

# TAKING TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING TO CO-CURRICULAR SPACES

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## *A ROUNDTABLE PRESENTATION*

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## *EXTENDED ABSTRACT*

Stereotypically, libraries are assumed to be noise-free “shush” zones, quiet study spaces for individual research and reflection. More recently, following trends in student learning, libraries have shifted, offering intentional space for collaboration. The evolving library landscape presents a challenge to librarians as we roll up cardigan sleeves, sheath shushing-fingers, and re-imagine what academic libraries are and what we’re becoming.

*What we are.* The library’s reality as a co-curricular institution presents a challenge for articulating and assessing our value in terms of learning outcome achievement. Student learning outcomes are connected to class research projects, while library instruction—whether in class or individual, virtual or face-to-face—is co-curricular. *Librarians face a challenge in directly assessing and mapping our instruction to student learning outcomes and, consequently, to program or university learning outcomes.*

*What we’re becoming.* Envisioning the library as a *third space* reflects an emerging trend in librarianship ripe with potential for capturing the significance of the library for co-curricular transformative learning. The Beam Library at Oklahoma Christian University offers a *third space*, an intentional space where normative rules and structures are challenged by shared encounters with cultural and ideological *otherness*. Third spaces open possibilities for transformational education by broadening worldview, encouraging self-reflection, and enlarging the soul. Among other strategies, we generate third space experience through two, co-curricular weekly chapel events that deepen discussion about gender, sexuality, and popular culture, conversations that are often regretfully taboo on a campus like ours.

In our context, we are able to capitalize on a normalized type of space—weekly chapel meetings—and infuse chapel with what is known in education as *third space* learning experiences. Third space refers to liminal learning spaces created where dominant culture, with its normative rules and assumptions, intersects with *difference* or *otherness*. Third space is the space between: for individuals, it’s the space between I and Thou; in classrooms, it’s the intersection of students’ out-of-school experiences, knowledge, and culture and the curricular content, rules, and school culture; in society, third space is the borderland where cultural minority groups navigate dominant cultural norms.

We envision the creation of third space as vital for transformative education and spiritual formation. We believe that encounters with difference open spaces pregnant with potential for learning; we believe that learning experiences in third spaces should be measured, outcomes articulated, assessed and mapped to University learning outcomes; and we believe the intentional creation of third spaces offers culture-transforming potential for the entire campus. Toward these ends, the library facilitates two third-space weekly chapel events that are illustrative of the power and potential of third space creation.

Beam Chapel offers a reflective space where participants engage gritty questions arising from the dark of film, literature, and television. The chapel hollows out a space for acknowledging, questioning, celebrating, and critiquing assumptions about faith, popular culture, and our inherited tradition(s). Safe at Home chapel exists as a generous *safe space* that fosters connection and facilitates crucial conversation about gender, sexuality, and faith. Safe at Home offers an important space for empowering students who may feel unsafe—whether because they are or affirm LGBT+ individuals—to learn to navigate existence among difference and to foster hospitable rather than fearful responses to the current, normative experience of LGBT+ students at OC. Chapel facilitators foster meaningful conversations among participants and demonstrate the library’s capacity as a significant space for transformative learning, as evidenced by participant survey responses mapped to specific learning outcomes for each chapel.

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