

2023 FACULTY ADVOCATE ELECTION



Mark Leeman

Current NKU Position Associate Professor. School of Media and Communication. College of Informatics.

Biographical Statement (350-word maximum)

My degree trail and my research and non-profit work describe best who I am and what I bring to the table. My undergrad degree in Education and my Master's degree is in Linguistics bespeak my people-first focus on language and the co-creations of social life that language makes possible. My Ph.D. is in Communication Studies with an emphasis on Organizational Communication and Culture. This Ph.D. has enabled me to serve as a bridge-builder, advocate, and consultant in contexts of complex social organizing where there are large gaps in understanding, perspectives, experiences, and interests between the involved participants. Through the lenses of Dialogue, Narrative, Alternative Organizing, and Advocacy, I enjoy questioning and investigating the ways we manage meanings and organize across radical differences – especially differences that concentrate power in unequal ways. My passion is investigating the contexts of non-dominant people and discourses in order to empower the human spirit and bring about more equitable and effective organizing. I have given my life to understanding and advocating for under-empowered peoples striving to win a voice and more organizing clout in their environments. My research and non-profit work aim at better understanding the challenges inherent in the cultural, communicative, and organizing differences between those in the middle class and those struggling with poverty, so that the later are more fully empowered to enter into and be successful at work, at school, and in health care and criminal justice settings. This is the same sort of learning and practice it takes to understand and serve context of radical difference in a variety of organizational contexts. Among my core driving tenants is that *separation* leads to what Mikhail Bakhtin dubbed “absolute death – being unheard and unrecognized,” and that such separation does not lead to effective organizing, society, nor relationships. Better communication is the key to bringing “life” into such contexts. I have served the under-represented in post-communism Eastern Europe, among homeless Appalachian people, and with urban-core African-American populations in Cincinnati, fighting for voice, influence, justice, and a place at the dialogic table of co-governance alongside their more dominant and powerful neighbors, compatriots, and adversaries.

Why I would like to serve as Faculty Advocate

I would like to serve as Faculty Advocate because it seems that the beauty and promise of “shared governance” are increasingly going unfulfilled at NKU. I would like to use my lifetime of study and practice in Organizational Communication to work toward the ideal of co-created collaborative meaning and governance via dialogue at NKU. *Dialogue* in which differing perspectives not only can compete and collide, but also coalesce and cooperate for better organizing. When dialogue is not possible, I am driven to serve from the pragmatic communication stances of *persuasion* and *public deliberation* – in which all sides are heard and charged with making and answering to good arguments in order to create and sway policy and procedure. If that fails, I believe I am well trained and equipped to advocate for faculty with *tactics and strategies* that can stand up for our rights and create pressure for our collective voices to be better taken into consideration in all matters NKU. Along with all the organizational communication training and experience I bring to the table, I also bring an overriding ethic of care. As faculty we must first hear and recognize one another - both in areas of policy and in community - before we can effectively represent ourselves and perspectives to administration and other NKU stakeholders. It would be my pleasure to care for faculty by making sure they are heard, and by carving out more space for them to feel like they belong and are valued at NKU. I want to serve because in this season of administratively-induced scarcity at NKU, we must skillfully fight for our faculty voice(s) to not only occupy its important place in the decision making of the university, but also to stand up for what we see as priorities when it comes to academics, student well-being, working culture and climate, and other important issues that no one is closer to and better informed about at the university than are faculty. In order to prosper, NKU needs the robust, healthy, and well-articulated voice of faculty. I will work hard to bring forth and advocate for that voice.