Title of project: The Many Faces of Belonging: The Habits and Mindset of Belonging Leaders

Summer 2023 was highly productive, and I am pleased to share this progress report funded by the Center's Summer Research Grant. The intent of the grant was to support the transcription and qualitative analysis of season three of a podcast on which I am a co-host and, as will be explained in this report, my research plan expanded to include multiple seasons. The podcast is about belonging, and seasons three and four featured 25 episodes with guests from a variety of professional backgrounds who discussed their experiences of belonging as leaders and in organizations and relationships. During Season 4 of the podcast, my research colleague and I determined that we wanted to unpack and make connections within and across episodes. Furthermore, we were eager to situate our findings with the current literature about belonging to contextualize the podcast episodes within and beyond the current beliefs about the construct. We worked collaboratively and independently, thanks to our summer research grant funding, to engage in IRB-approved qualitative research using podcast transcripts as data.

The proposed activities for the research grant are noted in the table below, along with progress toward each objective. While we initially planned to write manuscripts for journal submission, those changed planned when we secured a book contract with Information Age Publishing in the early summer. This was exciting and welcomed because it allowed us to focus on several podcast seasons, using more data to develop a broader understanding of belonging. A full draft manuscript for the book is due at the end of January 2024, and we are on schedule to meet the deadline.

Date	Objectives	Progress
June 1-5	Transcribe and Clean data from Seasons 3 and 4 of the podcast	Goal modified & met. 25 episodes from Season 3 and Season 4 were transcribed using Otter.ai software.
June 2023	Enter transcriptions into NVivo software and begin qualitative data analysis with first cycle coding. Write Introduction and Methods sections.	Goal modified & met. Transcripts from Otter.ai were entered into NVivo for first cycle coding. Shifted from manuscript to book preparation; developed table of contents & outline; book contract secured.

July 2023	Finish first cycle coding and begin second cycle coding with research partner. Complete data analysis. Write Results and Discussion sections.	Goal modified & met. First cycle coding completed, including independent and collaborative coding; co-constructed theme development; Introduction, chapter 1 drafted.
August 2023	Complete and review the article. Submit to an academic journal.	Goal modified & met. Introduction, chapter 1, chapter 2, chapter 4, chapter 6 drafted.

Our qualitative analysis included a combination of a priori and emergent coding (Saldaña, 2021). Our a priori codes came from a prior study on Season 2, belonging during the pandemic. We felt that many of the codes from that study would be relevant to this research, and we used the applicable a priori codes and were also open to new emergent codes as we analyzed Seasons 3 and 4. We began with parallel coding, where each of us coded the same four episodes, two each from Season 3 and Season 4. Then we met to discuss our a priori and emergent codes, and we developed a preliminary shared codebook. At that time, we eliminated the a priori codes that seemed to be pandemic-specific and did not arise in the Season 3 and Season 4 episodes (e.g., deep fatigue). Our next step was our first cycle of independent coding. In total, each of us coded 12 episodes, and we met regularly during the process to ensure intercoder reliability by discussing our respective emergent codes. We added codes to our shared codebook, merged similar codes, and removed codes that were not used at all. After the first full coding cycle, we added all our codes to a Google jam board, which functions as a virtual whiteboard. Initially, we collaboratively clustered the codes by grouping them according to commonality (Saldana, 2021). Four major themes emerged: definitions of belonging, belonging to self, five senses of belonging, and tools of belonging. From there, we worked within the themes to further categorize the codes into subthemes, such as feeling an *ease of belonging* and feeling a *vibe of belonging* within the five senses theme. We co-constructed the subthemes by working on the jam board simultaneously and independently, and then we met again to talk through our rationale for grouping codes into particular subthemes.

The chapters of the book emerged organically from the codes and themes, and we developed a table of contents reflective of our findings. During the summer, the following chapters were drafted: Introduction (our belonging stories); Chapter 1 (The podcast story, methodology), Chapter 2 (literature review; includes multidisciplinary perspectives on belonging from psychology, philosophy, theology, sociology, economics, etc.), Chapter 4 (definitions of belonging), and Chapter 6 (self and belonging). We are currently under contract to write a book

about belonging for a primarily higher education audience. We are confident that this manuscript represents our work as scholar practitioners who ascribe to systematic research methods and who are also able to tell the story of the research in ways that resonate with an audience of academics and non-academics alike. We believe that story and integration are a powerful combination, and we have had the privilege of hearing 100+ podcast episodes worth of stories that inform our understanding of belonging. Our book integrates the lived experiences of our guests, qualitative analysis, historical perspectives, and current literature to tell the story of belonging as we understand it through these methods. The 2023 summer research grant allowed for this research to take place, and I appreciate the grant and my work that it funded.

Reference
Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.