

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMAL LEARNING FOR WORK: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND PRACTICAL STRATEGIES IN AND FOR THE WORK SETTING**

Organizer(s)  
Em Maslak  
St. John's University

Contact: [maslakm@stjohns.edu](mailto:maslakm@stjohns.edu)

Email address for abstract submission: [maslakm@stjohns.edu](mailto:maslakm@stjohns.edu)

### **CALL FOR ABSTRACTS**

The study of workplace learning typically includes investigations of both formal and informal learning (Choi & Jacobs, 2011; Marsick & Volpe, 1999; Marsick & Watkins, 1990). On the one hand, formal learning requires the individual to successfully complete a set of courses which are designed to impart both knowledge and skills using planned and structured lessons (Brockman & Dirk, 2006). Equally important yet understudied, informal learning is the acquisition of understanding based on a process that utilizes experiences in the everyday world without designated learning objectives, periods of study, or learning support. (Kolb, 1984).

This workshop features scholars' and/or advanced graduate students' research on informal learning in the work setting. We define informal learning as the acquisition of understanding based on a process that utilizes experiences in the everyday world (Kolb, 1984). Presenters are invited to submit papers that focus on conceptual/theoretical research and/or practical strategies that pertain to informal learning in and for the work setting.

Two perspectives of learning theory help to ground our general understandings of the conceptual / theoretical papers that may contribute to this workshop. The social process of informal learning highlights the importance of context and culture in which learning is situated (Brown & Duguid 1991; Lave & Wenger 1991; Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995; Vygotsky, 1978). The social setting in which the action occurs and cultural norms and values related to that setting contribute to the informal learning experience. Another perspective of informal learning theory concerns the individual. Kolb and Fry, for example, specifically note that "[A]n individual learns from concrete experiences (CE) by reflecting on those experiences from different perspectives (RO), (re-)forming his or her learning based on that reflection (AC), then testing out and applying that learning in discussion and solving problems" (p. 91-2). Either or both of these elements could be explored in the theoretical/conceptual papers submitted for consideration.

Practical strategies that encourage and enhance informal learning are equally important in the study of informal learning in the workplace. This workshop also invites papers that are dedicated to the study of practical strategies related to informal learning. Practical strategies are based on the entry point of the learner. First, experience grounds all informal learning and is the stimulus for continued learning. Second, active participation in the setting enables

the learner to integrate their expectations, knowledge, attitudes, and emotions (Boud, Cohen & Walker, 1993). Strategies that enhance learning in the workplace typically consider these two elements of the learning process.