



Threshold Project Summer Leadership Institute: *Threshold Concepts and Wicked Problems* June 6-8, 2014

Thank you for joining 3CSN's Threshold Project and CSU's "Give Students a Compass" initiative at the beautiful **UCLA Conference Center in Lake Arrowhead**:

- Envision innovative, integrated General Education curricula based on "Threshold Concepts and Wicked Problems";
- Build relationships and meaningful collaborations across disciplines and educational segments; and
- Plan appropriate follow up activities to support intersegmental and/ or interdisciplinary engagement with the Threshold Project in your region.

The Threshold Project is a 3CSN community of practice dedicated to bringing together high school, community college, and university colleagues to re-envision the alignment of our curriculum and pedagogy through a focus on discipline-specific "threshold concepts."

Threshold concepts are those core concepts that transform our ways of thinking in a particular discipline. They have been described as transformative (because they change the way you see things), troublesome (because they defy your "common sense" view of things), and irreversible (because, once mastered, they are hard to "unlearn").

Threshold concepts are key to making progress in a discipline and to the kind of deep learning that students can transfer to new challenges and contexts, but identifying and mastering them is not straightforward. Embedded in the definition of threshold concepts is the understanding that grappling with them is a messy, recursive, and liminal process. Students benefit from repeated, sustained attention to threshold concepts over the course of their education.

Wicked problems are urgent challenges—such as global climate change or educational inequity--that are difficult to resolve because they are complex, contested, and constantly changing. They can't be fully defined and can be stated as symptoms of other problems. A curriculum focused on considering wicked problems through the lens of threshold concepts explicitly teaches students how to problem solve from distinct disciplinary perspectives, to explore the affordances and limitations of different disciplinary habits of mind, and to make visible the need for multi-disciplinary approaches to "real world" problems.

We are establishing a **community of practice** to support consideration of threshold concepts first and foremost because we would like to create the space for long-term, collegial, sustained learning and dialogue—across disciplines and across educational segments—about how a renewed focus on conceptual knowledge can inspire us to reconsider our curricula and our approach to "alignment." Please consider joining us as we launch this important work!

"Give Students a Compass, Phase II" is an initiative of the California State University to increase the relevance, integration, and real-life application of the General Education transfer curriculum in California by infusing it with high-impact educational practices such as service-learning, learning communities, first-year experiences, and collaboration with faculty on research.