

Stu Conger Award in Career Counselling and Career Development, 2011

Recipient: Bill Borgen

Biography

From Lynne Bezanson's Award Presentation Speech...

Here is how the Canadian Oxford dictionary defines "academic" -- "A teacher or scholar in a university or institute of higher education" so far so good – but it goes further---are you ready? "Abstract; theoretical; not of practical relevance; over-formal, conventional".

No one could be further from this description than the academic we honour this evening as the recipient of the Stu Conger Leadership Award in Career Counselling and Career Development—Dr. Bill Borgen.

Let us look at how Bill dispels every stereotype:

One of the first researchers to champion applied research in English in Canada, almost 30 years ago when applied research was not only rare; it was quite frowned upon as being not sufficiently "academic"; one of the first researchers in career development to champion qualitative research methodologies, (also frowned upon), but Bill pioneered, convinced that the lived experience of the individual was the source of the most valuable data; and his research topics?---the experience of unemployment—what really happens to people who are suddenly set adrift?; Starting Points:—a workshop series taking what was understood from the research and applying it to assist real people in real difficulty to make their way back into the workforce; and recently the employed workers and their experience in meeting the challenges of constant change in today's workplace. Bill is a researcher whose publication record is described by his Deputy Head as "stellar". How is that for debunking the stereotypes of "abstract; theoretical; not of practical relevance".

And over-formal?? Hardly! Bill is widely recognized as an outstanding mentor of graduate students and new faculty. Asked to describe what quality comes to mind in describing Bill, one of the most dominant traits would be that of a true "collaborator". Bill is a mediator in conflict; a supporter in difficulty; a listener to all sides of an argument and gifted at finding the golden mean in which there are no losers and everyone has been heard. Formal? Let me tell you one short story. I was observing in a group counselling course Bill was facilitating many years ago – we were all in a circle and Bill noted one participant with a particularly eager look. He invited, "Joan it looks like you have something you want to say". There was a long pregnant pause and Joan then said "Oh no, not at all; I'm just working hard at

pretending to be interested"! Talk about an ice-breaker! The group roared with laughter including Bill—but it was because of Bill's warmth, humanity and overall approach to people that such a comment could be made during the first hour of a 5 day workshop!

What about conventional? Well, perhaps just a little—but surely he must fit the definition at least a tiny bit!!

The Stu Conger Award is about all these qualities – it is also about leadership and cultivating leadership in others. Bill's leadership could not be more in evidence throughout his career –President of the International Association for Counselling from 1998 to 2006; President of CCA, now CCPA from 1993-1995 with the Career Development Chapter established during his tenure; a current lead researcher in the Canadian Research Working Group for Evidence Based Career Development and a catalyst and facilitator for the newly formed CCCDA; The Canadian Council of Career Development Associations are just a few examples. Bill is totally committed to excellence in theory, research and practice. One example is his co-authoring of the accreditation procedures for counsellor education programs in Canada.

Bill is of course a fine academic of exceptional quality, productivity and contribution and he is proof positive that the Canadian Oxford Dictionary is in need of significant revision!

One of Bill's nominee's noted in his comments "I am surprised that this has not happened before now" Well Bill, it has happened now and no one could be more deserving. I have had the privilege of working with you on many projects over the years –indeed going back 30 years ago and we continue to work together. I consider myself privileged to be a colleague and very privileged to be a friend. Bill, your contributions to career development and career counselling have been and continue to be enormous. Please come forward and accept the Stu Conger Award for Leadership in Career Counselling and Career Development and accept the thanks of the entire community assembled here this evening and Stu, with his regrets, in absentia.

Lynne Bezanon