

*School of Education Colloquium Series*  
**Community and Informal  
Approaches to Teaching, Learning,  
and Teacher Education**

**February 14, 2018**

1:25-2:25 p.m.

Willard Hall 207

*Featuring*  
**Leah M. Melber**  
*Knight Vice President of Education  
Phillip and Patricia Frost  
Museum of Science*



**Leah M. Melber** is the Knight Vice President of Education at the Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science. She holds a BA in Zoology from the University of New Hampshire, an MA in Education from Pepperdine University, and a PhD in Educational Psychology from the University of Southern California. Her research focuses on improving public understanding of scientific research through effective program design within informal learning environments. Most recently, she has focused on connecting learners to science through study of plants and animals both in zoo and aquarium environments and in the field.

## **From 'Reddit' to Reality: Our Informal Connections with Nature**

Informal science learning experiences play a critical role in developing understanding of nature and conservation. Some of these experiences are deliberate, such as visiting a zoo or hiking a nearby trail. For others, experiences may be subtle, such as exposure through social media or crossing paths with urban wildlife. Whatever the pathway, the research base articulating the impact these experiences have on individuals, as well as the world around us, is expanding. This presentation is structured to jump-start a conversation on how formal and informal educators can better support informal engagement with positive outcomes for the learner and for the environment. For researchers, this presentation is an opportunity to identify areas in need of additional, rigorous exploration to further our academic understanding. It is also an opportunity for the everyday learner to turn the lens on our own awareness, engagement, and action and see how our belief systems and practice influence our instruction.