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WHERE WE BELONG: MAKING ROOM FOR THE THIRD SPACE

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The concept of the Third Space has origins in studies of intersecting cultures by the postcolonial scholar Homi K Bhabha, which have since influenced the use of the term in disparate disciplines. Celia Whitchurch's 2008 paper introduced the Third Space in the context of Higher Education, referring to those positions and professional identities that don't fit the conventional binary of academic and professional roles. The Third Space encompasses roles such as learning designers, educational developers and other professional and technical roles within the academic space, staffed by people with a range of qualifications and experience, as well as staff in academic positions engaged in work-integrated learning and academic skill development roles.

Whitchurch (2023) identified two types of workers in the Third Space: those who find it a safe space, but not necessarily with recognition of their capabilities and with limited opportunities for career progression, and those who experiment and take risks to push the boundaries of the Third Space to develop their own space, leverage their networks and create new opportunities. Whitchurch calls on those who work in the Third Space *"to harness their agency and activism to promote the value-added of their work as part of the overall academic offering, and to combat any sense of invisibility."* The formation of Third Space communities of practice such as ADePT (Academic Development Partners in Teaching and Learning), which has members from the five universities in Western Australia, as well as institution-wide structures like the Nexus Program at UNSW (Moray & Lawrence, 2024) can provide a platform for knowledge sharing, belonging, inclusion and advocacy.

For the first time, there will be a Third Space workshop as part of Discipline Day at ACSME, to which we invite academic and professional staff that work in the Third Space, as well as those who would like to network with attendees across a range of disciplinary and professional work areas. This inaugural meeting will be an interactive workshop that will focus on gathering insights into participants' experiences of working in the Third Space. We aim to develop a community of practice focused on science education that will expand and strengthen our networks and build opportunities for advocacy and academic development in the ACSME and ACDS spaces.

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