
Stanford | Distinguished Careers Institute



PURPOSE - COMMUNITY - WELLNESS

PROGRAM STATEMENT

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The Stanford Distinguished Careers Institute (DCI) offers highly accomplished individuals from all walks of life the opportunity to come to Stanford for a year-long residential program of personal renewal and community engagement. The program seeks participants who are ready and eager to pause, think, explore, develop and prepare for their future as citizens of their local, national, and global communities. From its inception, DCI has been defined by three core principles or pillars: Renewing Purpose, Building Community and Recalibrating Wellness (Physically, Emotionally and Spiritually). Each is independently correlated with positive longevity based on considerable scientific knowledge. A fundamental tenet of DCI has been that a program that intertwines all three pillars will have a positive impact on individuals and communities, including higher education. This has been delineated in an essay by Phil Pizzo in the March 2, 2020 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association entitled [“A Prescription for Longevity in the 21st Century: Renewing Purpose, Building Community and Sustaining Social Engagement, and Embracing a Positive Lifestyle.”](#)

Rationale

We live in an era in which previously accepted norms of career length and retirement age are undergoing significant change toward personal and professional transitions and renewal. These shifts are coupled with rising global life expectancy and a rapid increase in the number of older citizens in the US over the next decades. For example, 10,000 individuals in the US cross the age of 65 every day and by 2030, 20% of the US population will be older than 65 years. Similar demographic changes are occurring around the world. In some Asian and European countries, the percentage of older individuals will approach 40%. Beyond the “baby boomer generation,” the prospect for a significantly longer life requires that we rethink aging and reconsider the role of higher education for individuals who have already been successful in one or more career pathways and who are seeking a new direction that includes addressing personal, community and societal needs.

Stanford University is well positioned to play a unique and important role in creating new opportunities for adult education that will be transformational for individuals, institutions, communities and the world. DCI has already served as a role model for other universities by fostering a new paradigm for adult education, as well as for life and career transition/transformation, that is increasingly important with the changing demographics in the US and globally. An important part of this new paradigm is the value of intergenerational engagement that embraces undergraduate and graduate students in tandem with faculty and members of the university community. Stanford advanced this new paradigm with the establishment of the Stanford Distinguished Careers Institute in 2013 and the entry of the Inaugural Class in January 2015. In 2018 DCI transitioned to an academic calendar and fellows now commence their journey beginning with the Fall Quarter.

The driving hypothesis of DCI is that through the fusion of renewed purpose, community building and recalibration of wellness, fellows and partners will lead healthier lives, reduce the onset or pace of the challenges associated with aging and, on a societal level, reduce their need for medical and social services.

Goals

The overarching goal of DCI is to offer an extraordinary opportunity to established individuals and leaders from the public and private sectors, including business, academia, health and beyond, who are ready and eager to reflect on their life journeys, explore new pathways, and redirect their lives for both personal and the common good. The new way forward that emerges from participation in the DCI can be one that has been long-anticipated and hoped for, or one not yet imagined. DCI serves as a transition to new ventures in the lives of participating individuals, allowing them to create something unique that will improve themselves and hopefully, the world. It is important to underscore that this is a program designed for individuals seeking transitions and new beginnings, whether through traditional pathways or via new avenues that enable them to contribute and engage meaningfully in their communities.

DCI provides individuals who have had distinguished career accomplishments the chance to utilize the wealth of knowledge and unique attributes of one of the world's great universities. In turn, fellows share their extraordinary expertise and wisdom with students who are beginning their own journeys. Through intergenerational engagement with students and with faculty, fellows, students and faculty learn from each other. This is facilitated by the fact that fellows are enrolled as nonmatriculated graduate students, which enables them to take classes side-by-side with undergraduate and graduate students. It is hoped that programs like DCI will help foster the university of the future by creating opportunities for intergenerational lifelong learning and engagement.

DCI engages cohorts of highly accomplished leaders in new learning communities that extend beyond the formal program and make use of social networking and virtual connections to transcend the limitations of on-campus programming. DCI enables participants to envision new career and life paths that may build on past accomplishments or open new vistas. In doing so, fellows transform their own lives to ones that are lived with purpose and a positive approach to longevity. As part of this process, participants assess their personal health and well-being to develop a plan for moving forward with a healthier and more productive life plan. Living longer means being fit and more able to take on the challenges of aging –physically, emotionally, and cognitively. In addition to physical and emotional wellness, the DCI fosters ways to improve and sustain spiritual health and well-being based on the individual goals and needs of fellows.

Through its Partners Program, DCI provides an opportunity for spouses and significant others of fellows who are enrolled in the program to participate fully in all aspects of the program as equals.

Why Stanford?

Without question, Stanford University is one of the most creative, energetic, entrepreneurial and interdisciplinary learning environments in the world. Comprised of seven schools (Business, Earth, Energy and Environmental Sciences, Education, Engineering, Humanities and Sciences, Law and Medicine), the breadth and depth of opportunities at Stanford are unique and virtually unlimited. Health, intellectual pursuits, athletics, creativity, entrepreneurship and leadership are all closely aligned and located on one campus, with schools and programs within walking distance –creating incredible possibilities for partnership. The culture at Stanford is about taking risks, promoting innovation to solve problems and exploring uncharted territory. It is about discovering new horizons and moving forward, not fearing failure or repeating the past.

Many of Stanford’s academic programs, both undergraduate and graduate, are small and highly interactive. Adding individuals with different perspectives, lifelong wisdom, and experience provides a very special opportunity for students and fellows to interact and learn from and teach one another. Finally, Stanford University is located in the heart of Silicon Valley, one of the most innovative and entrepreneurial environments in the world. In some ways Silicon Valley is a product of Stanford University, but in others it is its own learning environment that seeks new ideas that will change the world.

DCI is academically affiliated with the Stanford Center on Longevity and administratively associated with the Stanford Continuing Studies program. DCI embraces the incredible strengths and opportunities of the entire university.

Who Are the Stanford Distinguished Careers Institute Fellows?

DCI Fellows are individuals from around the world who have undertaken and navigated one or multiple careers with exceptional excellence and who now seek to deepen and strengthen their knowledge and skills or to develop new and different ones that will permit a new path and trajectory. DCI Fellows, who range in age from their 40s to 70s, are not seeking to retire but to transition to new challenges and opportunities that will improve their own life journey and that of the communities they serve. This is accomplished through renewing purpose, developing new communities and networks and recalibrating personal health and wellness.

Stanford DCI Fellows are selected not simply on past accomplishments but on how they envision that participation in the DCI might shape their future life journeys. This includes an assessment of what they will bring to the program to share with their colleagues, including other DCI Fellows, students, faculty, and the broader Stanford community. Accordingly, the emotional and social intelligence of applicants is considered along with their knowledge, skills and accomplishments. The selection of each Distinguished Careers Institute Fellow is thoughtfully done with the goal of bringing together fellows who will make a difference as individuals and as part of a broader learning community and social network. An important aspect of selection is composing DCI classes that connect individuals from diverse and complementary backgrounds with the goal of forming a sharing and supportive community.

Program Components

The DCI program is built around three interconnected pillars: Renewing Purpose, Building Community and Recalibrating Health and Wellness. These three pillars serve as the foundational elements around which DCI is constructed and implemented during the year of fellowship and those that follow.

Renewing Purpose

DCI takes a holistic view about how fellows can explore and renew their purpose. Specifically, the program is not prescriptive and does not assume that fellows/partners have a clearly defined direction when they enter DCI. In fact, we have found that many individuals need time to reflect and explore and that it takes time to determine one's next directional pathway. Further, the underlying goal of DCI is to equip fellows with the tools for a more positive life journey. Ascribing success to traditional socially accepted metrics of achievement may not conform to what fellows seek or find, and thus DCI encourages the exploration of many options and opportunities. This is similar to what often transpires during undergraduate education, where exploring courses and defining a major or concentration are parts of the journey but not the endpoint. Rather this process evolves from personal as well as community exploration and discussion, and DCI fosters both of these and more.

Among the fundamental underpinnings of DCI's focus on renewing purpose is the immersion in higher education. DCI Fellows/Partners are enrolled as nonmatriculated graduate students. As such, while they do not receive academic credit, they have the opportunity to enroll in classes across the university. This means that fellows/partners are full members of these classes and in many cases are doing the assigned work, contributing to classroom discussion and engaging fully with undergraduate and graduate students. By participating actively and fully, DCI Fellows/Partners have won the admiration of faculty and students at Stanford. Indeed, the extent of intergenerational engagement continues to grow and validates the impact of DCI on the university.

To help fellows/partners begin their exploration of purpose they are asked to select and write about "purpose pathway" as part of the application procedure. It should be noted that these are not career paths but rather broad academic themes, analogous to concentrations and majors, with one important caveat. They are designed to simply begin the journey through reflection but not to define or prescribe it.

However, choosing an area of interest helps to launch the process. The broad purpose pathways are listed below.

DCI Purpose Pathways

1. Arts and Humanities
2. Business, Leadership and Entrepreneurship
3. Education, Teaching and Learning
4. Engineering Sciences and Design
5. Health and Healthcare
6. International Studies and Programs
7. Social Sciences, the Rule of Law, Policy and Public Service
8. Independent Study

While selecting a purpose pathway enables an applicant to DCI to share their thinking about an area of study that will help launch their year at Stanford, it does not bind them to focusing on courses in a pathway or considering it as an endpoint. It is a beginning, and this helps DCI gauge the areas of interest of applicants and ultimately select a class that is diverse and complementary.

In addition to coursework, fellows/partners have the opportunity to align some of their interests to that of many dozens of interdisciplinary centers and institutes that are connected to one of Stanford's seven schools or to its independent labs. This is another unique way for fellows/partners to engage more deeply with faculty and initiatives at the university. More information about these opportunities can be found on pages 12-14.

Complementing the coursework and academic programs noted above, fellows/partners also join courses that help further refine the exploration of purpose. One is a year-long course, **Designing Your Life (DYL)**, which is a customized course for DCI Fellows based on design-thinking methods. DYL follows a well-defined curriculum designed by Dave Evans and Bill Burnett, pioneers and leaders in this field, to examine where one is now and where one is going in her/his professional and personal life. It includes large and small group discussions. Another opportunity for self-reflection is to participate in a course on **Memoir Writing** from Stanford's Program in Creative Writing. This popular course allows fellow/partners to explore more deeply how one's past is a prologue to the present and future.

Further, DCI provides a number of activities, adjunctive programs and events that support fellows' and partners' exploration of purpose. For example, each week DCI sponsors a weekly informal lunch series, the **Faculty-Fellow Dialogues**, which brings DCI Fellows/Partners together with leading Stanford faculty to promote dialogue and discussion around a broad range of topics drawn from the rich and diversified offerings of Stanford University. While fellows and partners may have articulated an area of known interest, we believe that it is important to expose them to other topics and issues to provide broader education opportunities or to ignite new areas of interest. In addition, each quarter DCI sponsors a **Colloquium** to provide opportunities for deeper dives into key social and intellectual issues of our time such as: challenges in education, racial justice and equity, climate change, wellness and many other topics. Colloquia have innovative and interactive formats and seek to engage fellows and partners as active contributors.

Building Community

One of the most important and valued pillars of DCI is the opportunity to build friendships with individuals from around the world who are exploring their personal journeys and who are eager to share experiences with a new group of colleagues. From its inception, DCI has witnessed that each new class forges deep and enduring friendships and bonds within the class, as well as across different cohorts. Much of this happens organically as fellows get to know each other but this is also facilitated by programs that DCI offers to help catalyze relationships.

Among the most important of these programs is a weekly early evening reception series entitled **Life Transformation Reflections (LTR)**. This has become one of the most important assets of DCI, bringing fellows and partners together to share events or parts of their lives that have helped define who they are or changed their identity. The LTR program is enabled by working in collaboration with Stanford's Storytelling Project. The LTR program has had a powerful impact on individuals and our DCI Community.

In addition, DCI hosts a monthly **Community Dinner and Event**, in which the community comes together in a social setting and a prominent Stanford faculty member or group is invited to speak informally on an important topic. Previous guests have included George Schultz, Condoleezza Rice, Michael McFaul, Abraham Verghese, and the St. Lawrence String Quartet.

As noted, community building also happens organically among fellow/partners via social events hosted by fellows or by participation in the incredible array of intellectual, athletic, arts and community events that take place at Stanford.

Every fall, DCI hosts an annual **Community Celebration** that brings the entire DCI Community – past and current fellows/partners – together to celebrate each other, engage together in shared presentations, including the presentation of the *DCI Life Journey Inspiration Award*, and participate in events sponsored by dciX (see below).

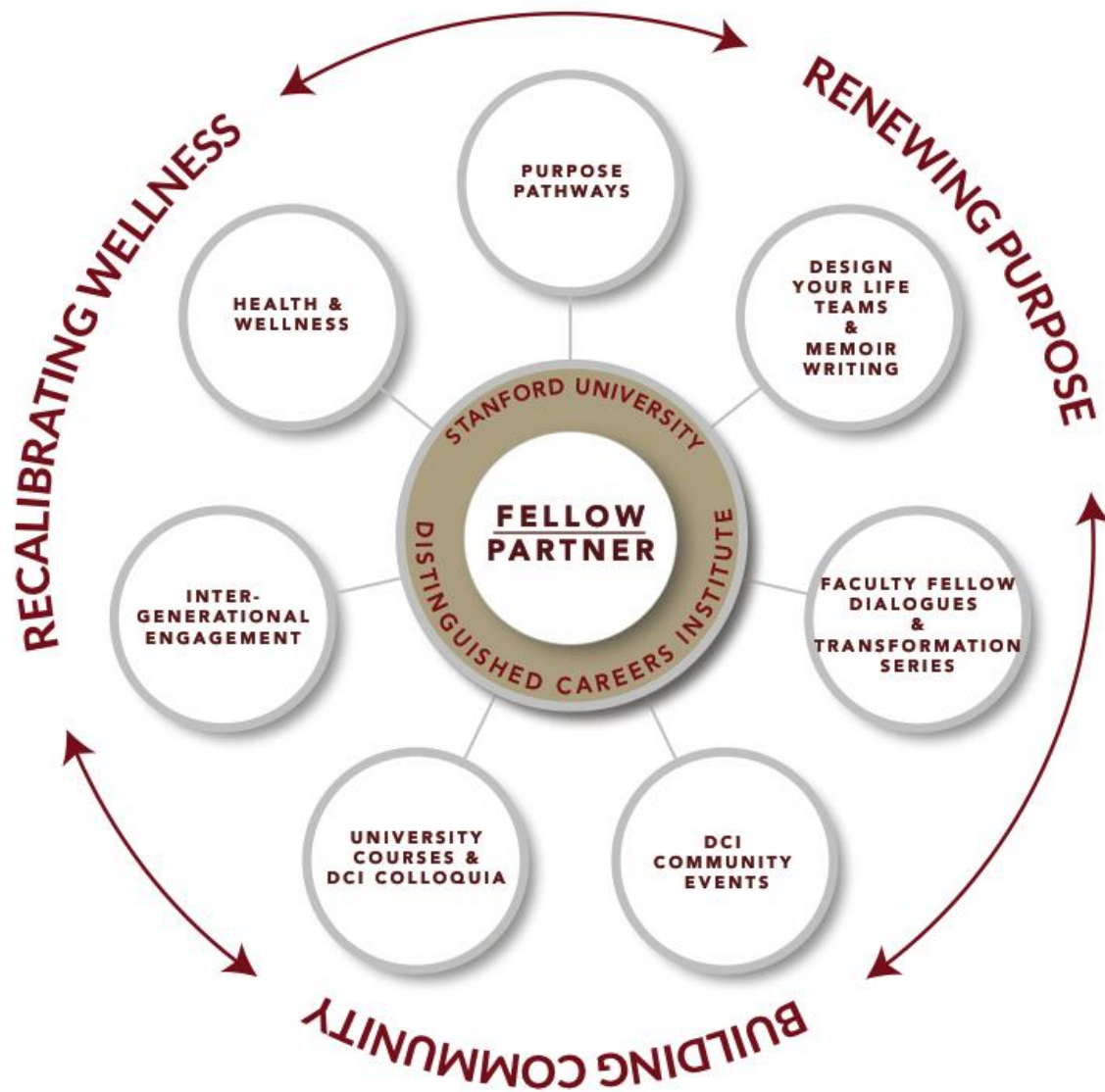
As the world has changed, we have created new ways to continue sharing and engaging the global DCI community from afar. Beginning in February/March 2020, the world plunged into a global coronavirus pandemic and practically all activities became virtual, many by Zoom. While this had consequences for DCI, it also opened opportunities to foster community on a grander scale. By hosting Town Hall meetings for the entire global DCI community, technology has provided ways of bringing our entire community to shared discussions and activities. It has also created and fostered opportunities for the broader DCI community, including special interest groups focused on creative writing, longevity and poverty and inequality, to come together for shared activities important to each group. Even when the pandemic concludes, these opportunities for community engagement will likely become valued opportunities for ongoing and future community building and personal connection.

Recalibrating Wellness

The third pillar of DCI focuses on Wellness from a physical, emotional and spiritual perspective. Fellows/Partners come to DCI with variegated approaches to personal wellness and each is seeking ideas and resources to further improve their wellness – or in some cases to reignite and recalibrate it. There is no “one size fits all” program. DCI has engaged a wellness educator to meet with fellows/partners to define opportunities for addressing core elements of wellness, including movement, nutrition, sleep and mindfulness. Fellows have opportunities to engage in courses or programs that are sponsored by the university including wellness and fitness classes and the Health Improvement Program (HIP). These are complemented by programs that DCI and Stanford collaborate on, including a program on **Physical Activity and Longevity**, as well as programs that address spirituality.

The coordination and integration of the DCI pillars of Purpose, Community and Wellness are delineated in the following graphic:

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Stanford Interdisciplinary Centers and Institutes

The following are some of the Stanford Centers and Institutes that fellows and partners have participated in in the past to support their Purpose Pathway endeavors. Fellows and partners might, after discussion with and approval of the relevant faculty, join one of these programs as either an observer or a participant. Fellows may also bring considerable life experience that will enhance the Stanford program. More information about these opportunities can be found via the links below:

Arts and the Humanities

- [Program in Modern Thought and Literature](#)
- [Stanford Arts Institute](#)
- [Stanford Storytelling Project](#)
- [Hume Center for Writing and Speaking](#)

Business, Leadership and Entrepreneurship

- [Arthur and Toni Rembe Rock Center for Corporate Governance](#)
- [Center for Social Innovation](#)
- [John S. Knight Journalism Fellowships](#)
- [Stanford Ignite](#)
- [Stanford Technology Ventures Program \(STVP\)](#)

Education, Teaching and Learning – from the classroom to the design lab and boardroom

- [Program in Modern Thought and Literature](#)
- [Center to Support Excellence in Teaching](#)
- [John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities](#)
- [Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education \(SCOPE\)](#)
- [PACE – Policy Analysis for California Education](#)
- [Stanford Institute of Higher Education Research: SIHER](#)

Energy and the Environment

- [Emmett Interdisciplinary Program in Environment and Resources \(EIPER\)](#)
- [Global Climate and Energy Project \(GCEP\)](#)
- [Precourt Institute for Energy](#)
- [Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment](#)
- [TomKat Center for Sustainable Energy](#)

Engineering Sciences and Design

- [Brown Institute for Media Innovation](#)
- [Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford \(d.school\)](#)

Health and Healthcare – Innovation and Discovery, Policy, Healthcare Delivery

- [Biodesign Program](#)
- [Center for Law and the Biosciences](#)
- [Child Health Research Institute](#)
- [Clinical Excellence Research Center](#)
- [SPARK Translational Research Program](#)
- [Stanford Cancer Institute](#)
- [Stanford Cardiovascular Institute](#)
- [Stanford Center for Immunity, Transplantation and Infection](#)
- [Stanford Institute for Neuro-Innovation and Translational Neuroscience](#)
- [Stanford Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine](#)
- [Stanford Prevention Research Center \(SPRC\)](#)

International Studies and Programs

- [Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law](#)
- [Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies](#)
- [Ford Dorsey Program in International Policy Studies](#)
- [Stanford Center on International Conflict and Negotiation](#)
- [Stanford Institute for Innovation in Developing Economies \(SEED\)](#)

Social Sciences, Policy and Public Service

- [Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity](#)
- [Haas Center for Public Service](#)
- [Hoover Institution](#)
- [Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence \(HAI\)](#)
- [John and Terry Levin Center for Public Service and Public Interest Law](#)
- [Michelle R. Clayman Institute for Gender Research](#)
- [Science, Technology and Society Program](#)
- [Stanford Center on Longevity](#)
- [Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research \(SIEPR\)](#)
- [Urban Studies Program](#)

Academic Programs

- [Knight-Hennessy Scholars](#)
- [Stanford MSx Program](#) (redesign of Stanford Sloan Masters Program)

Costs Associated with DCI

The fee to attend the Stanford Distinguished Careers Institute will be provided to applicants in the spring of the academic year before they begin their DCI program. Fees are comparable to those at the Stanford Graduate School of Business and other Stanford graduate programs. A select number of applicants whose careers have been in the public sector, including the military, public education, the arts, or related fields, may be eligible for a reduced fee. Fellows are expected to find their own housing.

Fostering the DCI Community

Since the Inaugural DCI Class entered Stanford in 2015, DCI has become a global community that seeks interconnection and engagement within and between classes around a range of shared interests. In 2016, DCI Fellow Susan Golden engaged her DCI colleagues around shared interests in longevity, a number of which were aligned with the Stanford Center on Longevity. With subsequent classes a range of interest areas emerged that were codified under the banner of dciX. An integral and important facet of DCI, currently led by Susan Golden, dciX aligns current and past DCI alumni (including the alumni network launched by 2015 DCI Partner Debbie Byron) into a vibrant and expanding community around themes such as DCI Writes, DCI Speaks, DCI on Boards, as well as important initiatives like Energy and Sustainability, Longevity, Impact Investing and more. A number of these initiatives have been aligned to existing Stanford Centers, including the TomKat Center, Lean Launchpad, and the Center for Social Innovation among others. These programs enhance the experience and connectivity of the DCI Community including their ever-expanding interactions with students and faculty.

Transforming Higher Education and Society by Creating a National and Global Network

From its inception, a goal for DCI has been to foster and catalyze the transformation of higher education by the creation of a global network of colleges and universities that develop their own unique programs that engage individuals in midlife to engage in the pursuit of purpose, community and wellness. We recognize that every institution is different; that community colleges, state and public institutions, small liberal arts colleges, research universities will have different goals and objectives. There is no singular ideal model and many different approaches should be explored and evaluated. To do this DCI has helped initiate a new organization that will bring colleges and universities under a common umbrella to share best practices, opportunities for collaborative programs and shared research. In 2020 this nonprofit collaborative, is being established as a project under the fiscal sponsor Community Initiatives, with the founding members being [*Stanford's Distinguished Careers Institute*](#), [*Notre Dame's Inspired Leadership Initiative*](#), [*UT Austin's Tower Fellows Program*](#) and the [*University of Minnesota's Advanced Careers Program*](#).

Validating DCI: Research, Metrics and Monitoring

DCI is committed to research that will further our understanding of life-career transitions as well as the impact of the program on enhancing longevity. To achieve these goals, fellows and partners will participate in research protocols that have been designed to assess the contributions of each pillar of the curriculum, purpose, community and wellness. These include prospective and longitudinal studies using qualitative and quantitative methodologies. We are also studying the impact of DCI on the University, assessing the experiences of students, faculty and DCI Fellows and Partners in this creative experience in intergenerational learning. As additional colleges and universities join with us, pooled data will allow us to evaluate similar information about diverse populations in different settings.

Importantly, this research will allow us to better understand how the fusion of renewed purpose, community building and a recalibration of wellness, impacts DCI Fellows and Partners in leading healthier lives, reducing the onset or pace of the challenges associated with aging and reducing their need for medical and social services.

Appendix



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SAMPLE QUARTER

Week 1

TRANSFORMATION SERIES

Community Forum with Continuing Fellows – Anne Friedlander
Your Body Inside and Out
Life Transformation Reflections

DESIGNING YOUR LIFE

Dave Evans, Lecturer, Mechanical Engineering/Design Program,
Author, “Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-lived, Joyful Life”

Week 2

TRANSFORMATION SERIES

Community Forum
Life Transformation Reflections

FACULTY FELLOW DIALOGUE

Niall Ferguson, Senior Fellow of the Hoover Institution, Stanford, and the Center for European Studies, Harvard
From Chmerica to Cold War II: Applying History to the US-China Relationship

Week 3

COLLOQUIUM: The Idea of Race: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

Race: Historical Origins of a Stubborn Idea

James Campbell, Edgar E. Robinson Professor in United States History

Conceptions of Racial Discrimination in American Law

Rick Banks, Jackson Eli Reynolds Professor of Law at Stanford Law School and Professor, by courtesy, at the School of Education

The Science of Diverse Communities

Claude Steele, Professor of Psychology

Doing Race

Paula Moya, Danily C. and Laura Louise Bell Professor of the Humanities, Burton J. and Deedee McMurtry University Fellow in Undergraduate Education, 2019-20 Fellow, Center for the Study of Behavioral Science

FACULTY FELLOW DIALOGUE

Pam Matson, Interdisciplinary Sustainability Scientist, Academic Leader, and Organizational Strategist

Transitions to Sustainability: What we've learned and where we're going.

Week 4

TRANSFORMATION SERIES

Community Forum

Life Transformation Reflections

FACULTY FELLOW DIALOGUE

Dr. Jonathan Berek and Dr. Seema Yasmin

Epidemics of Misinformation

Week 5

COMMUNITY DINNER

The Honorable George Shultz, Thomas W. and Susan B. Ford Distinguished Fellow and Former Secretary of State (Reagan Administration)

FACULTY FELLOW DIALOGUE

Jeanne Tsai, Professor of Psychology and the Director of the Stanford Culture & Emotion Lab

How Culture Shapes Our Feelings: Implications for Happiness and Other Important Things

Week 6

TRANSFORMATION SERIES

Community Forum with Continuing Fellows

Life Transformation Reflections

FACULTY FELLOW DIALOGUE

Melissa Jones Briggs, Lecturer in Organizational Behavior

Acting with Power

Week 7

TRANSFORMATION SERIES

Community Forum

Life Transformation Reflections

FACULTY FELLOW DIALOGUE

Rob Jackler, Professor in Otorhinolaryngology and of Neurosurgery

The Future of the Sense of Hearing

Week 8

TRANSFORMATION SERIES

Community Forum with Anne Friedlander
Your Body Inside and Out Wrap-Up
Life Transformation Reflections

FACULTY FELLOW DIALOGUE

Matt Bannick, Lecturer in Management
Whither Impact Investing

Week 9

TRANSFORMATION SERIES

Community Forum
Life Transformation Reflections

DESIGNING YOUR LIFE

Dave Evans, Lecturer, Mechanical Engineering/Design Program,
Author, *Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-lived, Joyful Life*

Week 10

TRANSFORMATION SERIES

Community Forum with Continuing Fellows
Life Transformation Reflections

FACULTY FELLOW DIALOGUE

Dean Winslow, Professor of Medicine
*From Bagram Airfield to Baghdad and Back Again –
an American military doctor's experience in two wars*

Week 11

REFLECTIONS & REVIEW