can't happen to anybody, because it can, but most people use that as a marketing point for their organizations. There are certain people that have more vulnerabilities than others.

So after framing it correctly, then we talk about -- go into a little bit about responses, policy responses, and I like to take hot topics, hot issues, really fresh.

So this year we were talking about FOSTA which is the Fighting Online Sex Trafficking Act, which was signed last year in April and passed into law, and that basically -- we spent three days on this policy. We're analyzing it. Now that you know something about trafficking and the systemic factors and all that stuff, is this policy response really going to be something that is

going to be useful. It's going to have an impact. Or is it like a knee jerk kind of measure that is going to do more harm to different kinds of people? So let's look at how that will actually play out in the field.

So my experience being in the field, I have had the unique perspective of watching legislation come through and then impact my client in different ways. So I can sit there in front of a piece of legislation and say, what is this going to do on the user end. And so then we have a debate about it.

So they learn about the legislation. They learn about technology and trafficking and all the vulnerabilities about that. What the intent of the legislation was. We spent three days diving into this legislation. They do a debate and reflection paper to prepare for the debate so that they know which position they stand on. And then the next assignment after that is their policy paper that they write on the legislation.

>> STEPHANIE: Okay. So let me ask you about that debate piece. Do you assign students perspectives or do they choose perspectives? How does that work?

>> SANDY: They choose.

>> STEPHANIE: They choose.

>> SANDY: Yeah. And so far I haven't had everybody on one side.

>> STEPHANIE: That was my question.

>> SANDY: Usually I'm intentionally picking very controversial issues because this field is complex. It's not like black and white. I think there's a lot of knee jerk policy that's like yay, we're all going to get on board with this with FOSTA. But the thing is that there are a lot of people out there, sex workers rights and others who have felt like this has been very detrimental to them and very damaging and harmful.

>> STEPHANIE: The FOSTA legislation?

>> SANDY: Yeah. So I think -- and I think that all voices are important.

>> STEPHANIE: So what students get out of that is the legitimacy of different perspectives on the same piece of legislation when you think about it from the impact on different stakeholders. So you're really getting down the decision tree, secondary impacts, the interconnectedness, and the complexity of the situation.

>> SANDY: Yeah.

>> STEPHANIE: And then in the policy paper -- so they have done this work where they have researched, gotten some research around their own perspective that they went into the debate with. Do you give students in the policy paper -- do you open the door or invite them to rethink their perspective after having engaged in the debate?

>> SANDY: Yes. Absolutely. They come to my class, and I understand when they come into my class that they have not learned how to write a policy paper yet, and they also have not learned how to write my final project yet, and we will talk about that in a second. So I know that these are brand new skills for them, and I also know that these are very critical skills in the

world. No matter what job you go into, what career you go into, you can always benefit from knowing how to write a really good two to three influential policy type paper.

So they do -- they tend to have a lot of research papers that they know how to write, and they can be very verbose and use a lot of unnecessary words and all of those things because they want to fill up page count and stuff. So because I know that they don't know how to write this, I actually spend a whole day talking about how to write policy papers. So it's not -- I'm not just throwing them out there and saying hey, write this. We talk about the purpose of the policy paper. We talk about the legislative process, like how it goes through committees, da, da, da. Give them samples. Give them a checklist. If they marked everything off of the checklist, then they have done a great paper.

So they can have any opinion they want. They can change their opinion or not. It has to be related to the policy that we are discussing. This year it has been FOSTA, with regard to FOSTA, since it is already a law. It's not currently in debate. It's already a law, but it's a fresh law. There's a lot of pushback.

So what are the options for FOSTA? Well, you can ask your legislators to repeal it. You can tell your legislators I'm fully on board with this decision. Don't repeal it. Don't give in to these people. I support you. Thank you very much. With all of the supporting information. Or you can say FOSTA is great, but I think it needs these amendments. Most of them are asking for amendments, which is fascinating because it's the hardest one to do, and it's also -- it really relies on their creativity.

>> STEPHANIE: What teacher doesn't want -- I mean, that's the most exciting thing to hear, that my students are choosing the hardest solution, because they know or they think it's the best one and they're internally motivated. They have bought into the need to do the work.

So you have led them through thinking about this personally and getting them to -- and inviting students to start imagining and empathizing and connecting through the journaling. They're digging into their own perspective. Then they take a look at the contextual, systemic, dynamics surrounding sex trafficking and the life of the trafficked individual or the trafficker. And then you kind of go back again into perspective, but it's more of like a scholarly or a research-based approach at that point because they are doing the debate and thinking about maybe rethinking their perspective again. And then where do they go?

>> SANDY: After that, then we dig into some professional skills in the field. So we look at the trauma, the impact. This is where the psych majors have a lot of fun. And then we look at kind of best practices in the field for solutions to this problem.

So part of the best practices is our multidisciplinary team coordination that takes place. So you can't address the issue of sex trafficking without collaboration with many different disciplines. You need to be able to work together with prosecutors, with law enforcement, with therapists, with Department of Children and Families, everybody.

After you're learning about the psychology and the impact, now we're going to solutions. We start with learning about collaboration, multidisciplinary team building, and so we spend three days on collaboration. There's a wonderful book that we're reading on collaborating against human trafficking which is brand new. It's hot off the presses by Kristen Foot, and I was really happy that she wrote it because this is important.

We have been doing this work, and we have been collaborating for years, but I have never seen anything engaging with the topic of collaboration around how are gender and race dynamics in our collaboration around this issue. How do people experience power in these collaborations. Who wins? Does law enforcement win when there's a discrepancy and a solution or what you're going to do with a client that you have

So these are really -- working in groups to get something done is very, is very complicated, and it's not an easy thing. But most of the time what happens is they get group projects and they are like, this sucks, and the teachers are like, but this is the real world, and that's it. We leave it at that.

>> STEPHANIE: Right. We don't equip them as you do with the policy paper with the skills to do the collaboration.

>> SANDY: Right. So they read the book. They learn about collaboration. What does that mean? You can collaborate as a funder. Who has money probably has power. Who has authority -- where does power come from? It comes from money. It comes from authority. It comes from influence. How can you leverage those different kinds of power that you might have in a group in order to meet your goals? They actually dive into that for three days, and we talk about the book on the first day.

On the second day I bring the multidisciplinary team representatives from Miami that are working on child sex trafficking. So they are actually in the field on the ground collaborating, and they come to class and we have a panel, and they outline. I tell them, look, they have had 10 weeks of trafficking already. So no one-on-one stuff here. We're diving right into process. So we actually make a case flow chart, like how do cases go through in Miami, who do they go to, what happens next, and all that stuff. How do they collaborate. What are the challenges for them collaborating. All of those things. They love those opportunities to speak with the presenters that I bring in.

And then on the third day after that, we have a mock multidisciplinary team staffing. So basically what that means is when you have a multidisciplinary team staffing, you have a case like a client, who in this case is going to be a child who has been sexually trafficked, and it's literally -- they have just been referred or identified somewhere. And then you get -- everybody gets a referral with a certain amount of case information.

And then you come together as a multidisciplinary team and you decide what are we going to do with this person. What happens next. So that's how it usually goes. So what I did with this, and this is like my baby --

>> STEPHANIE: All right.

>> SANDY: I love this exercise. My students are always terrified with these exercises like the debate and the staffing, but afterwards they are thrilled. They are like, that was the best thing ever. So I know that I'm doing the right thing.

So what I do is I have these case studies that I create from different perspectives. So I have -- one is from the law enforcement perspective, one is from child welfare, and the other is a therapist. They all get the same referral information for this person, for the child. And then they get the follow-up. What happened in your first interview? What happened with your research?

Now law enforcement gets different research information than child welfare and the therapist. They have different first interviews with these kids because of who they are and what they ask. They have different information.

They also have different agendas. Law enforcement wants to get the bad guy. The therapist wants to protect their mental health. So there's like different agendas that come into play, and that's written on their case study, what kind of agenda that they have to focus on.

And then I put up on the board some questions. Where are we going to place this child? What are the services you are going to put in place for them next? And they are using the information from the multidisciplinary team where we did the case flow chart, and I give them the options basically that already exist in our community.

Then the whole class after that, they split up into little teams of threeish, and they have to hash it out. They have to figure out what they are going to do with this kid to keep them safe, to get them the right services and things like that.

>> STEPHANIE: In their role from that perspective with differing information with a different agenda of each person.

>> SANDY: Absolutely.

>> STEPHANIE: And they have got to hash it out.

>> SANDY: Yep.

>> STEPHANIE: Is hashing it out -- so this is for me the heart of it. Is that a competitive thing or is it a collaborative thing? Are you inviting students to make connections amongst their different -- what are you specifically inviting students to do? Because I think that matters.

>> SANDY: Right. I want there to be friendly collaboration that can overcome a little bit of tension in the agenda, but it depends on the student and their perspective. I have had law enforcement officers in my class.

>> STEPHANIE: Like people in the profession?

>> SANDY: Yeah. And sometimes they will like be hard core about that role, and they will be no, they are doing what I want. You're doing what I want you to do. It's really interesting.

In Miami, our multidisciplinary team tends to work very well together. They are very collaborative, and they have a longer history of knowing each other and knowing how each other works. So there's less tension. But in the beginning it wasn't like that. I was the one that started these first multidisciplinary team staffings a decade ago, and in the beginning there was tension. Law enforcement would lock up a girl for running away because they didn't want her to run away. They wanted the information about the case, which would make of course the process of her cooperating with the case more challenging because she would feel she was betrayed by law enforcement. Then I would have to come in, and I would be like an advocate. But then law enforcement would see it as an adversarial thing.

But we have had a learning curve since the early days. Whatever they bring to the table as far as how they are presenting their character, any of that can be true. If they want to be like hard core, like no, I'm not sharing any information with you, law enforcement, because I'm a therapist

and I keep all this information secret. There are places in the country where therapists are doing that. So it's not any kind of thing you're bringing to the table. It's going to be something that's held true in multidisciplinary team meetings.

>> STEPHANIE: And the objective there, if I hear you correctly and please correct me if I'm wrong, is that students are becoming more comfortable with the chaos a little bit. In order to -- you have got a problem. You have got all these different perspectives. They are all coming together in the same place, and it's going to be uncomfortable, and there's going to be some chaos.

What is the order here? How do we make some kind of order that is going to be for the good of society and for the good of the individual based on the conflicts and the chaos, and you have to withstand that chaos, and you have to work through it in order to get to the new order, which is that solution.

>> SANDY: Yeah. There is a lot going on in this process. So that's definitely one of the main goals. And then it's also how do you take leadership in these groups. How do you express your personal influence or leadership and engage with the group in a way that you can get the needs met in the way you think? How do you do that? That's really important. How do you keep the best interests of the child at the top of the priority list and not let the group get personal?

My whole goal -- I tell them I want to make your life hell, and then I want to show you that you are way more capable and competent at handling these situations. You need to see the muck first before you can see the clear water. There's that little activity that you can do when you're meditating. It's like you have a jar with mud in it and water. And usually we go about our day shaking that jar, so we can't see through the water because it's all shook up and it's just a bunch of chaos, like you said. And we are just reacting all the time because we don't see what's really there.

So if you just actually allow it to sit, you'll see the mud will settle to the bottom and the water will be clear and you'll be able to see clearly. You'll be able to see through it.

And so I really want them to experience the complexity of the issue, the complexity of people's lives that are impacted by it, the complexity of how stakeholders work together. But also I want them to see how to get to the other side so you can make productive solutions so that you can be helpful.

>> STEPHANIE: You know, we define global learning with these words. It's a process that engages diverse people and their diverse perspectives in analyzing and addressing complex problems that transcend borders. Nowhere in those words is an explicit acknowledgment of the chaos, the discomfort, the challenge, the emotional, cognitive, disciplinary, practical challenges in doing all of that stuff.

And to a certain extent our conversation right now is making me, wow! I guess it's implied or embedded in that term process, but we really need to unpack that word. Each of those words is a whole world. It's like a Russian doll of skills and dynamics. But that word process, the sorts of things you're talking about are implied. It's like the colon in the title of your course, right? It's that space between the topic and the solutions. That's the rough place.

But inviting that into your course, which is not a traditional take on teaching and learning, that's why global learning as an approach really is a fundamentally different approach than a traditional lecture based, get the information, spit it out course. That's the piece of it, is inviting

the chaos and discomfort into the class. But that gets us to solutions, and it gets us to a place that I know that your students have gone.

You said a minute ago that your students sometimes choose the most difficult solution to take in their policy paper. You have had students that have come out of this class or at the end of the class saying I've got to go to the next step, and it's going to be hard. Help me, Professor, take it to the next step. Could you share a little bit about what that looks like and what's happened with your students?

>> SANDY: Yeah. After we do the multidisciplinary team staffing, we engage on the issue of best practices and problematic work that's being done out there.

So the final project which is the shining star is the grant proposal. They have to create a program that addresses sex trafficking, and they have to write a grant proposal for it, and then they do a pitch. And the pitch we do is in front of like a shark tank style of judges that actually give them feedback on the spot, which I find really helpful because instead of just getting afraid and never reading the comments on the final exam, they actually get the feedback right there in front of their face.

>> STEPHANIE: Just in time. Immediate feedback.

>> SANDY: Yeah.

>> STEPHANIE: Very impactful.

>> SANDY: And the grant proposal process, of course they don't know how to write a grant proposal. They don't know how to design a program. It's using a creative brain. It's using an organized brain. You have to create something and then you have to organize the information. I put them in groups. Now that we have learned about multidisciplinary teams, hopefully they can work together better.

>> STEPHANIE: So you give another chance to do that really difficult thing. I'm glad to hear that.

>> SANDY: So they work in groups, and we go through four skills-based classes. One of them is design thinking for social innovation. We talk all about how to design something that's effective using some examples of how things can be ineffective which were actually really interesting.

So one of the examples is from the Naandi Foundation in India who wanted to give clean water to this village. There were people getting sick because they were always drinking from the not clean water in the well.

And so it sounds like a great mission. They go into the village. They create a water treatment plant. They give out the jugs to the women, the five-gallon jugs, and a little card that they have to pay for. It wasn't extremely expensive, but it was for five gallons a day or something like that. And then they opened and they realized that the women weren't coming to get the water.

>> STEPHANIE: Right. So that goes back to that. It goes back to the second component of your course where students are thinking about the systemic aspects and unintended consequences and also the third component where they do the policy paper. Now they have

another chance to see oh, we can use certain thinking processes like design thinking that will help us to avoid some of those unintended consequences.

>> SANDY: Yeah. And part of this is the empathy piece. So why didn't they go? They didn't go because women went and got the water during the day, and they had been doing that at the well with three gallon jugs that would actually have a curvature to them to be able to fit on their head or on their hip when they were walking. But the five-gallon jugs that they had were square or something bulky, and it was too difficult for them to carry. They would have had their husbands or sons carry them, only they were at work, and by the way they got home from work the treatment plant was closed. They also didn't need that much water. So they were actually paying for more water than they needed and they didn't want to do that.

So there was like a lot of things. Missed opportunities. There was a great mission, but they didn't actually engage with the community. And then when I asked them how do you know what people need? What do you do to find out what people need? And they said oh, you ask them. You do a survey or something. And I said oh, okay. Well, Henry Ford famously said if he would have asked the people what they needed, they would have said faster horses.

>> STEPHANIE: Exactly. Yeah. Yeah.

>> SANDY: So the idea being is that it's more than just asking them what they need. You have to get into the community.

>> STEPHANIE: Participant.

>> SANDY: You have to be a participant, observer. You have to watch the behavior. You have to empathize with them, figure out what they think, how they might be feeling, what their behaviors are, why they are doing this, what motivates them. Things like that. So that design thinking process is really eye opening for them, I think. So applying that to the issue of sex trafficking, what you think based on everything that you have learned.

I also bring in a survivor leader for one of the classes. So they have that firsthand experience. And this person, Shanika Ampah, she's awesome. She has her own -- she's working as an -- she has her own organization, Guiding Light Outreach. She also is a survivor advocate or victim advocate at the Thrive Clinic at UM which specializes in healthcare, providing healthcare to victims of trafficking. And so she has -- not only does she have a story of being exploited in Miami as a child, but she's also overcome. She's gone on to become very successful, and she knows what my vision is for the class. So when she's in the class speaking, she engages the students with their ideas too so that they are getting feedback directly from her.

>> STEPHANIE: So she's really a community partner for your course.

>> SANDY: Yeah. And then they go on and they create the grants. I have two classes talking about how to write grant proposals. We go step by step. Even the budget. It's all new. Like some of them don't even budget personal. And then we have a whole class dedicated to learning how to pitch. And I give them really great presentation tools like new -- some of these new platforms and things like that that are coming out that are really easy to use and beautiful. So I give them all of those tools so that they can come up with a fantastic --

>> STEPHANIE: Like Prezi?

>> SANDY: No. So there's a new one. I love sharing it. I love sharing it, but part of me is like I don't want to share this one. No. It's actually called Beautiful.AI.

>> STEPHANIE: Oh.

>> SANDY: When I tell you this is the easiest and literally most beautiful presentation maker that I have ever seen, like Prezi is ridiculously complicated compared to this one.

>> STEPHANIE: Wow!

>> SANDY: It's really amazing. I have generated myself, I have generated at least 30 presentations in the past year.

>> STEPHANIE: Oh my gosh. I'm going to look it up. I will definitely link to it. Sorry the word is out.

>> SANDY: The word is out. They were still in beta last year. I don't know if they are going to start charging next year.

>> STEPHANIE: Oh, okay. Well, I'm not surprised that you're sharing this tool with us because I just have to say that it is a little bit mind blowing how many things are in this course. I didn't really anticipate us going there or that being a big takeaway from this interview, but the course is -- it's psychology, it's civics, it's public speaking, it's budgeting, it's writing. Ahhh! I'm sure the listeners are saying, yeah, but it's also X and Y and Z and P. But that's what you have to do for solution making. You have to do it, so you're bringing it in.

>> SANDY: Yes. So creating solutions is all of those aspects. You really have to be able to dive into those, and I do it not just to do a service to the issue, which I believe that I do, but I also do it because I feel like I'm doing a service to my students. I feel like in the process what they are learning are valuable skills that are going to help them in the future, even life skills.

>> STEPHANIE: And I don't want to get us too off track. I want to continue speaking about this final project, but one thing I do want to say is this. I can imagine some people listening to this might be thinking okay, I teach a course already in a social issue, and I would like to go in this direction, but I don't have the personal background or the skill set that Sandy does.

Like maybe I don't have a background in design thinking. Maybe I don't have the budget piece. When I think about it, well, what you're doing is you're pulling back the curtain on all of these embedded skills, and I could imagine that a faculty member saying I want to go there, I could reach out to other people in the community or in the institution to help bring, to give some lessons.

You can invite somebody maybe if there's a new innovation, a start-up or a think tank or an institution in the community to come in and do a design thinking lesson, right? I think it's really helpful that you're pulling back the curtain on all the embedded skills that you see, but at the same time one person, one teacher doesn't have to have all of those skill sets within them. You could make a team.

>> SANDY: Right. Yeah. I mean that's the point too, is engaging the community. I have a couple of classes where I am bringing community members in, like four or five of my classes.

>> STEPHANIE: Just like with the multidisciplinary team that the students are on, you bring one piece of it, and we need to invite other perspectives. This is part of global learning. We need to invite those other perspectives, the other pieces to the puzzle into the classroom. Okay. I think that's an important point because it might sound overwhelming. Wow. This woman, she's amazing, she can do it. She's superwoman. But I can't do it because I'm not super person.

>> SANDY: I have a very unique skill set too, because I have started programs and businesses and things like that. So I have lived in the -- I have worked in the field directly. I have done the case management myself. I have coordinated the multidisciplinary teams. I have a long history of all of that program development work in the field. So for me it's second nature to be able to discuss it at that level. But, you know, there's also a place for advanced theory, and it just really depends on your course, really.

>> STEPHANIE: And I think on the flip side for those listeners who might be coming from the professions and have an opportunity or would like to have an opportunity to teach in higher ed, whether it be at the college level or the university level, you're also giving a case study for how a professional could bring their skill set to the classroom in a legitimate way that is also educational. It's effective. Because what you are doing is following the best practices and teaching and learning, taking students through iteratively deeper and deeper connection making. You're bringing -- you're providing the background knowledge, giving applied, a chance to apply it, providing more background knowledge, another chance to apply. So it's a layered sequence.

So we have arrived, and we're still at this piece where they are doing the design thinking to write the grant. You do some work on grant writing. You do some work on pitching. And then they do the pitch.

>> SANDY: Yeah. So we get together with StartUp FIU at the end for our final day, and then in the main space I throw them to the sharks, basically.

>> STEPHANIE: And who are the sharks?

>> SANDY: So I engage a panel of judges, between three or four judges. They could be the same or they could be different. I don't know. Do you want to be a judge this year?

>> STEPHANIE: I do. I always want to be a judge. You have invited me in the past, and I haven't been able to do it. One of my colleagues has done it. So I have got to get it on the calendar.

>> SANDY: So I mix it up between people that have an expertise in startup, processes, that whole pitch, like business planning kind of stuff, also experts in trafficking, like maybe somebody that understands that. So this year we have already recruited Andrew Pompa who is now at FIU, StartUp FIU, but I know him from the community, from the startup work and through Radical Partners and things like that.

>> STEPHANIE: I can see the excitement on your face.

>> SANDY: Oh, I love that he's already agreed to be my judge. He's already had the experience of judging and working together with a lot of different actual organizations in our community that are doing social impact work. So I'm excited that he said yes.

I also have Florencia Dominguez coming. She's fairly new at FIU also, but I also know her from the community because she has had many years of experience providing services to trafficking victims and survivors.

>> STEPHANIE: Okay. Can I just jump in and say something about Florencia?

>> SANDY: Yes.

>> STEPHANIE: Because Florencia was a student at FIU. She took a global learning course on this topic. There was a guest speaker from International Rescue Committee. She got an internship. They offered her a job. She worked there. And when the IRC went through some changes, she had the opportunity to come back to FIU. She's now working in the Office of Global Learning Initiatives. And so it's like a full circle thing with Florencia to see the impact that it had, global learning had on her life, and then now her opportunity to really magnify that to however thousands and thousands fold.

>> SANDY: Yeah. I love that she's here, and I love that she's part -- she was a judge last semester too, and it was very exciting for her to see the ideas that are coming out of the brains of these university students. And that's really an incredible thing to watch also, because I have seen hundreds of organizations come up around the country that work on trafficking issues. I have done consulting for a lot of them that have started up. And to see the so-called beginner mind, to see where the beginner mind takes you is really interesting. I have just had amazing proposals coming from these students. They blow me away every single time. Even if I feel like they are struggling on their policy paper, you might do as well as you want to do because it's a new skill for you and it's hard, and that's fine. I grade it fairly, but I also grade it -- I don't --

>> STEPHANIE: Generously.

>> SANDY: Yeah. But when it comes to the end, by the time that they create their program, it's just what they can put together, the innovation that they think of. I mean it's amazing. I want to make some kind of -- I don't know. I want to put it all together. A compendium or something. Like make some kind of -- write something about all the ideas that they have come to the table with.

>> STEPHANIE: We can do a little bit of that with the scholarship of teaching and learning. Who knows. Let's think about that.

>> SANDY: I hate for it to just sit in my drawer. All these great ideas.

>> STEPHANIE: But some of the ideas haven't sat in your drawer. You had students that you mentored to the next level.

>> SANDY: Yeah. So this is a really fascinating story actually. So last year I had two students. They were actually in different groups. They were assigned to different groups. They both were creating their organization called Heart. Randomly. They did not know.

>> STEPHANIE: They just both named it the same thing?

>> SANDY: They both named it the same thing. They did not know. They called it Heart. And then one of them was focused on education, and the other one was focused on healthcare, but both had the idea that they wanted to do training and things like that.

So I sat them before they were done, like at the end of the semester, I sat them down together for a meeting, and I said you named yours Heart, and it's focused on training educators. You named yours Heart, and it's focused on training healthcare, and I think that there's a lot of synergy in that, and that didn't happen on accident, and you two should meet and think about doing this together. Because they both wanted, they were both actually thinking about doing it for real. So I was like this is not random. So I put them together.

And it turns out they got along great. They became cofounders. They named their one organization Heart Initiative. And then I did an independent study with them the following semester to help them launch. So we went through all of the process of launching. Now they have their members at the Center for Social Change, which is also their fiscal sponsor so they can accept donations and things like that.

They improved on the grant proposal, collaborating the two missions, and then also created a new pitch presentation that they did focusing on -- so that Heart Initiative is focused on providing training and education around the issue of human trafficking to educators and to healthcare workers.

So Alyssa Pepio is the education side because she has been a City Year corps member, and that's her expertise, and all of her connections are in City Year. And then Jennifer Amarteifio is a nurse, and she has these connections in the healthcare field with her company that she works for and everything too. So the two of them brought this amazing background and energy to this work and they created this organization.

They asked me to be on the board. I said yes. We also got Shanika to be on the board. So now Shanika Ampah is a survivor leader on the board. So we have a survivor led organization. And they have been getting like demand for presentations and trainings from all over because Shanika is also helping speak and do trainings and they have beautiful presentations.

>> STEPHANIE: Yeah.

>> SANDY: So the presentations are unlike any that we usually see in the field. They have pictures and graphics and they are very, very visually stunning. In addition, they have the expertise on the ground, and they have been invited into many partnerships already. We have a recent law in Florida that mandates nurses to get training.

>> STEPHANIE: And they can provide it.

>> SANDY: And they can provide it now. So it's also earned income for them because they get paid to do these trainings as well. So with that pitch and their kind of final design of their program, they entered it into FIU's social challenge grant through the Center for Leadership, and they won. So they won a \$7,500 start-up seed funding.

>> STEPHANIE: Beautiful.

>> SANDY: And then since then, they have also been able to raise additional money toward their mission.

>> STEPHANIE: And this is the great connection making that can happen in a university because Center for Leadership and Service is in the kind of student affairs side of the academic and student affairs house. You're in the academic affairs side of the house. We are an Ashoka institution. So social innovation education is something that we value and are supporting all

across the curriculum and in the co-curriculum as well and with community partnerships. You put it all together in this course, and it's putting together your personal drive and your professional expertise and bringing it to the classroom.

There's so much integration of you, it seems, Sandy, which is kind of taking us back to where we began, like you as a human being. This course seems to be a manifestation of who you are in the fullest of who you are, the holistic. It's like global Sandy.

I want to ask, just kind of a way of coming to a close, although I could talk to you forever, how has global learning and this experience creating this course, how has it impacted you as a person?

>> SANDY: You know, I learn a lot by being around the students. I see -- strategically, I'm a strategic thinker. I can see strategically into the future from where they are at right now. So I have taught this for several years now. I think I'm on my fourth year here, and my class size has grown exponentially. It's gone from eight or 10 people to now I have flooded with 78 students just on the MMC campus this year. So I have 100 students if you count both campuses.

And every semester the feedback I get, the engagement that I hear, like their thought processes, it's so fascinating how this culture has been changing and this new generation. We're going to see some very different policy coming up in the future. There's no better way to predict that than to engage with the topic of sex and the sex industry, sex work, sex trafficking, how all of those things mix together.

And there's a couple of fascinating things that -- I always ask them to raise your hand so I can get a sense of the room. There was a couple of fascinating things that came up. One of them was the government should be able to spy on corporations electronically to make sure that they are not engaging in human race abuses. Almost all my students.

>> STEPHANIE: Yeah.

>> SANDY: I was very impacted by that. It was not like half and half. It was a lot. Because there's that sense of we don't have privacy anymore anyway. And that new generation is kind of willingly giving up privacy and also not growing up in a world where their freedoms -- feel like that there's an imminent threat to their freedoms. They are growing up with this sense of freedom and then with this sense of privacy doesn't matter anyway. You don't have anything to hide. If you don't have anything to hide, then --

>> STEPHANIE: Right. Give me privacy in order to gain safety.

>> SANDY: Yeah, but it was interesting how many. And then the other thing is their attitude around sex work and the sex industry in general. Most of the students are very much pro decriminalization of the sex industry for consenting adults. Possible even legalization. So there's very much more openness about people being able to just engage in whatever sex they want as long as it's consensual, and I think these two -- oh, there was another thing too. This idea of being okay with very punitive measures in general. Let's just throw the book at everybody. Let's just legislate.

So I thought the combination of all of that was really interesting. So I start engaging around that when I talk to them too. Well, what's the slippery slope. What happens if we do engage in that

kind of policy. But it is eye opening and enlightening thinking about how that's going to look in the future when they are making the decisions.

>> STEPHANIE: One thing I know for sure is that -- I guess I'm reading into the future a little bit too in that we are an anchor institution. The majority of our students will probably go on to lead their professional and personal lives in South Florida, and you are creating -- I don't want to use a violent image -- but an army or a cadre of champions for tackling this issue in South Florida and beyond.

So I want to thank you for this interview, but I have to thank you as a citizen of South Florida because the issue touches all of our lives in direct and many, many indirect ways, and this is a beautiful manifestation of what the mission of our institution is, which is to exchange and create new knowledge but also to serve our community. And I guess on that note I just want to say thank you.

>> SANDY: Thank you so much.

>> STEPHANIE: Thanks for listening to this episode of Making Global Learning Universal. This podcast is brought to you by FIU's Office of Global Learning Initiatives, Media Technology Services and our Disability Resource Center. You can find all our episodes, show notes, transcripts, and discussion guides on our webpage globallearningpodcast.fiu.edu. And if this episode was meaningful to you, please share it with colleagues, friends and students. You can even give it a rating on iTunes. Thanks again for tuning in and for all you do to make global learning universal.

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The podcast is hosted by [Stephanie Doscher](#), Director of Global Learning Initiatives at Florida International University and co-author of *Making Global Learning Universal: Promoting Inclusion and Success for All*.

The “Making Global Learning Universal” podcast is produced through a partnership between Florida International University’s Office of Global Learning Initiatives, Media Technology Services, and Disability Resource Center.

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