

Maintaining optimism and instilling hope: The work of academic integrity practitioners and scholars

Brandy Usick
University of Manitoba

Abstract

We open the second volume of the journal with a reflection on the state of our world and campuses and the importance of our work as academic integrity practitioners and scholars. We announce the evolution of the journal to include both peer-reviewed research and practitioner articles.

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I am driving across the prairies for spring break with my spouse and soon-to-be 9-year-old son. My son, the thinker, declares that he was born in the wrong time. He is interested in the era in which my husband and I grew up, the latter decades of the last century. My son's interest in the past is informed by the juxtaposition of old and new in his world. Our character-rich house is over 130 years old and nestled among sparkling new condo units in the trendiest area of our city. While our house shows a clear indication that we have embraced technology (smart phones, laptops, streaming media, e-readers), there is strong connection to the past (overflowing bookshelves, vinyl, antiques and several typewriters). My son's pining for what he perceives to be a simpler time had led to his decision to self-limit technology at a time when his peers are caught up in the frenzy of the video game Fortnite.

I share this story because of the meaning it provides to me about my own thoughts on the state of our world. I understand my son's feelings as I too yearn for a time that is less chaotic. However, I keenly understand that nostalgia adds a veneer to the past that emphasizes the positive and minimizes the negative. Taking comfort from the past helps when the world seems out of control. We are experiencing a deficit of strong and ethical leadership in our global world. The institutions that have long provided structures are being eroded by corruption and unethical behaviour. But when has this not been in the case over the ages?

My thoughts turn to our institutions of higher education and the recent headlines south of the border related to the college admission scandal (Kwon, 2019). I am dismayed but not surprised to hear how power and privilege buys opportunities for those who cannot compete on their own

merit. But again, while the headlines are shocking, dishonesty has taken many forms at university and college campuses for as long they have been in existence. I am concerned about the students who might begin to doubt that a virtuous path is the right one take. A responsibility for us researchers and practitioners within the area of academic integrity is to instill hope and cultivate the values that underpin integrity. We need to help students make sense of our complex world which includes navigating academic integrity issues though out their degree.

In my twenty years as a Student Affairs practitioner, I have been able to maintain an optimistic perspective. I have hope too in this generation that is now on our campuses. While I read generational studies with a critical eye, I find learning about the characteristics of various generations to be informative. And I take comfort in understanding that Generation Z are deeply committed to social issues and are not afraid of putting in hard work to address complex problem (Linder, 2019). It makes me realize that the work we do as practitioners and scholars in the area of academic integrity is more important than ever. If they are willing to put in the hard work, we must be too.

That persistent flame of optimism continues to burn for me. I hope you are able to find inspiration for your efforts through the articles in our Volume 2 Issue 1. As the world shifts and changes, so has our journal and we have now evolved to include both peer-reviewed research and practitioner articles to expand on the ways we share and mobilize knowledge around academic integrity.

References

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