

Spring 2020

Policy Problems: Preparing Students for the “Real World”

Shannon McKechnie
smckech@uwo.ca

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Communiqué

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Editor / Rédacteur

Mitchell Miller, communiqu@cacuss.ca

CACUSS Board/Conseil ASEUCC
(2020-2021 as of time of printing)

Mark Solomon, President

cacuss-president@cacuss.ca
mark.solomon@senecacollege.ca

Dale Mullings, Finance Director

dale.mullings@utoronto.ca

Woo Kim, Director-at-Large

woo.kim@yorku.ca

Raymond Sewell, Director-at-Large

raymond.sewell@smu.ca

Erin Biddlecombe, Director-at-Large

erinb@sfu.ca

Anne Comfort, Director-at-Large

acomfort@mta.ca

Evan Hilchey, Director-at-Large/Policy

hilchey@camosun.bc.ca

Jen Gonzales, Director-at-Large

j8gonzal@ryerson.ca

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Jennifer Hamilton, Executive Director

cacuss-ed@cacuss.ca

Advertising / La publicité

CACUSS Secretariat, contact@cacuss.ca

Submissions / Soumissions

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Mitchell Miller, communiqu@cacuss.ca

CACUSS Secretariat/Secretariat ASEUCC

150 Eglinton Ave. E., Suite 402, Toronto, ON M4P 1E8

Email: contact@cacuss.ca Website: www.CACUSS.ca

Outgoing President's Message

Note: This message was written in January 2020

As I come to the end of my term as CACUSS President, it is a time to reflect, to look back, to take stock, to assess how we did, and, with hope, to resolve, to keep that momentum going, and to look for new ways to improve going forward. With hope, problems can be viewed as challenges providing new possibilities for a better tomorrow. For me, hope is the positive life force that creates a strengths-based approach to life. Without it, problems become overwhelming, stifling black clouds that engulf and strangle that life force, leaving behind it an empty shell.



Students arrive at our post-secondary institutions filled with hope for their futures, but for many they can quickly become overwhelmed by what faces them and lose sight of this hope. Now, rather than being excited by new opportunities and interesting challenges, they may become despondent and withdrawn. It is therefore no surprise that hope is so strongly linked to student success.

Hopeful students (Snyder et al., 2002):

- are positive about the future,
- are goal-orientated,
- are more likely to achieve academic success,
- experience psychological and physical well-being,
- are resilient,
- have problem-solving ability to navigate obstacles.

There are also countless threats to hope, including but not limited to:

- lack of support,
- inability to envision a positive future,
- repeated failures or setbacks,
- mental illness,
- personal limitations,
- institutional apathy.

Post-secondary campuses across Canada are struggling with a mental health tsunami. There are two approaches to institutional response: 1) a problem-based approach that focuses on students as “problems” that need to be fixed, 2) a strengths-based hope-filled approach that focuses on the assets students have and on cultivating their assets.

The problem-based approach shares assumptions with deficit models that conclude student problems derive from individual deficiencies. In contrast, the asset-based approach concludes student problems arise from the individual, the environment, and the context (Soria & Stubblefield, 2015). One, a living, breathing, active hope-based approach. The other a stifling, deflating approach surrounded in dark clouds of shame and recrimination like a cold stagnant pond.

Blas Pedreal (2013) proposes that student affairs professionals engage in the practice of hope in an effort to transform higher education, and we are doing just that. We have initiated and are leading the conversations on mental health, diversity, equity, Indigenization, inclusion, and civility on campuses across Canada. We can co-create new positive, hope-inspiring policies and practices with our academic colleagues.

Student affairs professionals are on the front lines of inspiring hope for our students. The research of Soria and Stubblefield (2015) along with the positive psychology perspective offered by Maher (2010) suggests students who develop greater awareness of their strengths, particularly in their first year, may

also have associated increases in their levels of hope. Infusing hope-related activities into curricular and co-curricular venues (e.g. classrooms, advising appointments, study groups, residence activities, presentations, discussions) is recommended.

Amundson (2011) offers a hope-centered model of career development that could be adapted to all areas of student affairs work. With a central focus on instilling and maintaining hope, the model provides a framework for guiding individuals through phases of self-reflection, self-clarity, visioning, goal-setting, planning, implementing, and adapting.

We all went into student affairs work because we want to make a difference in the lives of students. Loss of hope is by no means limited to students. Those on the front lines are especially susceptible. Burnout can lead to feelings of hopelessness for staff, and it is important for everyone to be able to recognize these signs both in others and in themselves. Knowing the characteristics of hopelessness can help student affairs leaders renew sources of hope among staff. Hope is a living thing, and when student affairs staff exude hope, our students will feel and be inspired by this powerful energy.

I am reminded of the words from my 2017 conference reflection in which I described Frank O'Dea's words about Hope. Vision. Action.: "Without hope, you can't have a vision for a better life and vision without action is simply a dream."

So, as I reflect on my tenure on the CACUSS Board, the main feeling that I have is gratitude for all of you, for our profession, and for our Association because, in working with all of you, I've been able to bring my whole authentic self to this leadership role.

We are living in very interesting and complicated times. Change is constant and fast. And what I truly feel with my whole heart is that, as student affairs and services professionals, our work plays a huge part in adding value to a student's post-secondary education. We make it worthwhile. We make a difference. We are called on to support our institutions and our students as they respond to the unprecedented change that is occurring. Our work is not easy. It requires knowledge and skill, courage and compassion, kindness, love, patience, resilience, deep caring for others... and hope.

This is how CACUSS will achieve its vision. CACUSS and its members are integral to the transformation and success of the post-secondary sector in Canada. I look forward to continuing to work with all of to realize our vision.

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Message de la présidente sortante

Note : ce message a été écrit en janvier 2020

Au moment où j'arrive au terme de mon mandat à titre de présidente de l'Association des services aux étudiants des universités et collèges du Canada (ASEUCC), le temps est venu de réfléchir, de regarder en arrière, de faire le point, d'évaluer ce que nous avons fait et, avec espoir, de trouver des solutions, de poursuivre sur cette lancée et de chercher de nouvelles façons de progresser. L'espoir aide à envisager les problèmes comme des défis qui offrent de nouvelles possibilités pour un avenir meilleur. Pour moi, l'espoir est la force de vie positive qui crée une approche de la vie fondée sur les forces. Sans lui, les problèmes deviennent accablants, tels des nuages noirs étouffants qui engloutissent cette force de vie et l'étranglent, laissant derrière eux une coquille vide.

Les étudiants arrivent dans nos établissements postsecondaires pleins d'espoir en leur avenir, mais beaucoup d'entre eux peuvent rapidement se sentir dépassés par ce qui les attend et perdre de vue cet espoir. Aujourd'hui, plutôt que de s'enthousiasmer pour de nouvelles possibilités et des défis intéressants, ils peuvent devenir méfiants et se renfermer. Il n'est donc pas surprenant que l'espoir soit étroitement lié à la réussite des élèves.

Les étudiants pleins d'espoir (Snyder et coll., 2002) :

- sont optimistes quant à l'avenir,
- se concentrent sur leurs objectifs,
- sont plus susceptibles de réussir leurs études,
- connaissent un certain bien-être psychologique et physique,
- font preuve de résilience,
- savent résoudre les problèmes pour surmonter les obstacles.

De même, d'innombrables menaces pèsent sur l'espoir, notamment :

- le manque de soutien,
- l'incapacité d'envisager un avenir positif,
- les échecs ou revers répétés,
- la maladie mentale,
- les limitations personnelles,
- l'apathie des établissements.

Dans l'ensemble du Canada, les campus d'enseignement postsecondaire sont aux prises avec un tsunami lié à la santé mentale. Il existe deux approches à la réponse des établissements : 1) une approche axée sur les problèmes qui se concentre sur les étudiants en tant que « problèmes » à régler; 2) une approche axée sur les forces et chargée d'espoir qui se concentre sur les atouts des étudiants et sur le développement de ces atouts.

L'approche axée sur les problèmes partage des hypothèses associées à des modèles de déficit qui concluent que les problèmes des étudiants découlent de lacunes individuelles. En revanche, selon l'approche axée sur les atouts, les problèmes des étudiants découlent de la personne, de l'environnement et du contexte [Soria et Stubblefield (2015)] (traduction libre). La première approche, vivante, respirante et active est fondée sur l'espoir. L'autre approche, étouffante et déflationniste est entourée de nuages sombres de honte et de récrimination telle un étang stagnant et froid.

Blas Pedreal (2013) propose que les professionnels des affaires étudiantes s'engagent à pratiquer l'espoir dans un effort de transformation de l'enseignement supérieur, et c'est exactement ce que nous faisons. Nous avons amorcé des conversations sur la santé mentale, la diversité, l'équité, l'indigénéisation, l'inclusion et la civilité sur les campus et nous les dirigeons partout au Canada. Nous pouvons créer conjointement de nouvelles politiques et pratiques positives et porteuses d'espoir avec nos collègues universitaires.

Les professionnels des affaires étudiantes sont en première ligne d'un espoir inspirant pour nos étudiants. La recherche de Soria et Stubblefield (2015), ainsi que la perspective psychologique positive que propose Maher (2010) suggèrent que les étudiants qui développent une plus grande conscience de leurs forces, en particulier au cours de leur première année, peuvent également connaître une augmentation connexe de leur niveau d'espoir. Il est recommandé d'introduire des activités liées à l'espoir dans les programmes scolaires et parascolaires (p. ex. cours en classe, rendez-vous d'aide pédagogique, groupes d'étude, activités en résidence, exposés, discussions).

Amundson (2011) offre un modèle de perfectionnement professionnel axé sur l'espoir qui pourrait être adapté à tous les domaines de travail des affaires étudiantes. En mettant l'accent sur l'instigation et le maintien de l'espoir, le modèle fournit un cadre qui permet de guider les personnes dans des phases d'introspection, de clarté intérieure, de visualisation, d'établissement d'objectifs, de planification, de mise en œuvre et d'adaptation.

Nous nous sommes tous engagés dans le domaine des affaires étudiantes parce que nous voulons faire la différence dans la vie des étudiants. La perte d'espoir ne se limite en aucun cas aux étudiants. Les employés de première ligne y sont particulièrement sensibles. L'épuisement professionnel peut susciter un sentiment de désespoir au sein du personnel, et il est important que chacun soit en mesure de reconnaître ces signes, tant chez les autres que chez lui-même. Connaître les caractéristiques du désespoir peut aider les responsables des affaires étudiantes à renouveler les sources d'espoir parmi le personnel. L'espoir est une chose vivante, et lorsque le personnel des affaires étudiantes dégage de l'espoir, nos étudiants se sentent inspirés par cette énergie puissante et y trouvent une source d'inspiration.

Je me souviens des paroles que j'ai prononcées lors de ma réflexion dans le cadre de la conférence de 2017, au cours de laquelle je citais les mots de Frank O'Dea au sujet de l'espoir. Vision. Mesure à prendre : « Sans espoir, vous ne pouvez pas avoir la vision d'une vie meilleure et une vision sans action est tout simplement un rêve. » (traduction libre)

Ainsi, si je réfléchis à mon mandat au sein du conseil d'administration de l'ASEUCC, ce que j'éprouve essentiellement, c'est de la gratitude pour vous tous, pour notre profession et pour notre association, car en travaillant avec chacun d'entre vous, j'ai pu apporter l'ensemble de ma personnalité authentique à ce rôle de leadership.

Nous vivons des moments très intéressants et compliqués. Le changement est constant et rapide. Et ce que je ressens vraiment de tout mon cœur, c'est qu'en tant que professionnels des affaires étudiantes et des services aux étudiants, notre travail contribue grandement à ajouter de la valeur aux études postsecondaires des étudiants. Cela en vaut la peine. Nous faisons la différence. Nous sommes appelés à appuyer nos établissements et nos étudiants dans leur réponse aux changements sans précédent qui surviennent. Notre tâche n'est pas facile. Elle demande des connaissances et des compétences, du courage et de la compassion, de la gentillesse, de l'amour, de la patience, de la résilience, un souci profond des autres... et de l'espoir.

Voilà comment l'ASEUCC concrétisera sa vision. L'ASEUCC et ses membres font partie intégrante de la transformation et de la réussite du secteur de l'enseignement postsecondaire au Canada. Je me réjouis à l'idée de continuer à travailler avec vous tous pour réaliser notre vision.

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Incoming President's Message

Aanii!!! (Hello) I am Mark Solomon, Dean of Students and Indigenous Education at Seneca College, proud member of Henvey Inlet First Nation, father, partner, and the incoming president of CACUSS – in fact, the first CACUSS president who is Indigenous. This is my third or fourth attempt at this message. Previous drafts included me lamenting about not having a conference this year, the incredible work done by student affairs across Canada to serve students in the pandemic, and how relationships are more important now than ever.



Mark Solomon

I will tell you, my mind is preoccupied with the murder of George Floyd. As I write this, it is day three of unrest across America, the rallying cry of “No Justice, No Peace” is being answered. There is a long-standing pattern of police killing BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour). I am unclear when this message will be published and when you will read this, but I am not confident that between now and then, there will not be another death of similar circumstances.

I watch the unrest and immediate militarization of the police in reaction to these cries for justice. I also saw the police indifference to armed end-the-lockdown protests. The measures taken by police in both cases saw a different response based upon skin colour. We should be shocked that the unarmed BIPOC have a military-like response while the armed protesters are allowed to walk into government buildings brandishing military-looking weapons. But we are not shocked. Do you feel uneasy about that? I certainly do.

In Canada we often judge our neighbour's backyard and while ours is just as unkempt. Canadians were shocked to learn that the woman who called, and weaponized, police on a man of colour in New York was one their own. Canada has a history of systemic racism built right into its fabric. I can give countless examples for Indigenous peoples, people of colour, members of our Pride community, women, new Canadians... but *Communiqué* does not have enough space...

I am angry at myself. I am a white coded, straight, Indigenous man. Would “Othered” people call me an ally? Have I earned that title? CACUSS as an association is beginning a conversation about Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Indigeneity. Most recently, the board called for leadership from our members who were reflective of that conversation. The membership responded and we have one of, if not the, most diverse CACUSS boards in the 47 years of the association. Is that enough?

I have sat complacent in many boardrooms, not just at the CACUSS board, and realized I was the diversity quota. By myself – again, white coded; thus, if you saw a picture, you would not know I was Indigenous – I would sit in those rooms. I did point that out when I was younger, but I have aged and maybe built a callous to it all.

I would like us as an association, as a community, as humans to learn, unite and act. Coincidentally, “Learn, Unite, Act” was the theme of the 2020 Tkaronto:Toronto CACUSS Conference. I purposed that theme, as what I have done as a member:

- Learn from my colleagues
- Unite as a professional association
- Act as a community

I would like us now to repurpose that theme:

- Learn from BIPOC, women, LGTB2sQQ*, Othered communities
- Unite and uphold community
- Act when they call

Diversity cannot simply be a value statement, a “value add”, or photo op. Diversity is now a matter of life and death.

Message du président entrant

Aanii!!! (Bonjour) Je suis Mark Solomon et je suis le doyen de l'Éducation des étudiants et des Autochtones au Collège Seneca, fier membre de la Première Nation Henvey Inlet, mais aussi père, partenaire et nouveau président de l'Association des services aux étudiants des universités et collèges du Canada (ASEUCC), et en fait, le premier président autochtone de l'ASEUCC. C'est la troisième ou quatrième fois que j'essaie de rédiger ce message. Dans les versions précédentes, je déplorais le fait qu'il n'y aura pas de conférence cette année, et je reconnaissais le travail incroyable accompli par les affaires étudiantes dans l'ensemble du Canada pour servir les étudiants pendant la pandémie et l'importance des relations, aujourd'hui plus que jamais.

Je dois vous dire quelque chose : je suis préoccupé par le meurtre de George Floyd. À l'heure où j'écris ces lignes, cela fait trois jours que l'Amérique connaît des troubles, que l'on répond au cri rassembleur de « Pas de paix sans justice ». Depuis longtemps, la police tue les personnes autochtones, noires et de couleur (PANDC). Je ne connais pas exactement la date à laquelle ce message sera publié ni celle à laquelle vous le lirez, mais je ne suis pas convaincu qu'il n'y aura aucun autre décès dans les mêmes circonstances d'ici là.

Je constate les troubles et la militarisation immédiate de la police en réaction à ces appels à la justice. J'ai vu également l'indifférence de la police à des manifestations armées qui demandaient la fin du confinement. Les mesures prises par la police dans les deux cas ont donné lieu à une réaction différente selon la couleur de la peau. Nous devrions être choqués que des PANDC non armées fassent l'objet d'une réaction de type militaire, tandis que les manifestants armés sont autorisés à entrer dans des bâtiments gouvernementaux en brandissant des armes de type militaire. Mais nous ne le sommes pas. Cette situation vous met-elle mal à l'aise? Moi oui, sans aucun doute.

Au Canada, nous portons souvent un jugement sur le comportement de nos voisins, bien que nous ne soyons pas plus exemplaires. Les Canadiens ont été choqués d'apprendre que la femme qui a appelé et armé la police contre un homme de couleur à New York était l'une des leurs. La société canadienne a une histoire de racisme systémique bien ancré dans son tissu. Je peux vous citer d'innombrables exemples concernant des peuples autochtones, des personnes de couleur, des membres de notre communauté de la fierté, des femmes, de nouveaux Canadiens... mais nous n'accordons pas assez de place à Communiqué...

Je suis en colère contre moi-même. Je suis un Autochtone blanc hétérosexuel. Est-ce que les gens « différents » me considéreraient comme un allié? Ai-je mérité ce titre? L'ASEUCC, en tant qu'association, lance une conversation sur l'équité, la diversité et l'inclusion (EDI) et l'indigénité. Plus récemment, le conseil d'administration a demandé à ses membres de jouer un rôle de chef de file qui refléterait cette conversation. Les membres ont répondu et nous avons l'un des conseils d'administration les plus diversifiés, si ce n'est le plus diversifié, qu'ait connu l'ASEUCC au cours de ses 47 ans d'existence. Est-ce suffisant?

J'ai fait preuve de complaisance dans de nombreuses salles de réunion, pas seulement au conseil d'administration de l'ASEUCC, et je me suis rendu compte que je représentais le quota de diversité. Par moi-même, encore une fois, qui suis blanc; ainsi, si vous aviez vu une photo, vous n'auriez pas su que j'étais autochtone, j'aurais siégé dans ces salles. J'avais effectivement remarqué cet état de fait lorsque j'étais plus jeune, mais à présent, j'ai vieilli et j'y suis peut-être devenu indifférent.

J'aimerais qu'en tant qu'association, que communauté, qu'êtres humains nous apprenions, nous nous unissions et nous agissions. Pure coïncidence, le thème de la conférence de l'ASEUCC à Tkaronto Toronto en 2020 était « Apprendre, s'unir, agir ». J'ai choisi ce thème à dessein, tout comme ce que j'ai fait à titre de membre :

- Apprendre de mes collègues
- S'unir en tant qu'association professionnelle
- Agir en tant que collectivité

J'aimerais à présent que nous réfléchissions à nouveau sur ce thème :

- Apprendre des PANDC, des femmes, des LGBTQ2S+*, d'autres collectivités
- S'unir et défendre la communauté
- Agir lorsque nous y sommes appelés

La diversité ne peut pas être qu'un énoncé de valeur, une « valeur ajoutée » ou une séance de photos.
La diversité est désormais une question de vie et de mort.

Focusing on what is essential

As I write this message, I am sitting alone in my home office the week that many of us would have been gathering together in Toronto for our annual conference. I know it has been a challenging three months for you and your teams. I am sure that no one could have anticipated what 2020 has presented to us, and no amount of foresight or planning could have properly prepared us.



This time has been challenging for many, and in many cases we have had to focus on what is most important. Whether it be making choices at the grocery store, our capacity to support our own children with online learning, sharing technology and physical spaces while working at home, or deciding when to go out and get fresh air and exercise, I personally have had to decide what is most essential.

We know that COVID-19 will have a long-lasting impact on the post-secondary sector in Canada. We know it has impacted how you do your work and caused us to rethink how we support our students. We have all had to rethink what we think of as “essential” in our work, home, and communities.

Beyond COVID-19, the international focus on the elimination of racism and discrimination is an essential conversation for us to have. It is happening at home with my children, in my community, and with CACUSS.

I will be working with our new President Mark Solomon and our new Board of Directors to reimagine CACUSS. Our Association will feel the impact of these circumstances in our near and later future. As we move into 2021, we would have been focused on building a new strategic plan for CACUSS. However, we will turn our attention to focusing on what is essential to keep our organization viable and vibrant. We will envision our future with and without COVID-19, so that our future as a profession continues to evolve. We will have to make difficult decisions and work with uncertainty. However, we have the collective strength of our membership and our leadership to move forward. We may look like a different CACUSS after all is said and done. And we are ready to have that conversation.

What is essential as far as our Association is concerned?

- Continuing to give space for our members to learn, share knowledge, and create community across institutions and functional areas to support the student experience.
- Giving space for our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) colleagues’ voices to be heard, and work to support all of our members to learn and to take action to address and eliminate systemic racism on campus and in their communities.
- Continue to support the work that is taking place on student health and wellbeing, as well as your wellbeing as professionals working with uncertainty.
- Remaining transparent in our communications and consultative in our approaches as an Association.

Since mid-March, we have had over 1000 individuals participate in free online conversations, roundtables, and webinars mostly led by our volunteer Community of Practice leaders.

We have had a great response to our repurposing of content from the 2020 CACUSS Conference to CACUSS ON-line, where we have over 40 sessions taking place and over 250 registrants engaged in learning. We thank everyone for their engagement in these conversations.

In order for us to continue to do what is essential, we will need to rely on your individual and institutional support of CACUSS. This will be difficult, especially in times where your departmental budgets will have to face tough choices. We know that we are at risk of being deemed non-essential in terms of your budgetary spending. Please let us know how we can continue to support you during these circumstances.

We are in this together.

Se concentrer sur l'essentiel

Au moment où j'écris ces lignes, je suis assis seul dans mon bureau chez moi, alors que cette semaine, bon nombre d'entre nous auraient dû se réunir à Toronto pour notre conférence annuelle. Je sais que ces trois mois ont représenté un défi pour vous et vos équipes. Je suis convaincu que personne n'aurait pu prévoir ce que 2020 nous a réservé, et qu'aucune prévision ni planification n'aurait pu nous préparer de manière adéquate.

Cette période a été difficile pour beaucoup et, dans bien des cas, nous avons dû nous concentrer sur ce qui est le plus important. Qu'il s'agisse de faire des choix à l'épicerie, de notre capacité à soutenir nos propres enfants pour apprendre en ligne, de partager des moyens technologiques et des espaces physiques tout en travaillant à la maison, ou de décider du moment où sortir pour prendre une bouffée d'air frais et faire de l'exercice, personnellement, j'ai dû décider de ce qui était le plus essentiel.

Nous savons que la COVID-19 aura des conséquences à long terme sur le secteur de l'éducation postsecondaire au Canada. Nous savons qu'elle a eu des répercussions sur la façon dont vous travaillez et cela nous a incités à repenser la façon dont nous soutenons nos étudiants. Nous avons tous dû repenser ce que nous considérons comme « essentiel » dans notre travail, à la maison et dans nos collectivités.

Au-delà de la crise de la COVID-19, l'attention internationale portée à l'élimination du racisme et de la discrimination est une conversation essentielle que nous devons avoir. Elle a lieu à la maison avec mes enfants, au sein de ma communauté et avec l'Association des services aux étudiants des universités et collèges du Canada (ASEUCC).

Je collaborerai avec notre nouveau président Mark Solomon et notre nouveau conseil d'administration pour repenser l'ASEUCC. Notre association ressentira les répercussions de ces circonstances dans un avenir proche et plus lointain. À l'aube de 2021, nous aurions mis l'accent sur l'élaboration d'un nouveau plan stratégique pour l'ASEUCC. Toutefois, nous nous concentrerons sur ce qui est essentiel pour assurer la viabilité et le dynamisme de notre organisation. Nous envisagerons notre futur avec et sans la COVID-19, afin que notre avenir en tant que profession continue d'évoluer. Nous devons prendre des décisions difficiles et travailler dans l'incertitude. Toutefois, la force collective de nos membres et notre leadership nous aideront à aller de l'avant. Après tout, notre association pourrait ressembler à une ASEUCC différente. Et nous sommes prêts à avoir cette conversation.

Qu'est-ce qui est essentiel pour notre association?

- Continuer de donner à nos membres l'occasion d'apprendre, d'échanger des connaissances et de créer une communauté entre les établissements et les secteurs fonctionnels pour appuyer l'expérience étudiante.
- Donner de l'espace aux voix de nos collègues, les personnes autochtones, noires et de couleur (PANDC) pour qu'elles soient entendues, et travailler pour aider tous nos membres à apprendre et à prendre des mesures visant à lutter contre le racisme systémique et à l'éliminer sur le campus et au sein de leurs communautés.
- Continuer de soutenir le travail sur la santé et le bien-être des étudiants qui est effectué actuellement, ainsi que votre bien-être en tant que professionnels travaillant dans l'incertitude.
- Demeurer transparent dans nos communications et mener des consultations dans le cadre de nos approches en tant qu'association.

Depuis la mi-mars, plus de 1 000 personnes ont participé gratuitement à des conversations en ligne, à des tables rondes et à des webinaires dirigés principalement par nos leaders bénévoles de la communauté de pratique.

Nous avons obtenu une excellente réaction à notre réorientation du contenu de la conférence de l'ASEUCC 2020 vers la conférence de l'ASEUCC en ligne, lors de laquelle plus de 40 séances ont eu

lieu et plus de 250 inscrits ont pris part à l'apprentissage. Nous remercions tous les participants de leur participation à ces conversations.

Pour que nous puissions continuer à faire ce qui est essentiel, nous devons compter sur votre soutien individuel et institutionnel à l'ASEUCC. Cela sera difficile, surtout au moment où il faudra faire face des choix difficiles concernant les budgets de votre ministère. Nous savons que nos services risquent de ne pas être considérés comme essentiels par rapport à vos dépenses budgétaires. Nous vous invitons à nous indiquer la façon dont nous pouvons continuer de vous soutenir dans ces circonstances.

Nous faisons face, ensemble, à cette situation.

Introducing the Graduate Student Network

by Nicole Crozier and Joshua Grondin, Graduate Student Network Co-Chairs

gradstudents@cacuss.ca

Graduate students often go relatively unseen and unheard in the Canadian student affairs community, flying under the radar. But from the young graduate students trying to break their way into the field to the established student affairs professionals seeking to expand their skillset, graduate students are everywhere.

There are many words that can be used to describe the experience of being a student affairs practitioner and a graduate student simultaneously. Challenging, rewarding, fun, stimulating, empowering, exhausting, exhilarating, life-changing, demanding, and gratifying are all words that current graduate students used to describe their experience, in response to a tweet put out by CACUSS. Maintaining a balance between school and work and life can be a struggle. Diving deep into topics that you care about can be a joy. Being able to use your learning to inform your practice is pure magic.

In fall 2019, acknowledging both the barriers and opportunities that face graduate students in our student affairs community, CACUSS launched the Graduate Student Network. The Network focuses on providing a supportive environment for graduate students in CACUSS, offering a space to share experiences and navigate challenges, explore and enhance learning, and develop skills useful for graduate student success. Recognizing the wide variety of graduate students in our community, our Network is open to all: master's and doctoral, full-time and part-time, with any level of work experience, and studying in any program area.

Our Network works to support graduate students, but we also want to raise the profile of graduate students and the work they are doing within our field.

So, let's meet a few of them.

Responses have been slightly edited for clarity and length. Huge thanks to these folks for sharing their stories!

Noah Arney

Work Experience Coordinator at Mount Royal University

Master of Education in Educational Research: Adult Learning at University of Calgary



Why did you choose to do a graduate degree / choose your specific program?

I've been looking at a master's program for years now. The time just never seemed right. Then I was talking with a colleague who asked me what I thought the perfect time would be. I realized that putting it off was just a way of avoiding it.

I chose the program for a few reasons. I wanted a program that I could do while I kept working. I wanted a program that would make me able to do research, assessment, and evaluation at a higher level. But I also wanted a program with a defined end point. I was worried that, since I'd been out of school for well over a decade, if I did a thesis-based master's, it would end up taking far longer than I expected. One of the outcomes of my program is a paper suitable for publication in a journal, and that appealed to me.

What's your favourite thing (or class) that you're learning about?

I've had the honour over the last ten years to work with a number of amazing Indigenous elders, primarily Nlaka'pamux, Sto:lo, Tsleil-Waututh, and Niitsitapi. I wouldn't be where I am now without

them. Perhaps because of that, what I've loved getting to research more than anything else has been Indigenous educational philosophies. The work Indigenous scholars have done in explaining traditional forms of education and learning theories fits very well with holistic student-centered work.

What is one piece of advice you have for someone considering grad school?

I wish I had known how fast it goes by. I applied for grad school only 15 months ago. In another 15 months I'll be done. If going to grad school has been something you've been wanting to do, take a look at the reasons why you aren't. You may find that, like for me, they're less reasons and more excuses.

Jessica Ruprecht

Coordinator, Peer Helper Program at the University of Guelph
MEd (Post-Secondary Studies) at Memorial University



How did you choose your graduate program?

I chose my program at Memorial because of its flexibility as a distance program. When I applied and began my master's degree, I was living in Edmonton. I was pretty sure that I would end up moving at some point and needed a program that could move with me. I'm now back in Ontario, and am thankful that my move didn't impact my studies. I also appreciate the ability to focus on my learning when it works for my schedule, rather than having structured course times.

What's your favourite thing (or class) that you're learning about?

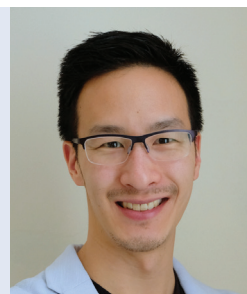
I am currently in my favourite class of the program, called "Administration of Student Services in Post-Secondary Education". While the title doesn't sound very exciting, the instructor, Dr. Christine Arnold, is very engaged in the class and follows the principles of adult education in her teaching style (which is definitely not always the case). For the class, I'm focusing around the role of student affairs professionals in advancing social justice, and I'm finding some important ties to my personal values and my professional career, which is a great place to be in.

How does what you're learning influence your practice?

Something that I had found initially in my first few roles out of university was that though I tried my best to make time to read current literature, it was usually the thing that got pushed to the side of my desk if work became busy. Being in a master's program has ensured that I am actively engaged in current literature and research. I've also found that it's been beneficial when I've been able to tie my learning to something relevant to my role. As an example, the topic around social justice work on campus was one that I chose as I was preparing to lead a community-based learning program over reading week, and I found it helpful to frame my role within the trip through a different lens. Bridging theory and practice can sometimes be a challenge in our field in Canada, so working on a master's degree while working in the field has been a huge benefit for my professional work!

David Ip Yam

Project Director, Student Service Excellence at York University
PhD in Education: Language, Culture and Teaching and Graduate Diploma in Postsecondary Education at York University



What's your favourite thing (or class) that you're learning about?

My favourite things to learn relate to my area of research and practice: higher education change, culture, and leadership. For example, in my current class on organizational behaviour, we've covered theories and practices of personality, learning, perception, groups, motivation, power, politics, communication, culture, structure, conflict, change, and leadership. I also thoroughly enjoyed my

independent study on higher education organizational theory. During this time, I focused on analyzing aspects of university life through various frames (e.g. political, spiritual, bureaucratic, etc.). It's been beneficial to have access to studies in "business" and "education," and I'm fortunate to work with a supervisor who supports this blend.

How does your learning influence your practice?

My learning has been complementary to my work and seems to enhance the way I think about and conduct my practice. First, it's enabled me to think more holistically and critically about issues of management and leadership in student affairs and services and the university. Second, it's broadened my focus from what makes good student success programs and services, to the kinds of organizational conditions (like people, purpose, and principles) that are needed to foster student success in the first place. Third, it's provided me with strategic and tactical research to be more adaptable in my role. A potential pitfall of my area of study is that it's easy to lose sight of students, our *raison d'être*. That's why it's been important for me to speak directly to [students on the job](#) or through my podcast: [The Student Success Exchange](#).

How do you balance work, school, and life?

When I responded to this question for a University Affairs article, [Balancing a Job and Graduate Studies](#) (November 2019), my schedule was more consistent and had a good margin of breathing room. Fast forward to March 2020 and I must admit that there've been a few late nights since February when work, school, personal, and entrepreneurial pursuits happened to peak at the same time. Despite these occasional moments, I continue to integrate my commitments wherever I can, to manage my energy with biohacking practices, and to be happy with my decision to pursue the part-time PhD. I'm really enjoying it! I should also acknowledge that I do not have dependents and that I have a very supportive partner and network of friends, colleagues, and family.

Anika Roberts-Stahlbrand

Don at University of Toronto

MA, Adult Education and Community Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) - University of Toronto



Why did you choose to do a graduate degree / choose your specific program?

I stumbled into student affairs and services completely by chance. I went to a tiny undergraduate university, and although my experience was transformative, there were not opportunities for work study or to be Dons/Residence Advisors. I was involved in student government and enjoyed running programming around environmental and equity issues and mentoring younger students, but I did not think this was something I would be able to do post-graduation.

After graduation, I spent a year working at a bean-to-bar chocolatier. While working, I presented my honours thesis on the history of the apple industry in Nova Scotia at a conference. At the closing plenary, I happened to meet someone who worked in student affairs and services at University of Guelph, and I learned that student affairs and services could be a career! It was an "ah-ha" moment where I finally saw a space where my passions and skills could converge.

Despite this, I wanted to make a thoughtful decision before diving into another degree. I lived in England for two years, working and travelling. I decided to apply to the Adult Education and Community Development program at the University of Toronto, OISE, because I was keen on its focus on social justice and social change. As well, I was attracted by the research of Dr. Jennifer Sumner, now my supervisor, who specialises in food and adult education. I also knew OISE had a Higher Education department, and I planned to take my electives there to gain specific knowledge in student affairs and services.

This is exactly what I have done. I think I have gotten so much more out of the degree because I took some time off and have come to it with more intentionality. The two programs at OISE have helped me develop a thesis that brings together the fields of critical food studies, adult learning theory, and student services. Both my current front-line role as a Don/Residence Assistant and my

academic work have affirmed that ah-ha moment I had back in 2016 when I realised that I could have a career in student affairs and services.

What issue or topic does your research explore?

My research explores the potential for learning through food on campus. Within the campus learning system (Keeling, 2006), eating locations remain missed opportunities to foster student learning, health, and well-being. Food is so much more than fuel – it is connected to personal well-being, community-building, and global citizenship responsibilities. Drawing on current research, including my case study of a university residence meal hall with more than 1000 students, I argue for student affairs practitioners to become more intentional about meal halls. I reveal the pedagogical potential of food, both as something to learn about (for example, how the workers who grew it were treated) and learn through (for example, a conversation with a professor over a shared meal; Flowers & Swan, 2012). I'm analysing my interviews and observations right now, and I look forward to reporting on my findings at the CACUSS conference this spring.

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Compassion Fatigue in Student Affairs: A Closer Look at the Research

by Angel Evans

Although traditionally associated with therapists, social workers, nurses, and many other of health care providers, the phenomenon of compassion fatigue (CF) is a growing concern for professionals in higher education and student affairs. Figley (1995) characterizes CF as a natural consequence of caring for others. Mathieu (2012) defines it as “the profound emotional and physical erosion that takes place when helpers are unable to refuel and regenerate” (p. 14). With expanding diversity on campuses, including students with disabilities (including mental health), LGBTQQ-identified students, Indigenous students, and racialized students (Strange & Hardy Cox, 2016), and the incidents of trauma and crises prevalent on campuses, student affairs professionals are now serving in the capacity of first responders (Kay & Schwartz, 2010) and are at risk of experiencing CF. In fact, a recent study conducted in the United States by Lynch and Glass (2019) noted that few individuals working in higher education have *never* supported students through trauma and “more than 66% [have supported] students through the death of a loved one; sexual violence; suicidal ideation, attempt or completion; severe mental health episode; and/or hate crimes and discrimination” (p. 8-9). As a student affairs professional and MEd graduate student, this topic resonated deeply with me, and I wanted to investigate how CF was being studied within this field to understand better the breadth of this phenomenon. This article provides a summary of what I learned and the challenges I encountered while completing a research paper for coursework in the Master of Education program at Wilfrid Laurier University. I present an overview of my key findings, an outline of the limitations, an evaluation of the Canadian context, and some thoughts on future research. This is important knowledge to share so campuses may learn how to recognize, mitigate, or alleviate the negative impact of compassion fatigue of their employees.

Key findings

Terminology and Research Approach

Compassion fatigue is a complex topic to research because it is rarely studied independently. Studies about CF often incorporate the interrelated terms “burnout,” “vicarious trauma” (VT), and/or “secondary traumatic stress” (STS). Added to this complexity is the convoluted way researchers use the terms in the literature. Often I found these terms were used interchangeably (see Carter, 2019; Lynch, 2017) and defined differently (see Carter, 2019; Bernstein & Chernoff, 2016). I also discovered that CF and the interrelated terms were hidden in literature investigating attrition, job satisfaction, turnover intention, and occupational/job stress prevalent in student affairs, even if not identified as such. All of these issues made locating articles, specifically regarding CF, difficult. In order to find

relevant articles, I surveyed the literature looking for evidence of the symptoms commonly associated with CF, as outlined by Figley (2002), such as diminished sense of purpose/enjoyment with career (found often with studies relating to attrition), loss of hope, diminished capacity to function at work, increased negative arousal, and exhaustion (commonly found in studies of burnout). I also looked for evidence and mention of physical and emotional symptoms, such as feeling helpless, depleted, and withdrawn. What I found was that student affairs professionals are experiencing the effects of CF, it may be contributing to attrition, and there are correlations between the phenomena and job satisfaction.

CF, STS, and Burnout

Looking specifically at CF, STS, and burnout in student affairs, I encountered studies that determined that student affairs professionals experienced high psychological distress (Biron, Brun, & Ivers, 2008) as well as negative psychological and physical outcomes as a result of their work (Lynch, 2017). Stoves (2014) further contributed to the topic of CF by determining that individuals who embraced an internal locus of control and who strove to establish deep, emotional connections with the students they supported were more likely to experience and develop CF, as compared to individuals who exhibited an external locus and were able to set clear boundaries with the students and their trauma. These three studies specifically studied and/or included higher education staff in their sampling, although the breakdown within the functional areas was only provided in the Biron, Brun, & Ivers study, the one Canadian study I found.

Attrition

Unsurprisingly, I encountered literature concerning attrition when researching CF within student affairs. Marshall, Gardner, Hughes, and Lowrey (2016) surveyed student affairs professionals who left the profession and determined burnout, excessive hours, lack of a supportive supervisor, non-competitive salaries, personal fit to the organization, and a lack of work challenges and passion were the main reasons cited. Interestingly, a number of participants in the study “felt that once they lost their passion and desire to connect with students, it was time to leave the field” (p. 156). This could mean that, unbeknownst to them, they were experiencing some symptoms of CF, particularly the reduced capacity or interest in being empathetic. While this study did look at student affairs professionals as a whole, it is worth noting that the majority of those surveyed were from residence life departments. Since individuals working in residence life departments are inclined to work unconventional hours and live in closer proximity to students than other professionals and departments, the results of this study may not generalize to other student affairs staff. What is interesting is that this is the only study I found that surveyed individuals who had left the profession. A limitation of the other studies listed in this paper may be that they did not include those who had already detached from their positions, for reasons that may include burnout or CF.

Relationships between Phenomena

The research exploring the relationships between the phenomena revealed negative correlations between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction (Brewer & Clippard, 2002); that is, the higher the reported emotional exhaustion (burnout), the lower the level of job satisfaction (compassion satisfaction). Conversely, Brewer and Clippard (2002) found that higher reports of job satisfaction correlated with lower emotional exhaustion (burnout). While these results were interesting, this article was written in 2002 and no follow-up studies were completed, although there is an extensive list of articles that have cited this one. Bernstein Chernoff (2017), who investigated student conduct professionals specifically, corroborates these correlations by also reporting significant relationships between CS, STS, and burnout. Analysis from their study revealed a negative correlation between CS and STS and positive correlations between burnout and STS.

Limitations

Many of the articles cited similar limitations of their studies, so for clarity, I have outlined them in chart form on the next page:

Limitation	Description	Biron, Brun, & Ivers (2008)	Lynch (2019)	Marshall, Gardner, Hughes, & Lowrey, (2016)	Bernstein Chernoff (2017)	Lynch & Glass (2019)
Selection bias	Samples may have been unbalanced within functional areas, gender, or include a small sample size.	X	X			
Convenience sampling	Study included sample of student affairs professionals who left the profession, leading to utilizing individuals based on the ability to locate them.			X		
Overreliance on memory, which may result in recall errors	Participants were asked to recall past information, which may not be accurate and may have impacted results.			X	X	X
Skewed data associated with participants who were indifferent	Possibly, in order to justify their decisions to leave, participants [may have] over-emphasized their dissatisfaction and unhappiness (p. 151).			X		
Difficulties with relying on self-reported data	Participants may not have answered truthfully or not assess self accurately (subjective reporting).					X

My own observations include limitations arising from the inconsistencies with how the terms were used. This made it difficult to compare the data and results. Other issues include questionable generalizability within the Canadian context, and concerns with small sample sizes. One additional area missing in the research is the exclusion of student staff, better described as demographic limitations.

Canadian context

With the exception of one study, all of the research I read originated in the United States. In general, I found very limited Canadian research; it was essentially non-existent. Biron, Brun, and Ivers' (2008) Quebec study, as aforementioned, reported high psychological distress in their participants as compared to a representative sample of the Quebec population over the age of fifteen. Notwithstanding, they also revealed that this sample showed evidence of high levels of emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, and intention to quit, factors associated with CF and burnout. Their sample had one of the largest participant sizes of all the articles I found and included a thorough breakdown of the functional areas; however, faculty comprised the largest group. While I intentionally omitted studies from my paper that included faculty, wanting to focus specifically on student affairs, I included this study in my review primarily because it was Canadian and did include a wide range of functional areas.

Future research

Further to the need for more Canadian research, future research should focus on specific student affairs functional areas, investigate the intersectionality of the participants to ascertain how power and privilege may play a role in how CF manifests, and consider the role of student staff and the impact on them. There is much work yet to be done.

Conclusion

Student affairs in higher education has a wide range of supports and services aimed at assisting students. Many student affairs professionals have student-facing positions, working closely with students in various capacities. With the prevalence of traumatic events and crises on campuses, student affairs staff are usually the ones with whom students confide. SAS are first responders (Kay & Schwartz, 2010) and as such are vulnerable to the effects of CF. As this is a current issue and I am a student affairs professional, I endeavoured to investigate the topic of CF; my purpose was to survey the current research on CF to learn how it was being studied within the student affairs and Canadian context. I discovered the complexities of this topic, the limitations of the research, and the need to promote additional research in this area. CF may be considered “the cost of caring,” but we cannot afford to continue to ignore this issue.

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Angel Evans, Exams & Educational Supports Coordinator at Wilfrid Laurier University (Brantford campus), is a current student within the Master of Education, Student Affairs at Wilfrid Laurier University.

Rethinking Police in Residence and on Campuses

by Tuba Chishti

Content warning: Sexual assault, self-harm, police violence, racism

I have never understood what it meant to be radicalized by a moment until now. In the wake of George Floyd's murder by the Minneapolis police, the spotlight has been (back) on police everywhere. Over and over again, we keep seeing police in Canada disproportionately harming and killing Black and Indigenous people. All this has led to me reflecting about the presence of police on our post-secondary campuses. The majority of my police interactions have occurred while working in Residence Life and Housing, so naturally my thoughts of law enforcement drift to our campuses. This is a time for colleges and universities to go beyond statements that Black lives matter (they do) and to think about what actions we need to take for our students.

I keep having conversations with well-meaning friends who stand (on social media) with protestors and think that policing is a community issue. And after a decade spent as a student at Queen's University and the University of Toronto, and working at the University of British Columbia, University of Guelph, and Humber College, I believe that policing is a campus issue as well. For years, I have written down my work stories, and despite the numerous concerning exchanges I have witnessed involving police officers, I have never before thought about alternatives to policing. I have never thought that we fundamentally need to re-examine our police relationships for the sake of our students. In this opinion piece, I hope to share problematic stories that I have seen on our campuses, raise some questions for all of us in student services to answer, and think about what actions we need to take.

I am now publicly asking the questions I have kept to myself: Why do we allow police to perform mental health arrests in most of our provinces and territories? Why do the police show up when paramedics are needed? Why are trauma-informed practices not the bare minimum for all caregivers and first responders in society and on our campuses? Why do we ask people with guns, Tasers, and pepper spray to respond to people that need support, resources, and someone to listen to?

I could fill a chapter in a book with stories I have seen, but I do not want to spend too much time on the past. Here are some of the anecdotes that that helped me evolve my views on policing on campus:

- The first time I sat with a sexual violence survivor as they reported an official sexual assault to the police. The survivor was asked to recount their assault **three** times. The first time, the officers let the survivor repeat the incident. The second time, the officers kept interrupting the survivor: "Do you remember the colour of his shirt?" "What about the time?" "You really didn't know anyone at the party?" The third time, the officers asked the survivor to write down everything that had happened to them.

- When a student who needed serious medical attention kept running away from the paramedics because the police showed up as well. The student later told me that as an Indigenous woman, she had faced enough abuse and prejudice from officers that she did not think any police would help her. It took me a while to learn that calling 911 (or Emergency Medical Services) meant that police could show up even if you had asked for paramedics or fire safety.

- One time, a cop told me that he "didn't go into policing to become a babysitter" because the paramedics were called four times that night, and the same officers showed up each time as well. I reminded the officer that the police were not requested, but we did need medical support for a concussion, a passed-out student, a potential alcohol poisoning, and a severe allergic reaction.

- When a police officer told an Indigenous student not to worry about reporting a sexual assault to the Toronto police because unlike the rural community the student came from, "there are no racist police officers in the Toronto police force".

- That time a police officer kicked a non-responsive 18-year-old in the stomach while the student was on a bad acid trip. When I asked the officer why they hurt the student, he responded, “It’s one way to see if they’re faking it”.

Despite these experiences, embarrassingly, I never once thought to question why the police exist. I never realized that was an option before this moment. Now, I am questioning their role on our campuses. What are the best alternatives to policing and campus security? This conversation needs to include campus security as well; oftentimes, our students do not have the luxury to make distinctions between uniforms. It could look like re-allocating money to social workers, mental health counsellors, or mobile crisis units 24/7 on our campuses. It might mean looking at proactive ways to support students on our campuses – and not just when they are in crisis or passing through conduct offices. There is often a large overlap between folks who are exhibiting concerning behaviours and those who are struggling with their finances, well-being, requirements, etc. Perhaps it means practicing some form of restorative justice on our campuses and addressing students’ behaviour for the impact they have on each other and themselves. There are activists and community organizers who have far better answers to this. I mostly have questions.

You may be thinking that we do not want to coddle our students. After all, the majority of them leave our campuses to enter the “real” world where they have to deal with problematic police and systemic injustices. We do not have to be complicit in enforcing a normalized (read: violent) police state on our campuses. We do not have to squander an opportunity to imagine and bring to life a better, more just, more equitable world. If we could help give students examples of what community building and taking care of all our relations actually looks like, why would we not? If we can give students not just the hard knowledge they come to our campuses for, but also provide psychologically and socially safe places for them to thrive in and take with them? What a gift that could be.

Whether or not you individually see the problem of policing is almost irrelevant; it exists. Our students, staff, and faculty are also living in this moment and seeing police kill and hurt people without reason. We, as post-secondary institutions, are not just products of the society we live in; we have actively shaped norms and expectations since our beginning. Some of the curtains of that society are coming down right now, so there is a push for us to change as well, and maybe an opportunity for colleges and universities to lead by example. We are already having conversations about what belonging and campuses look like in the coming months with this pandemic, so let’s not waste this opportunity to include justice in those conversation as well.

I am young(ish), idealistic (despite the world around me), and there is more I do not know about governance and post-secondary than what I do know, but that does not mean I am wrong. I have too little positional power to make change on my own, but that is why I am asking leaders in higher education about what security and policing look like on our campuses.

We talk often in post-secondary about innovation, courage, and how we are building future leaders. It should not be so challenging for us to exemplify those values for ourselves too. For us to live by the anti-racist statements our institutions put out a few weeks ago means we have to follow through with actions. As we feel the swell of people rising up to fight for a better world, so too must we. Let us begin by re-evaluating our relationships and responsibility to each other as members of one community, and strive to remove the police from the equation of learning, community, and care.

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Backgrounder and Further Readings:

- Police funding numbers in Canada and Alternatives to Policing: <https://defundthepolice.org/canada/>
- Police and wellness checks: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/police-wellness-checks-deaths-indigenous-black-1.5622320> and <https://globalnews.ca/news/7102404/defund-police-canada-mental-health/>
- Police and sexual assault reporting: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/investigations/unfounded-sexual-assault-canada-main/article33891309/> and <https://globalnews.ca/news/7092552/defund-police-sexual-assault/>

Tuba Chishti works in Student Success & Engagement at Humber College and is doing her MBA at the University of Toronto. She can be reached via email at tuba.chishti@humber.ca or on Twitter @TubaCh

Progress of a Profession: Analyzing the Isomorphic Changes of Student Affairs and Services in Post-Secondary Education

by Jeremiah Rojas

Introduction

From the ways in which technology has transformed jobs, to the skill sets and resilience required from the contemporary work force, the role of student affairs and services (SAS) in post-secondary education (PSE) is one that will likely continue to contribute to the training and development of Canada's contemporary workforce. Since the twenty-first-century demand by the labour markets is one that requires a diverse set of experiences, SAS can serve to provide opportunities, services, and programs to enrich their character and develop their skills. SAS professionals are one of many contributors to PSE that "must do more to better prepare today's students for tomorrow's jobs" (Perna, 2012, p. 274).

Post-Secondary Education

PSE grounded in functionalist ideals is a response to gaps in employability and educational aspiration. It was asserted that educational systems facilitate "a smooth integration of youth into the labour force" (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 11). Yet in one research study that surveyed graduating students from 1988 with open-ended questions about how education prepared them for the workforce (first survey, n=5,345; second survey, n=2,765; third survey, n=1,055), researchers concluded that students want more direction and guidance beyond the classroom (Pillay, 2004). In the same study, participants also identified that "their high schools inadequately prepared them for the transition between the secondary and post-secondary educational systems" (Pillay, 2004, p. 239). Another study, using data from Statistics Canada's Youth in Transition Survey (YITS) Cohort A, found that "the gender gap in aspirations appears to be one of the sources of the gender gap in university participation" (Christofides, Hoy, Li, & Stengos, 2008, p. 129). Along with the gender gap in PSE and the desire for guidance outside the classroom, students also encountered challenges and stressors related to food, habitation, unemployment, recreation, financial state, accommodations, family expectations, and subject enjoyability, to name a few (Doogun & Gulec, 2012; Mueller, 2008; Parker, Hughes, Marsh, Ahmed, Cannon, Taylor-Steeds, Jones, & Page, 2017). It is due to these students' needs that SAS units exist, that SAS practitioners may continue to advocate "for change in policy, practice, and priorities for students in post-secondary education" (CACUSS, 2017, p. 8).

Student Affairs and Services

In 1937, the American Council on Education published a foundational document that outlined the core values of SAS practitioners. The 1937 report, revised in 1949, clarified that the purpose of SAS practitioners was to consider "students as individuals" while ensuring that they have a "full and balanced development [that] involves the acquisition of a pattern of knowledge, skills, and attitudes consistent with [the student's] abilities, aptitudes, and interests" (Williamson, Blaesser, Bragdon, Carlson, Cowley, Feder, Fisk, Kirkpatrick, Lloyd-Jones, McConnel, Merriam, & Shank, 1949, p. 3).

Sandeen and Barr (2006) wrote a well-versed and detailed account of the critical issues facing contemporary SAS practitioners in PSE. One question considered in their book is SAS's place within the overall organizational structure of their respective institutions. It is important to note here that the term "institution" defined hereafter refers to the social structure that is comprised of normative and regulative elements of PSE (Scott, 1995). Sandeen and Barr (2006) recounted that the beginning

of SAS was when Charles William Eliot, the Harvard President from 1869 to 1909, appointed LeBaron Russel Briggs as Dean of Men at Harvard College in 1890 (Crowley, 1937 as cited in Rhatigan, 2009; Harvard University, 2019). It was in the role of this deanship that SAS would come to grow and become what it is known as today. It was also under Eliot's administration at Harvard College that an educational reform took place in PSE through the creation of an elective system (Elliot & Paton, 2018; O'Connor, 1970; Russel, 1957; Sandeen & Barr, 2006). As this elective system began to garner support, so too did the purpose of SAS units.

Elective Systems

At a time when the industrialization period was spreading to North America, the education system was still prescribing curriculum to their students (Rudolph, 1962). This meant that students were studying subjects that were highly specialized. It also meant that students that wanted to study a specific subject matter had to seek out PSE that offered such classes and specialties. Potential PSE students were then left at the crossroads of choosing between academia and employment.

The forces of specialization left students deciding early in their academics what institutions to attend in order to be exposed to knowledge and skills they needed to qualify for their desired field or employer. During this period, educational systems were tightly coupled between the institution and the students. PSE needed students who wanted to study the subjects they offered, and students had to pursue education from institutions that offered what students wanted. This interdependency on one another is an example of tight coupling.

Eliot's proposal of the elective system was highly contentious and ambitious at that time. During Eliot's inaugural speech at Harvard as President in 1869, he said,

The endless controversies whether language, philosophy, mathematics, or science supplies the best mental training, whether general education should be chiefly literary or chiefly scientific, have no practical lesson for us to-day. This University recognizes no real antagonism between literature and science, and consents to no such narrow alternatives as mathematics or classics, science or metaphysics. We would have them all, and at their best. (1869, pp. 41-42)

Eliot expected that every subject matter be taught at Harvard. However, during this time of educational reform, it was only the larger institutions who had the desire and resources to maintain a diverse set of courses and programs (Boggard, 1996). This brings to light that there is little, or a lack of, interconnectedness between schools and their communities. In other words, "little of what is learned in school is directly applicable in the workplace" (Davies & Zarifa, 2009, p. 6). An inconsistency that SAS units were happy to help resolve.

New Institutional Theory

SAS units are deeply embedded in socio-political environments. New Institutional Theory (NIT) provides a framework and opportunity to explain and expand upon the SAS practices amongst PSE, as well as their structures being a reflection or a response to diverse influential forces within their environment. In this section, the socio-cultural contexts of SAS units will be discussed and analyzed to explain how their complex environments constricted them towards isomorphism. Three terms that will be expanded upon are mental models, cultural scripts, and isomorphism.

Mental Models

According to Peter Senge (2006), "Mental models are deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influences how we understand the world and how we take action" (p. 8). Like many organizations, employees may not always be consciously aware of their mental models and how they shape one's behaviour, attitude, and actions. SAS units and practitioners are no different. Learning organizations, such as SAS units, facilitate and encourage learning through the understanding of various knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Argyris & Schön, 1999; Huber, 1991; West & Burnes, 2000). It is in recognizing what these mental models are and how they influence decision-making processes that all levels of an organization can adapt and transform within complex environments.

Returning to the founding of SAS in PSE in the 1860's, it was at a time when prescribed curriculum

was still prevalent. One proponent of prescribed curriculum in PSE was James McCosh, President of Princeton University from 1868 to 1888, who believed that the primary purpose of PSE was to improve individuals through classical education (Butts & Cremin, 1953). Even as the elective system was beginning to take root, PSE was experiencing other reforms, such as being co-educational (Goldin & Katz, 2011). Other important events during the 1860's include the American Civil War, along with the eventual abolishment of slavery in America (Fernée, 2015); American President Abraham Lincoln's assassination by John Wilkes Booth (Steers, 2001); the first United States Transcontinental Railroad's completion (Duran, 2013); the laying of the first transatlantic telegraph cable, establishing communication lines between North America and Europe (Alexander, 2013); the establishment of the first nursing school in the world, leading to the nursing profession known today (Karimi & Alavi, 2015); Karl Marx publishing *Das Kapital* (Basu, 2017); and the modern periodic table's development (Scerri, 1998). These world events demonstrate how complex the environments were as SAS was just beginning to root itself in PSE.

Cultural Scripts

Senior staff (managers and above, as noted in Figure 1) within SAS units are often tasked with objectives from administrators more senior than they are. As coordinators are eventually tasked with programs to conduct and services to provide, senior administrators rely on a "logic of confidence and good faith" (Meyer and Rowan 1977, p. 357). This is an example of loose coupling, one that NIT would explain as a way in which SAS units navigate complex environments (Crilly, Zollo, & Hansen, 2012; Davies & Zarifa, 2009; Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Miceletta, & Lounsbury, 2011).

Associated with complex environments are the various methods of communication and interaction that take place between SAS units and among SAS practitioners. These interactions and implementation of norms and values can best be described as cultural scripts. "Cultural scripts are intended to capture background norms, templates, guidelines or models for ways of thinking, acting, feeling, and speaking, in a particular cultural context" (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2007, p. 157). For example, SAS practitioners proficient at "student advising, support, and advocacy" may not mean much to those external to SAS units. However, within the field of SAS, it may mean a few things, especially with it being a Canadian SAS competency, as identified by the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS). Being proficient at student advising, support, and advocacy could therefore mean an individual "exhibit[s] culturally inclusive active listening skills" or someone who "seek[s] opportunities to expand one's own knowledge and skills in helping students with specific concern" (Fernandez, Fitzgerald, Hamblen, Masson-Innes, 2016, pp. 27-28). Understanding cultural scripts illustrates that there are social norms and practices that make up an SAS unit and practitioner interactions beyond that of a formal organizational structure.

Despite SAS practitioners not being a regulated profession like that of medicine or law, practitioners manage expectations of each other through cultural scripts. Even though SAS was initially founded to respond to student conduct issues, it has since evolved into an educational role (Long, 2012). While this has been an important shift in the profession since the 1860's, there are still cases of decoupling between the professional and the profession. In Canada, for example, there has not been a need for SAS practitioners to have a graduate-degree credential, unlike in the United States (Robinson, 2011). A survey conducted in 2010 on SAS practitioners found that 87% of respondents held an undergraduate degree while 48% held a graduate degree (42% master's and 4% doctorate) (Hardy Cox & Strange, 2010). It is important to note that this data is almost a decade old, as Canadian SAS units continue to follow suit with the direction of American SAS, which is to say that Canadian institutions are seeking out candidates that would be just as competitive with their American counterparts.

Isomorphism

As SAS units continued to grow and expand throughout the mid-nineteenth to the twenty-first century, so too did their roles and responsibilities, but not without a few changes along the way. In the mid-1700's, an English lawyer named William Blackstone published the *Commentary on the Laws of England*. In this commentary, he explained that a parent "may delegate part of [their] parental authority, during [their] life, to the tutor or schoolmaster of [their] child; who is then *in loco parentis*" (Blackstone, 1765, p. 144).

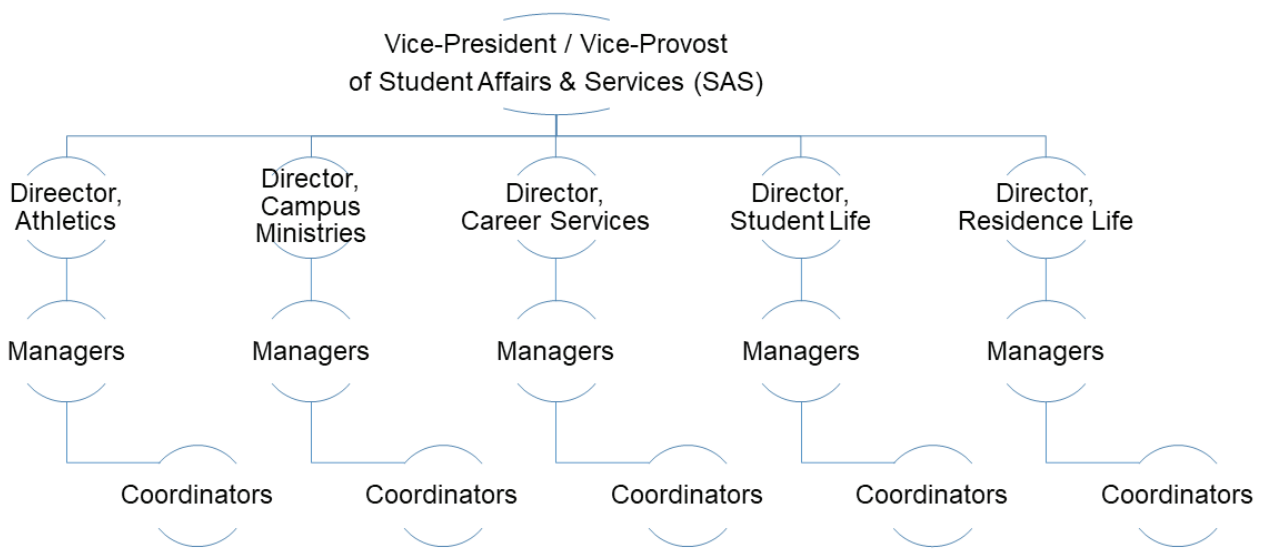


Figure 1. Sample organizational structure of SAS unit in PSE.
(Adopted from Kuk & Banning, 2009; Kumar & Geraci, 2011; Siefert & Arnold, 2010)

In the United States, until the 1960's, American institutions operated on the doctrine that allowed them to regulate their students' lives *in loco parentis* (Latin for "in place of a parent") (Garner, 2009, p. 858; Long, 2012). The evolution of SAS units transitioning from student conduct to education coincided with this doctrine that SAS practitioners too acted in place of a parent, as an extension of the PSE.

When SAS units began to take more of a comprehensive and holistic approach to supporting students in PSE, associations that regulate, research, and contribute to SAS professions started to be founded around the world. These include, but are not limited to the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), founded in 1919 (NASPA, n.d.-a); American College Personnel Association (ACPA), founded in 1924 (ACPA, 2018); CACUSS, founded in 1971 (CACUSS, 2019); Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association (ANZSSA), founded in 1970's (Elliot, 2019); Hong Kong Student Services Association (HKSSA), founded in 1984 (HKSSA, n.d.); International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS), founded in 2010 (Ludeman & Moscaritolo, 2016); and Southern African Federation for Student Affairs and Services (SAFSAS), founded in 2012 (Pillay, 2018). Through the founding of these SAS associations, and many more, it is evident that SAS units have experienced and continue to experience isomorphic changes within their profession. These include coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism, and normative isomorphism.

Conclusion

Since the rise of SAS in PSE, SAS units continue to thrive despite having encountered challenges in complex environments. The role of SAS practitioners has changed since the 1860's. However, their values have not. In 2017, CACUSS approved a Strategic Long-Range Plan that outlined their values to include integrity and accountability of the organization, utilizing evidence-based decision making for the profession, being open to diverse perspectives, collaborating and consulting with other associations, engaging its members, and encouraging universal design. This is another isomorphic approach by SAS in Canada, as these values are like that of NASPA's (n.d.-b) values: "Integrity, Innovation, Inclusion, and Inquiry" (para. 1).

SAS units continue to be affected by various mechanisms of isomorphic organizational change. The complex and diverse environments that SAS units and practitioners continue to be faced with also continue to lead them towards isomorphism. By relying on each practitioner and institution's successful attempts at reforming structure, curriculum, profession, and practice, SAS practitioners gave rise to the profession as it is known today.

The socio-cultural contexts of SAS units are ones that are ever changing and continuously adapting to the world around it. Perhaps this is where isomorphism compliments such a profession. By learning from each other and responding to diverse factors and pressures, the field of SAS successfully continues to garner new professionals, new educational programs, and professional development opportunities, thereby demonstrating how the progression of this profession produced a homogenized profession: one that is cohesive, competent, and complementary to the student personnel movement.

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Jeremiah Rojas is a Leadership Educator at the University of Guelph and a PhD Student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. He can be reached on Instagram @jay.rojas

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Post-Secondary Student Suicide: The Need for More Research on the Suicidal Behaviours of Transgender Students

by Hillary Winger

Student suicide is a prominent issue at colleges and universities today. The issue of student suicide has garnered media attention in recent years, as a number of post-secondary students in Canada have died by suicide. The topic has also garnered significant scholarly attention, especially in the United States. This article will provide a critical review of a sub-set of the literature on post-secondary student suicide: gender differences in suicide among post-secondary students, as well as suicidal behaviours among transgender students.

Differences in Suicidal Behaviour among Male and Female Post-Secondary Students

The literature on post-secondary student suicide indicates that there are gender differences in students' suicidal behaviours. In their sample of 630 students, Stephenson, Pena-Shaff, and Quirk (2006) found that female students reported higher levels of suicidal ideation than male students did. Similarly, in their study of the prevalence and predictors of suicide among college students, Wilcox et al. (2010) found that female students were more likely to have a one-time episode of suicide ideation and to have a suicide plan than male students were. Brownson, Drum, Smith, and Burton Denmark (2011) also found that female graduate students, in particular, are a high-risk group for suicide and are more likely than male graduate students to report suicidal ideation and attempts. Although these findings indicate that female students are more likely to experience suicidal behaviour, all of these studies had more female participants than male participants, which may explain the researchers' findings. It is also important to note that these studies do not examine student suicide in Canada.

While hopelessness, helplessness, and burdensomeness have been found to predict suicidal ideation in both female and male students (Lamis & Lester, 2013; Stephenson et al., 2006), there are gender differences in the predictive factors of suicidal behaviour among post-secondary students. For example, sexual victimization (Brownson et al., 2011; Stephenson et al., 2006), domestic violence (Brownson et al., 2011) and depression (Lamis & Lester, 2013) have been identified as predictors of suicidal behaviour in female students. Among male students, researchers have identified physical assault (Stephenson et al., 2006) and the questioning of sexual orientation (Brownson et al.) as predictors of suicidality.

Gender differences have been found in male and female students' help-seeking behaviour. Brownson et al. (2011) found that female students were more likely than males to seek professional help for suicidal ideation, as well as informal support from friends and family. Females also reported higher satisfaction with the professional help they received, including medication and psychotherapy, than male students (Brownson et al., 2011). These findings suggest that more needs to be done to increase male students' satisfaction with professional services so that they do seek help when needed, especially since men are less likely to turn to friends and family for support.

Limitations of the Literature

Although this literature indicates that there are gender differences in students' suicidal behaviours, this research is limited because it fails to examine the suicidal experiences of students who identify as transgender. Stephenson et al.'s (2006) study, for example, uses survey responses from 662 post-secondary students, which included 348 students who identified as women and 285 who identified as men. The researchers do not share the results of the 29 students who identified as neither men nor

women. Furthermore, Brownson et al. (2011) examine responses from the 2006 Nature of Suicidal Crises in College Students survey, in which respondents had to identify as either men or women. The researchers acknowledge that this mandatory selection is a limitation of the survey. Brownson et al. briefly mention at the end of their article that “a separate item asked students whether they identified as transgender” (p. 291) but fail to discuss what the item was and do not share results on the students who identified as transgender on that item. Other studies (Wilcox et al. 2013; Lamis & Lester, 2013) do not include participants who are neither male nor female and do not acknowledge that excluding transgender students limits their findings.

This limitation points to the larger issue of minimal research on transgender students. Dugan, Kusel, and Simounet (2012) argue that this limited research “reflects the degree to which deeply engrained assumptions of a binary gender system shape both educational research and practice” (p. 719). As awareness of transgender students on university and college campuses continues to grow (Nicolazzo, 2017), there is a need to understand their distinct experiences, particularly suicidal behaviours, to better support this group of students.

Transgender Post-Secondary Students and Suicidal Behaviour

Although research has been done on transgender youth and suicide (Grossman & D’Augelli, 2007; Liu & Mustanski, 2012; Mustanski & Liu, 2013), as well as the experiences of transgender students at colleges and universities (Pryor, 2015), few studies have specifically focused on suicide among transgender post-secondary students. The few studies that have focused on this issue have found a high rate for suicidal behaviours among the transgender post-secondary student population. For example, in Swanbrow Becker et al.’s (2017) study of the impact of stress on transgender and cisgender college students, transgender participants reported a high frequency of suicidal behaviours. In particular, 55% of transgender respondents reported a history of seriously considering suicide, compared to 44% of cisgender Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Questioning (LGBQ) students and 19% of cisgender heterosexual students (Swanbrow Becker et al., 2017). In addition, 34% of transgender respondents reported a history of attempting suicide compared to 18% for the cisgender LGBQ group and 5% for cisgender heterosexual students (Swanbrow Becker et al., 2017). In another study of 776 LGBTQ students, Woodford et al. (2018) found that nearly 10% of trans students ($n = 214$) and 5% ($n = 562$) of cisgender LGBQ students reported that they had attempted suicide in the past year.

Studies have identified a number of risk factors for suicide among the transgender post-secondary student population, including a history of emotional, sexual, or physical trauma (Swanbrow Becker et al., 2017) and victimization through verbal and physical threats (Woodford et al., 2018). Seelman (2016) and Woodford et al. (2018) both found that the environment and culture of post-secondary institutions is connected to suicidal behaviour in transgender students. Most recently, Messman and Leslie (2019) found that transgender students experienced more mental health symptoms than cisgender respondents, particularly higher levels of anxiety, self-harm, depression, stress, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts.

These studies offer important contributions on transgender post-secondary students to the literature on higher education and student affairs. In their book on transgender students in college, Nicolazzo (2017) argues that transgender students have always attended college and university, but they have largely been ignored by post-secondary institutions and researchers. Nicolazzo writes that the current and forthcoming scholarship on transgender students “can be understood as a way ... to liberate the field of higher education and student affairs from binary discourses regarding gender...” (p. 41). As more research is conducted and published on the experiences of transgender students, this group of students will become more visible on campuses and in educational research.

Limitations of the Literature

A limitation of these studies is that the surveys used may not have accurately captured a respondent’s gender identity. In the surveys analyzed by Messman and Leslie (2019) and Swanbrow Becker et al. (2017), for example, respondents had the option to identify as transgender, but some gender non-conforming students may instead identify as genderqueer or gender fluid. As such, some respondents may not have selected “transgender” on the survey. Both Messman and Leslie and Swanbrow Becker et al. acknowledge in their limitations sections that the “transgender” category may have been limiting

for some respondents. Instead of using the term “transgender,” the surveys in Seelman (2016) and Woodford et al.’s (2018) studies used the word “trans*.” Woodford et al. argue that this term is “inclusive of identities beyond transgender, such as genderqueer, gender nonconforming, and two-spirit” (p. 421). Future research with students who identify as transgender and gender non-conforming should ensure that all participants are able to report their gender identity accurately. More accurate self-identification will give researchers a better understanding of suicide rates and behaviours within the transgender and gender non-conforming student populations.

Looking to the Future

Some preliminary analysis was completed on the 2019 Canadian National College Health Assessment (NCHA) dataset to identify the number of Canadian non-binary students who had considered or attempted suicide within the last 12 months. I found that of the 1475 respondents who identified as non-binary and who responded to the question, 551 (37%) had seriously considered suicide within the past 12 months. Concerning suicide attempts, of the 1471 respondents who identified as non-binary and who responded to the question, 132 (9%) had attempted suicide within the last 12 months. In almost all comparisons that were made to male and female students, the number of non-binary students reporting that they had seriously considered or attempted suicide in the past 12 months was consistently double. Further analysis is therefore needed to identify how non-binary students specifically can be further supported at Canadian post-secondary institutions. It is crucial for colleges and universities to provide tailored support that meets the needs of specific student populations, particularly transgender students.

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Hillary Winger is a student in the Master of Education program at Wilfrid Laurier University with a focus on student affairs in higher education. Hillary can be reached at kend3300@mylaurier.ca.

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The 5 R's in Online Orientation

by Nicole Crozier

When I started my master's program in educational technology last summer, I was excited about everything we were learning. Digital identity! Inquiry! Personalized learning! Research methods! Not all of it related directly to the work I'm paid to do, but it was still fascinating.

When we were assigned Tessaro et. al's 2018 article, *The 5 R's for Indigenizing Online Learning: A Case Study of the First Nations Schools' Principals Course*, I was hyper-excited. The article describes the creation, implementation, experiences, and research surrounding the creation of a professional development course for principals of First Nations schools across Canada. It does so through the lens of the 5 R's of Indigenous education: respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility, and relationships. Finally. Something that directly, 100% related to the work that I was doing every day.

When I came to the University of Victoria (UVic) in early 2018, I came to develop and implement a new online orientation program for incoming students. Through a lot of research, consultation with subject-matter experts throughout the university, a close partnership with Technology Integrated Learning (TIL), and some of my thoughts and feelings about what I thought was best, we created a 3-4 hour program containing eight different topic areas and a number of different activities.

It was fascinating to see how many of the approaches they took in the First Nations Schools' Principals Course (FNSPC) resonated with how we had approached our work.

Rationale for Going Online

Our reasons for creating an online orientation program were obviously very different from the researcher's reasons for creating a course for First Nations principals (that shouldn't surprise anyone), but our reasons for making the decision to go online were very similar: online courses help to break down geographic barriers to participation. First Nations principals are scattered all over the country, often in geographically remote areas, and learning online gave them a way to participate without disrupting their daytime principal roles. Similarly, UVic's incoming students are scattered all over the world; over 70% of incoming students come from outside the Greater Victoria area. Creating an online program gives all students (more or less) an equal opportunity to participate, without the need for expensive flights, or disrupting their normal day-to-day life to attend an in-person program.

People Involved

In order to develop the FNSPC, two separate-but-related teams were developed. First, there was the course design team at OISE. This was the team that would be doing most of the work in pulling the course together. Then there was the expert advisory panel, who met with the design team twice. The 22-member advisor panel consisted of leading educators, curriculum developers, academics, and principals.

Our process had a similar approach. We had a small design team that consisted primarily of myself and two members of the TIL team, with a little bit of support from our wider office teams. Then we had our own version of the expert advisory panel, a subject-matter expert group for each of our topic areas that consisted of people who knew a lot about the topic or could represent a specific student demographic in relation to the topic. Similarly to the FNSPC, we recognized that knowledge was not simply held by one or two individuals, and the more perspectives we brought to the table initially, the more likely we were to create a product that worked for the most students.

Modules Organized Around a Query

One of the ways the FNSPC designers tried to ensure the course content was relevant to learners was by organizing each module around a query related to principals' everyday experiences; all content and activities within the module related directly to supporting the exploration of this query. These queries included "What are our school resources and how can we use them?" and "How can data be used for school improvement?"; among others.

I was initially struck by the similarity in titles between the FNSPC modules and our program's

activities. We had also chosen to frame every activity (although not every larger topic) as a question. In reflecting on the rationale provided by the FNSPC, I realized our rationale was largely the same. We posed a question to students (“How can I maintain academic integrity?” or “How can I build and maintain relationships?”), and then the activity allowed the students to explore the question, learning skills, expectations, strategies, and resources they could take forward to answer the question.

Ongoing Feedback

It’s obvious throughout the article that receiving and responding to feedback was an important component of the FNSPC. For them, in the context of the 5 R’s, this allowed them to show respect for the local community’s values and perspectives and allowed them to apply the principle of reciprocity, making teaching and learning a two-way process.

Due to the short nature of our course and the high number of students enrolled, we’re not able to make changes throughout the course, but we have incorporated features into the course and into our assessment process to ensure we are receiving feedback. The course is set up with a pre-post test so we can determine the program’s impact and make changes accordingly; students are required to submit a feedback survey before the course is considered to be complete, and we have plans to run additional focus groups in the fall to gain more information. Based on feedback we received in our January pilot, we have already made changes to the program, adding a learning outcome and activity about navigating the campus that we originally had not thought was necessary. Further, student input, through surveys, focus groups, and the staff working in our office, was solicited and incorporated throughout the development of our program.

As they stated in the paper: “Student voices should be actively listened to, and their needs and goals should be accommodated.” This is a statement we firmly believe in.

Horizontal Sharing

Due to the importance of reciprocity in Indigenous education, and the importance of relationships, many elements of horizontal sharing were introduced into the course design of the FNSPC, allowing learning to take place not simply via a transmission model of teaching but via sharing between participants.

Our program admittedly does not have a lot of sharing between participants outside of a few polls whose responses are shared. This is partly due to concerns about monitoring and responding to anything posted in the course, and partly because participants have not had the experience of coming to university yet, so there is a limited amount they could share to be helpful. However, we have incorporated the stories and learnings of upper-year students throughout the program, through student profiles, student tips, and the videos we created. These upper-year students are giving back to their community through their participation in our program.

Oral Communication

Indigenous education and ways of knowing are largely based in community and in oral communication; therefore, the FNSPC incorporated lots of video chat rooms and video lectures.

The connection to our program here may, admittedly, be a bit of a stretch. While each of our topics did have a video component, they also had lots of non-video components. However, many of our activities were scenario-based, where students had to help a “fellow student” navigate, for example, their first term at UVic or the banking system. While students had to read text on a screen in order to do this, the text was written in the form of an oral conversation, and the entire scenario was based on a helping relationship with the character.

Direct Application

To help ensure relevance, the design team for the FNSPC wanted to ensure that course participation was incorporated into participants’ working lives as much as possible and was not simply seen as an external activity. We had the same thought process when designing our course; we wanted students to see the direct application of our activities to their lives as students, and to identify strategies and behaviours they could directly apply to their lives. To do this, we added what we called a “Think Forward” activity at the end of each topic. These activities required students to think about what they had just learned and set an intention for applying that content to their lives. For example, they

were asked to choose, from a list, three new study strategies they wanted to implement, or to set three health and wellness goals for the fall.

An Overall Look

As someone who came into the design process with a lot of thoughts and opinions, but, realistically, very little experience in developing an online course, finding all these parallels between our process and approaches, and those of this program was extremely validating. Our assessment data and feedback has been quite positive, and we're looking forward to improving and expanding the program moving forward.

I want to be clear: I don't write any of this to make an argument that we have Indigenized our online orientation program. While there may be parallels between some of our approaches, there are also lots of gaps. Because we offer additional, in-person orientation programming, the online program does not focus on relationship building; our program does not heavily involve the tradition of oral communication; and while we talk a fair bit about building community on campus, we do neglect the community back home. But it was interesting to see how well the Indigenous core values of education (experiential, holistic, personal, orally transmitted and uses narrative and metaphor) lined up with what we had identified as best practices in online learning.

And I have to say: Knowing this Five R framework exists makes me much more comfortable with the idea of potentially designing activities specifically for Indigenous students down the road.

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Nicole Crozier is a Project Coordinator in the Office of Student Life at the University of Victoria, where she has worked to design and implement a new online orientation program. Nicole can be reached at nicolecrozier@uvic.ca or on Twitter @n_crozier.

Policy Problems: Preparing Students for the “Real World”

by Shannon McKechnie

Ememployability of students has risen as a key indicator of success of institutions, alongside an increased focus on policy for skills development in Canada. In Ontario, a hub for Canada’s economy, the issue of the “skills gap” has sustained interest as a significant but contested policy issue in public post-secondary education (Viccko, Lorusso, & McKechnie, 2019). Directed by policy and by public demand, significant resources at universities are invested into efforts to increase students’ skills capacities, career prospects, and overall employability. For student affairs staff (SAS), developing student career readiness and employability is central to many portfolios of our work (CACUSS, 2011). In my master’s thesis research, I conducted a qualitative study with SAS, with the intention of understanding how skills development policy discourses extend into the everyday reality of SAS who are ultimately responsible for its realization in post-secondary institutions. In this article, I present findings related to one of four themes that emerged from analysis of policy documents and interviews with SAS: preparing students for the “real world.”

The Study: Theory and Methods

I consider this research a critical policy analysis. I draw mainly on policy scholars Stephen Ball and Carol Bacchi, both of whom utilize Foucauldian concepts of power (Ball, 1994; Ball et al., 2011; Bacchi, 2009, 2012; Foucault, 1980). In a critical approach, the researcher asks questions about the assumptions underlying the “problems” and evidence informing policy, considers who is involved in creating policy (and more importantly, who is left out), and understands policy as innately social, historical, and political, with implications beyond the intended solutions (Diem et al., 2014; Bacchi, 2009).

Ball et al.’s (2011) concept of policy as discourse informs the theoretical foundation of this research, in which I understand policy as not simply a document or text that is negotiated, implemented, and reformed, but rather as an agent in our understanding of the “problem” it supposes to solve. Theoretically, treating policy as discourse lets us see the way policy does or accomplishes things: “We do not speak a discourse, it speaks us. We are the subjectivities, the voices, the knowledge, the power relations that a discourse constructs and allows... we are spoken by policies, we take up the positions constructed for us within policies.” (Ball, 1994, p. 22). Policies define problems in the way that the policies themselves are constructed, creating conditions for certain possibilities for interpretation and solution while limiting others. Bacchi refers to this as “problematization” (2009). Central to this theoretical approach is questioning how and why problems come to be understood as truths, and ultimately, what the implications of this might be for the governance of social life.

This study was completed in Spring 2018 at a large research-intensive university in Ontario and included document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Six main policy documents were analyzed, including documents from both institutional, governance, and research-based sources, and seven staff in the university’s central SAS unit participated in interviews.

Findings

Four main themes emerged from this study of policy discourses, student skills development, and SAS: skills development articulation, bringing attention to the connections between student skills development and student mental health, access and equity, and the creation of a binary of the “real world” and the university, which is the focus for this article. While presented separately, these themes are deeply interconnected and tangled in their complexities.

Policy Documents

The binary of the “real world” and the university life was pervasive in the data. In policy documents, the problem of the “skills gap” is represented as one in which the university is unable to meet demands of industry and thus, “real” life, for students. Skills development, particularly through experiential learning and career readiness programming, is presented as the solution, effectively bolstering a co-occurring and long-standing binary of academic learning versus experience. Both of these binaries suggest that the university is a bounded space, and that the learning that occurs in university is different and disconnected from the learning and skills needed in the workplace.

In the Strategic Mandate Agreement at the university where this research was conducted, the language of the “real world” and the university binary is used to describe the benefits of experiential learning and skills development programs; theoretical concepts learned within the classroom are fully understood once applied in the “real world” to “real challenges”. The Council of Ontario Universities’ (2014) report uses an equation to make this explicit: “classroom learning + real life learning = career success” (p. 1), implying that classroom learning is only beneficial once combined with experience. Other actors, such as the Conference Board of Canada and the Province of Ontario, have articulated a similar binary in their policy documents, using “real world” and “reality” to discuss the economic relevance of university education and advocating for the prioritization of STEM programs (Munro, Maclaine, & Stuckey, 2014; COU, 2014). This extends the “real world”/university binary to include another co-occurring binary of humanities, arts, and social sciences versus STEM, business, and professional degrees.

Interviews

In conversation with SAS, the concept of the “real world” was central to their sense of purpose. As advocates for students, participants shared that their work in developing experiential learning and skills development programs had direct impact for those students that participated, as the programs contributed to preparing students for when they leave the “campus bubble” and enter the “real world”. Participants who spoke about the campus bubble and student life invoked images of students spending all day in the library writing essays or not paying attention in a large lecture hall. “Real” learning, in comparison, brought students outside of the classroom and towards applied experiences. Participants largely identified the local community outside of their university as a site for potential real world learning that guided their program development: “Rather than students working on any assignment that a faculty or course instructor created that’s really just theoretical, why not have students work on a project that actually meets a need within the community?”. Additionally, participants spoke about the responsibility students have to choose to prioritize this part of their development during their studies, known as “self-enrolling”.

What is the effect?

To analyze the data, I followed Carol Bacchi’s (2009) approach, which prompts investigation into the assumptions that underpin problem representations in policy and govern our response to perceived “problems”. Included in these assumptions are the use of conceptual logics like binaries, categories, and key concepts. In this analysis, these logics are understood as techniques of governance that are important to identify and explore “where they appear in policies and how they function to shape the understanding of the issue” (p. 7).

The binary of the “real world” and the university works to create and sustain a hierarchy of learning and experience that is directly tied to industry. It designates the “real world” as separate from what the student experiences in university and represents the university as a bounded space, rendering it irrelevant to life outside. The effects of the dominant use of this binary have implications for the enactment of equity and inclusion in skills development and employability spaces in higher education, and for how we might understand our interconnectedness with policy discourses.

Equity and Inclusion

It is important to consider how the use of concepts and binaries like the “real world” impact the ability to practice equity in skills development and employability programs and services. Creating such a distinct binary of the “real world” and the university may discount the very real experiences students have during their time as an undergraduate student, including those experiences that may prevent them from accessing skills development programs. When discussing preparing students for

the “real world,” participants referred to student priorities and choices when planning their time. It is up to the student to self-enroll and choose to prioritize this learning. This approach may discursively re-constitute equity as a meritocratic project, with emphasis on individual choice, rather than on systemic access. Liasidou and Symeou (2018) call this the “neoliberal version of inclusion that aims at facilitating the production of the ‘ideal student’” (p. 160). In this way, dominant use of the “real world,” priorities, and choice discourse, paired with pressures of responsibility to meet policy expectations, can hinder equity driven practice.

Policy Discourse & Student Affairs

Ball (1994; Ball et al., 2011) and Bacchi (2009, 2012) tell us that policy as discourse works to create particular truths through policy problems. The critical analysis required to uncover these truths and how they operate in our lives is complex and messy. Bacchi (2012) writes:

The task is complicated, however, by the norms embedded in the practices - the “rules one prescribes to oneself and the reasons one subscribes” (Foucault, 1980, p. 42) - that “determine how we go about constructing who we are and what we know” (May, 2006, p. 104). That is, since we are all located within practices and problematizations that shape us to an extent, it is difficult to stand back and study their operation. (p. 4)

Under neoliberal influences, the student is forced to pursue education that helps them find success in the “real world” while SAS supports that goal. Throughout this research, I found myself reflecting on a balancing act I was witnessing in conversations with participants: believing in a holistic education, encouraging exploration, and lauding the benefits of higher education, while also feeling responsible for responding to the political and economic pressures facing students.

Conclusion

This article provided insights from a study about SAS and policy discourses related to higher education and skills development. What emerges from this conversation, in addition to the ways in which we can begin to understand how policy discourses can govern our work, is a recognition that our rejection of the traditional university structure is representative of our discomfort with the university as it currently operates. COVID-19, more than any other recent event in Canadian higher education, has now forced a re-ordering of the way universities operate, while simultaneously revealing stark inequities that have long existed. We have to reckon with what the university is and should be in this cultural moment, and with what the “real world” might be as we move forward. The complex, messy work is in detangling ourselves from problematizations that shape us so we can begin to imagine possibilities of “doing” the university and supporting students differently.

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Shannon McKechnie, M.A., is currently a PhD student at Western University studying policy networks related to student employability in Ontario higher education. Shannon can be reached at smckech@uwo.ca or on Twitter @s_mckechnie.

The Experience of Master's-Level Student-Parents

by Andrea Pape

Are you ready to support a student who is a parent on your campus? This past year, I found myself in a position where I could not direct someone to a changing table on a university campus. I did not know about what supports were available. In my Master of Education classes of about 25 students, there were at least 5 student-parents enrolled alongside me. While research in the Canadian context on graduate students who are parents is quite limited, the 2019 Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey provides some indication of how many graduate students there may be who report having children. Preliminary analysis was completed, and I found that of 52,189 respondents, 9,817 (18.81%) reported having one or more children. Of students specifically at Master's-level studies, 17.24% had one or more children. Yet, when I did a preliminary scan to find out where a student could find changing table information, there were little resources for, or acknowledgement of, student-parents on campus past the childcare centre.

There are multiple reasons for institutions to be concerned with how facets of the student experience are supporting or creating barriers to student-parents during their degree. Being concerned with what is impacting student persistence-to-degree can be from a supportive mindset of adjusting to meet student needs or from institutional financial reasoning (such as the cost of new graduate student recruitment as higher than efforts to retain current graduate students). The bottom line is, though, as Lovitts (2001) asserts, "The most important reason to be concerned about graduate student attrition is that it can ruin individuals' lives" (p. 6).

An exploration of current literature found little research on the experiences of student-parents, and even less on Master's level student-parents. The research that does exist mostly explores the experiences of student-parents in either undergraduate or doctoral experiences. For example, McCourt (2018) analyzed 50 American postsecondary institutions' online resources accessible to student-parents and highlights desired campus supports, including childcare, class flexibility, financial aid, housing, and advising alongside challenges such as role conflict (balancing role of parent vs. role of student). Lindsay and Gillum (2018) explored the experiences of single mothers who are students in college and found that mothers wished the university would support them as individuals (e.g. class flexibility during a child's school breaks) and also want the university to consider their children (e.g. drop-off childcare). In our Canadian context, Van Rhijn, Smit Quosai, and Lero (2011) provided a profile of undergraduate student-parents and Van Rhijn (2014) also examined barriers, enablers, and strategies for success for undergraduate student-parents.

The gap in research led me to conducting a phenomenological study on the experiences of ten Master's-level graduate student-parents in their persistence-to-degree. Specifically, I am interested in the challenges and supports Master's-level graduate student-parents experience. Gardner (2009) utilizes Sanford's theory of challenge and support as a foundation in explaining the persistence-to-degree of doctoral students. Focusing on the development of a student in response to experiencing a challenging experience, Gardner posits that too many challenging experiences for doctoral students without mitigating support may result in a diversion in development. A balance of challenge and support provides an opportunity for a student to positively resolve a challenge and develop (Gardner, 2009). The focus of my study is on the following three questions: (1) What, if any, supports related to being a student-parent have been experienced during their degree that they identify as contributing to persistence-to-degree? (2) What, if any, challenges related to being a student-parent have been

experienced during their degree that they identify as a barrier to persistence-to-degree? and (3) What, if any, supports or barriers from within the educational institution have impacted persistence-to-degree? (e.g. personnel, supports, resources, information).

Giving voice to student-parents could elevate voices with potentially shared lived experiences, showcasing how opportunities and challenges are not experienced in a vacuum and that barriers or opportunities are not solely founded on individual capacity of motivation or dedication (Gardner, 2009). From the collective knowledge of participants, I hope to provide insight to the field on any opportunities institutions can engage in to offset student-parent challenges. Are there any gaps in resources or supports that could be addressed, strategies that could be employed, or opportunities for cyclical sharing so student-parents can self-determine how to persist towards the completion of their degree? I look forward to unpacking these questions and possible responses using the findings from this study.

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Andrea Pape is the New Student Advising Coordinator at the University of Guelph and a recent graduate of the MEd program at Wilfrid Laurier University.

Alberta Post-Secondary Roles and Mandates

by Noah D. Arney

Introduction

The Alberta system of post-secondary education may be unique in Canada. As Alex Usher says, “Alberta not only has the closest thing Canada has to a genuine system of education, but the government is also by some distance the most interventionist in the country when it comes to universities” (Usher, 2019). The Albertan system has changed over the years from its single public university – the University of Alberta founded only three years after the province was created (Macleod, 2016) – to the current seven universities. Four of the universities are called comprehensive academic and research universities and three are called undergraduate universities (Types of publicly funded institutions, 2020). In addition to the universities, the province has eleven publicly funded comprehensive community colleges; two polytechnic institutions; five private universities; and the Banff Centre, a specialized arts and cultural institution.

The Alberta system went through an overhaul in the first decade of the twenty-first century. New institutions were added, institutions changed from being colleges to being universities, and funding, which had been cut substantially in the 1990s, was increased (Usher, 2019). More importantly, in this decade was the 2007 introduction of *The Roles and Mandates: Policy Framework for Alberta’s Publicly Funded Advanced Education System*, which I will refer to as Roles and Mandates 2007. This document formalized the six-sector model that Alberta continues to follow today and laid out the goals and directions the system works towards. Although it has been superseded by 2019’s *The Roles and Mandates: Policy Framework for Alberta’s Adult Learning System*, referred to as Roles and Mandates 2019, the current structure of the Alberta system was formed by the 2007 version and so this inquiry will focus on the Roles and Mandates 2007 and the report that led to it.

Context

In 2003, the Alberta economy was picking up steam after a weaker-than-expected decade (Statistics Canada, 2014). After leading an austerity-focused government for two terms, Ralph Klein, leader of the Progressive Conservatives in their ninth consecutive majority, ordered a review of the K-12 system. The review’s recommendations stated that one of the outcomes for students was to be that they were “ready to be lifelong learners” (Alberta’s Commission on Learning, 2003 p36). The report made it clear that by “lifelong learners” what they meant is that the students are ready and able to go on to post-secondary education and succeed at it. It further stated that although Albertans have, in the past, been able to find meaningful and financially stable work without post-secondary, soon that would no longer be the case (Alberta’s Commission on Learning 2003). This caused people’s attention to turn to the neglected post-secondary system (Moore-Kilgannon, 2006).

In the wake of this report, Klein went into the 2004 provincial election facing post-secondary education as a key political issue. During the election, the inaccessibility of post-secondary, the high cost of education, and the crumbling infrastructure of the institutions were all brought up frequently (Moore-Kilgannon, 2006). Government revenues were up substantially, and the province was in its eleventh consecutive surplus (Statistics Canada, 2014). An underfunded post-secondary system did not make sense to voters (Moore-Kilgannon, 2006). Klein’s Progressive Conservatives won, but they lost a sixth of their seats (General Elections, n.d.). Before the first year of what would end up being Klein’s final term was up, the government undertook a review of the post-secondary system in the province.

The resulting report, titled *A Learning Alberta*, proposed a radical redesign of the Alberta post-secondary system. Or rather, it proposed creating a true unified Alberta post-secondary system. This system was to include “literacy development, community programs, apprenticeship and industry training, colleges, universities and technical institutes” (A Learning Alberta Steering Committee, 2006, p. 1). The current state of the province was one where it had one of the lowest post-secondary participation rates in the country, and that was worse in rural and further north areas of the province. In addition, a third of Albertans lacked the literacy skills they needed for the changing world. The report laid out a twenty-year plan for Alberta’s post-secondary system.

A Learning Alberta

The *A Learning Alberta* report laid out a vision of Alberta’s future, one in which “Alberta leads the world in inspiring and supporting lifelong learning for all its peoples” (A Learning Alberta Steering Committee, 2006, p.5). By lifelong learning, the report means both formal and non-formal learning that people undertake after completing their formal primary and secondary education. The report, while focused on post-secondary institutions, is clear that lifelong learning is not the sole responsibility of these institutions, but that other providers include “schools, community organizations, non-profit learning providers, employers” (p.16), and the goal of the province is for all of them to work together. The ambitious nature of the report, and its proposed changes, is summed up in the executive summary:

What we need is an enhanced learning system that supports all our aspirations. We need a learning system that covers the full range of advanced learning opportunities including literacy development, community programs, apprenticeship and industry training, colleges, universities and technical institutes. (A Learning Alberta Steering Committee, 2006, p.1)

If Alberta were to create a world-leading system by 2025, it would be seen by metrics in participation rates, graduate student numbers, a 90% literacy level, a world-class research system, high international student participation, and finally the affordability of post-secondary education in the province (A Learning Alberta Steering Committee, 2006). The report recommends six ways of achieving this.

Creating a “learner-centered society” (p.9) where all Albertans see learning as essential is the first method. For this goal, they recommend that Albertans see education as important for their personal and work success. The report is clear that this does not necessarily mean post-secondary, but also includes non-formal learning, and that it is important for educational institutions to encourage students to bring their prior learning or transferring courses between institutions. The other key part of this goal is to encourage underrepresented populations to take advantage of lifelong learning opportunities.

Encouraging “vibrant learning communities” (p. 11) would require non-post-secondary community-based organizations to take a bigger role in the learning-centred society. This would include strengthening the Community Adult Learning Councils, strengthening literacy programs, encouraging community-based sports programs, and helping Indigenous-focused learning organizations gain capacity.

Positioning Alberta as a “global leadership in a knowledge-driven economy and society” (p. 14) would require Alberta to look beyond its borders. This would include helping immigrants take part in the provincial economy by both providing learning opportunities and recognizing the credentials of immigrants. It would include attracting top researchers and instructors, and it would include encouraging Albertans to participate in international educational experiences.

Supporting “innovation and excellence through learning” (p. 14) in the report focuses primarily on the research capacity of post-secondary institutions. Building institutional research capacity, increasing the number of graduate students, and increasing research funding are the main ways the report says the province can support this research capacity. Other recommendations include supporting the technology required to increase collaboration between institutions and increase the efficiency of institutions, as well as supporting best practices in Indigenous education.

Creating a “seamless advanced learning for all Albertans” (p. 17) is the recommendation that seems to have guided most of the changes to the post-secondary system since 2006. It recommends the formalization of the roles of each post-secondary institution in the province. In addition, it

recommends a new affordability framework – one where tuition is rolled back to 2004 levels and then allowed to increase at the Consumer Price Index to accommodate for inflation, while government funding increases accommodate increases in student numbers. It also recommended that the loan system use the affordability of education as its main goal.

By supporting the “strategic advancement of learning opportunities,” what the report means is the accessibility of higher education. Recommendations in this area include ensuring that literacy programs, Indigenous education programs, and programs for those underserved by the current educational system are all aligned and aimed at supporting the lifelong learning of the individuals involved. It recommended that the government substantially increase funding for adult literacy, post-secondary, and learning organizations, with the intent of allowing the institutions to be able to plan long-term without worrying about funding changes. The report also suggests including Indigenous run institutions in the overall framework.

Although ambitious, the report’s critiques came quickly (Moore-Kilgannon, 2006), primarily around affordability. The concerns were that the report, although advocating for affordable post-secondary, still created a post-secondary system that was too expensive. Other concerns were raised about implementation and whether or not the more forward-thinking concepts would be enacted.

Roles and Mandates 2007

Eighteen months after the *A Learning Alberta* report was submitted, the government, now led by Ed Stelmach, put forward *The Roles and Mandates Policy Framework for Alberta’s Publicly Funded Advanced Education System*. Its vision aligned well with the *A Learning Alberta* report’s proposal for post-secondary education in the province:

Alberta’s social, cultural, and economic well-being is enhanced through a globally recognized advanced education system that provides high-quality and efficient programs, is resilient and responsive to learner and economic needs, and unleashes innovation through world-class research and knowledge transfer. (Alberta, 2007, p2)

Although the vision and outcomes aligned with *A Learning Alberta*, the policy framework itself was primarily focused on how that happened within the post-secondary education system. The way this was implemented was through the differentiation between the post-secondary institutions. The differentiation was laid out by dividing the province’s post-secondary institutions into six types, known as the six-sector model:

1. Comprehensive Academic and Research Institutions
2. Baccalaureate and Applied Studies Institutions
3. Polytechnical Institutions
4. Comprehensive Community Institutions
5. Independent Academic Institutions
6. Specialized Arts and Culture Institutions

(Alberta, 2007)

The *A Learning Alberta* report laid out six metrics by which success would be judged. They key parts of the metrics were participation rates (compared to G8 countries), Indigenous participation rates, graduate student numbers, literacy percentage (aiming for 90%), being one of the top two sciences and social sciences or humanities research locations in the country, having some of the highest numbers of international students, and having an affordable system (*A Learning Alberta Steering Committee, 2006*).

In *Roles and Mandates 2007*, they identified twelve metrics. Four of the metrics – participation rates, Indigenous participation rates, graduate student numbers, and literacy percentage – aligned closely with *A Learning Alberta*. Two of the metrics - the percentage of students completing high school and the percentage completing post-secondary – were expanding on the aligned metrics. Three of the metrics - number of patents and licenses, and amount of revenue from them; level of research in the system; and amount of sponsored research per capita – were a redesign of the *A Learning Alberta*’s research metric. But three of the metrics were new. Those three were employer support for AETS, level of student satisfaction, and utilization of post-secondary infrastructure (Alberta, 2007).

Roles and Mandates 2019: a change in focus

Although lifelong learning was a focus of the Alberta's Commission on Learning 2003 report, the *A Learning Alberta* report, and Roles and Mandates 2007, it is never mentioned in the Roles and Mandates 2019. Instead, the focus is now on Adult Learning, a topic which just a few years earlier was only mentioned in relation to adult basic education (Alberta, 2007). The new vision is a substantial change, with a focus on individual learners rather than on the province's economy:

Every Albertan has the same opportunity to fulfill their full potential and contribute to their communities by obtaining a high-quality post-secondary education regardless of financial circumstances. (Advanced Education, 2019a)

This new policy, authored by the Alberta New Democratic Party, a party significantly to the left of the prior Progressive Conservative government, kept the six-sector model but focused the institutions on accessibility and affordability rather than innovation, which is left primarily to the comprehensive academic and research institutions. Accessibility and affordability were two of the main drivers behind the original creation of the *A Learning Alberta* committee (Moore-Kilgannon, 2006) so it seems appropriate for the government to bring them back in. In addition, Roles and Mandates 2019 also brings Indigenous post-secondary institutions into scope (Advanced Education, 2019a), which had been recommended in *A Learning Alberta* but was not implemented in Roles and Mandates 2007. Roles and Mandates 2019 also removes the benchmarks from the document and adds in specific pathways for institutions to follow to move between sectors (2019).

Commentary

After 12 years, the two major universities in the province are still in about the same place they were before on national and international rankings. Yet we have seen great success on most, but not all, of the four key metrics both Roles and Mandates 2007 and *A Learning Alberta* laid out, as well affordability. On participation rates, Alberta has seen a clear increase in post-secondary participation, moving from 29% participation in 2005 to 34% in 2018 (Statistics Canada, 2020a). This participation rate, however, still lags behind the rest of the country by 8%, as the rest of the country's participation rate has improved at the same rate as Alberta's. The student population has increased by 25% during the same time (Statistics Canada, 2020d); however, the population change during the same time means that the participation rate improvement has not been what was anticipated. While overall participation has increased slowly, Indigenous participation has increased substantially. In 2005 there were only 6,236 Indigenous post-secondary students in Alberta (Alberta's indigenous post-secondary numbers, 2015), and in 2018 there were 12,951 Indigenous post-secondary students (Advanced Education, 2019b). The doubling of the number of Indigenous post-secondary learners is a clear success for the report and policy framework. Another success was the change in graduate studies with a nearly 43% increase in graduate students in the province from 2004/2005 to 2017/2018 (Statistics Canada, 2020a). Regarding literacy, Alberta, in the most recent PIAAC survey, was the highest-scoring province in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2013), and in 10 years Alberta has moved from having a third of Albertans struggling with literacy (*A Learning Alberta*, 2006) to a fifth (Public Awareness, 2013). Regarding affordability, in 2006 the average Alberta undergraduate tuition was \$4,763, which was higher than the Canadian average of \$4,400, and in 2018 Alberta tuition had increased to \$5,713 as compared to the now substantially higher Canadian average of \$6,822 (Statistics Canada, 2020b). Increasing only 20%, compared to Canada's 55% increase, it seems that, although it was not a metric from Roles and Mandates 2007, Alberta has worked hard to keep tuition affordable and has, in fact, kept it within the 24% increase in the Consumer Price Index (Statistics Canada 2020c). However, since 2018 a new government has come to Alberta, the United Conservative Party led by Jason Kenney, bringing post-secondary changes. The largest of these for the current metrics is a likely 21% increase in the average undergraduate tuition over three years. This change will likely bring Alberta tuition in line with the Canadian average again.

Conclusion

The *A Learning Alberta* report and Rules and Mandates 2007 laid out a path for post-secondary education in Alberta to follow. It has, for the most part, succeeded at the metrics set for it. The system

does, as Alex Usher commented, provide “exceptional services, particularly in rural areas” (Usher, 2019). The system has succeeded on all the major metrics set for it, except for participation rate. However, it has been noted that the participation rate is low because seats, while 25% higher than they had been in 2005, have not kept pace with the growing population. The issue is not student demand. In fact, student demand remains much higher than availability of seats in post-secondary in Alberta (Hagenaars, 2019), and Alberta would likely need to increase its seats not by another 25% but by over 40% to meet demand. The slow loss of funding in the last few years (Usher, 2019) combined with the rapid loss of funding currently underway will affect the system for the worse, as will the rapid change to the tuition fees. The Rules and Mandates 2019 may have put the focus on affordability and accessibility, but the recent changes show that those are not considerations for the current government. *A Learning Alberta* set out to change the Alberta education system, and the changes were successful. However, with a change in government it seems we are seeing a change in focus. Perhaps the change will just be refocusing on the 2007 goals of innovation and monetization of research, but the result could be an Alberta system that looks more like it did in 2004 than what it looked like in 2018.

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Noah Arney is a Work Experience Coordinator at Mount Royal University. He is also a graduate student in the MEd Educational Research, Adult Learning at University of Calgary. Noah can be reached at narney@mtroyal.ca or on Twitter @ndarney.

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#SAequity Round 3: Summary of #SAchat and Poll Results

by Sania Hameed

The CACUSS Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Community of Practice (EDI CoP, formerly Equity-Seeking Groups Community of Practice) hosted the third round of [#SAequity](#) on Twitter, which involved posting 5 daily polls (April 27 – May 1), followed by the third [#SAchat](#) on equity in Canadian student affairs on May 7. For context, [#SAchat](#) (student affairs chat) is a hashtag used by many student affairs professionals on Twitter to share topics related to student affairs. It is also used for themed and timed discussions on a particular topic; in this case, the [#SAchat](#) focused on equity in Canadian student affairs. [#SAequity](#) is a hashtag coined by the EDI CoP to share tweets related to student affairs and equity. Our [#SAequity #SAchat](#) Round 3 garnered over 150 tweets from contributors such as students, student affairs professionals, and researchers, and provides insights into the experience of student affairs professionals across Canada – the [#SAchat](#) questions (and responses) can be viewed [here](#), and poll results are available [here](#). This article has been written to summarize and preserve the collective knowledge that was generated. A huge thank you to the colleagues who shared their ideas and observations in the chat, as well as to all those who voted in the polls!

Q1. How has COVID-19 highlighted or heightened inequities/challenges that students are facing (e.g. access, finance, identity-related concerns)? Have you learned something new about student populations that you can share?

To begin the [#SAchat](#), for Question 1, we asked about inequities and challenges students might be facing due to the circumstances caused by COVID-19. Responses included the financial impact on students, access issues, how disabilities can impact both navigating e-learning and navigating the pandemic broadly, the emotional and mental toll many are experiencing, as well as challenges related to identity. With regards to the financial impact on students, colleagues demonstrated concern for students who are graduating this summer as well as students who may have their scholarships, funding, or upcoming job opportunities cancelled or in flux. This financial impact can also contribute to mental health issues, particularly at a time when many are distanced from their community. It was heartening to learn about the variety of ways that institutions have been attempting to support and address these concerns, such as providing students with financial support as well as laptop stimulus packages.

Colleagues shared that the rush to move programs and services online meant that conversations around access and equity were often considered later in the process, rather than as a fundamental part of the process. Adapting our programs and services to pivot quickly to online delivery reveals our bias and the assumptions we hold about students, such as students having reliable access to computers, internet, and webcams, and/or not being dependent on features such as closed captioning to engage with our services. At the intersection of finance and access, students are often paying for access on campus (libraries, computers, internet) to support their learning; therefore, what does the shift online then mean in terms of expecting students to pay for access to these services and resources out of pocket? This may be complicated further with work-study or on-campus roles that require students – particularly those with financial needs – to have a laptop or internet access in order to work remotely effectively. Additionally, while phoning in for programs and services is provided as an option for remote offerings, accruing long-distance charges and tolls poses a challenge for some students; furthermore, those who call in due to unreliable internet are often unable to view screen sharing or slides that our programming may rely on.

Two key points were shared involving the impact of identity on students' experience: students who have experienced anti-Asian racism, and queer students who may not be out at home. The latter also brings up broader issues of privacy and our expectations of engagement. Some students may not feel comfortable with audio participation and might prefer chat functions. Being at home can have many implications for students, from privacy concerns during counselling appointments, to having a home environment conducive to learning (especially as students may also be juggling multiple family care responsibilities as well). Additionally, travel restrictions have an impact on international students and those involved in study abroad, ranging from completing academic requirements, to scholarships and funding, to tough decisions around whether to remain in residence or be home with their families (depending on where home is).

Q2. As we build community and deliver programs & services online, it's important to think about creating inclusive virtual spaces. Share tips, strategies, and successes you've had with building inclusive spaces online!

For [#SAchat](#) Question 2 which was around creating inclusive virtual spaces, folks shared that it is important to remember that people – students and professionals alike – respond differently to Zoom. Some find that it builds connection and allows them to flourish; however, for others it creates distance, loneliness, and causes “Zoom fatigue”. Expectations around webcam use is part of this, particularly when considering the differences between large group settings and small group or 1-on-1 interactions. Some may not be comfortable showing themselves or their personal home on camera for a variety of reasons, and we need to have flexibility, grace, and show understanding for the different ways people may engage with Zoom calls, as well as appreciate challenges from a tech standpoint. Reliable internet impacts engagement, and as we move into summer and summer student positions, it's important to think about offering students a variety of ways to participate in interviews, including phone options as well as the opportunity to choose between multiple video conferencing platforms. As we offer these options, we are encouraged to communicate to students that connection issues will not impact their interview evaluation negatively.

This is also part of a larger message that many [#SAchat](#) participants are sharing with students (and often colleagues and faculty as well): it is okay not to be perfectly presentable right now. This is a tough period for many, with folks finding it challenging to find places to work in ways that align with notions of “professionalism”. Rather than simply reassuring students, colleagues encouraged the importance of role modelling that it's normal and natural that when working or studying from home, unexpected appearances from family members or pets may occur, or that we may not be dressed as formally as we might have been if we were on campus. Being flexible and understanding is key: if students prefer to participate in sweatpants, or via chat without video, or need to take a moment to step away, that is okay. We can demonstrate our empathy by being open to the different ways students choose to engage and letting them select the way that is most comfortable for them. Additionally, extending this empathy to modifying expectations of deadlines and deliverables can help reduce stress during what may already be a stressful time.

There are also steps we can proactively take to make our programming more tailored to a virtual space and continue to centre inclusion online. One colleague shared that workshops have been trimmed in length to acknowledge differences between online and in-person learning, with content being focused on a few key pieces of information, followed by space to ask questions. Another shared the importance of providing synchronous and asynchronous options for engagement, as well as opportunities to join in at different times. Professionals shared steps towards fostering inclusive communities online, which included being intentional about creating opportunities for student staff to build connections with each other, as well as the space to share their pronouns. It is also important to be culturally responsive by acknowledging that Muslim students may be fasting during Ramadan. Zoom *iftar* parties are an example of inclusive programming, designed to offer community for students breaking the day's fast.

Q3. What is an area or aspect of EDI that you would like to learn more about and deepen your knowledge? What kind of equity-related [#SApro](#) professional development opportunities would you find valuable at the present time?

For [#SAchat](#) Question 3, in order to increase their equity, diversity and inclusion competency, participants indicated that more information on accommodations, accessibility, universal design, equity in practice, and trauma-informed care would be most valuable during this time. There was curiosity about the gaps in our online programming approaches and the challenges this might bring. Case studies were brought up as an engaging way to think through equity in practice with fellow professionals. Additionally, fluency with utilizing the accessibility features in various platforms is crucial as we continue to offer our programs, services, and resources online.

There was also an acknowledgement that we might not be the experts in creating inclusive and engaging online learning spaces, and that there are issues that we aren't sure how to solve. Rather than placing the onus on us to invent or discover solutions, one colleague encouraged turning to those who do have that expertise (e.g. in the educational technology or instructional design communities) in order to learn best practices and approaches. Another area to deepen our learning involves the different kinds of accommodations that support students – both in-class and for co-curricular offerings – as this can help us better understand student needs and be more intentional and inclusive in our approach. Universal design principles will be incredibly helpful as we look to evolve our programs and services to aid us in better supporting the diversity of our student populations. Lastly, an understanding of trauma-informed support, community care, and effective communication are also areas we can improve our skills to serve students better during times that can feel stressful and overwhelming.

Q4. We ran 5 #SAequity polls last week, with a total of 210 votes! Were there any results that surprised you? If so, why? If not, do you have any reflections on the results?

[#SAchat](#) Question 4 focused on asking folks their thoughts on results of the 5 #SAequity polls. To recap, the first poll asked participants to indicate (via emoji set) how they feel about the way their institution is upholding EDI priorities, programming, and supports. The majority (57%) selected 🤔😬😏 [Set of 3 emojis: Face with Open Mouth, Thinking Face, and Nerd Face], followed by 😨😞😓 [Set of 3 emojis: Fearful Face, Sad But Relieved Face, and Pensive Face] at 28%, with 😄😁😊 [Set of 3 emojis: Smiling Face with Heart-Shaped Eyes, Grinning Face with Big Eyes, and Slightly Smiling Face] at just 15%. The second poll asked participants whether the transition to remote work or any change in their role due to COVID-19 was equitable and inclusive to their needs (e.g. flexible hours, childcare). In response, 45% indicated that the transition was very equitable and inclusive, 41% chose “Yes, somewhat,” 8% selected “No, not really,” and 6% shared “No, not at all”. In the #SAchat, participants primarily had a discussion on the results of the second poll, with appreciation for the high percentage of folks who experienced an equitable and inclusive transition, and concern around whether these flexible policies will continue post-COVID. The ability to work from home or have flexible hours shouldn't only be available during a pandemic; it is important to be vocal about the needs of students, staff, and faculty, and advocate that such supports continue for those who need them.

For the third poll, 48% shared that they are seeing more students experiencing equity and access issues, 29% indicated that the volume is about the same, with 23% reported seeing fewer equity and access issues than usual. The fourth poll asked participants to self-assess whether they achieved their EDI learning and practice goals for the year. Among respondents, 25% learned more than they expected, another 30% met their personal goals, 35% didn't make as much progress as they had hoped, and 10% shared that EDI wasn't their focus for the year. The fifth and final poll asked folks to indicate which Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Community of Practice activities they are most likely to participate in. Out of the options presented, 68% voted for webinars, 20% selected monthly conference calls, and 12% chose the resource post and newsletter. This response will support the EDI CoP in more effectively programming for our members over the coming year.

Q5. COVID-19 has challenged [#SAcdn](#) as a field to reimagine how we serve students. In your opinion, moving forward, will our experience navigating COVID-19 change how [#SApro](#) view equity in relation to our work?

COVID-19 has challenged us to reimagine how we serve students, and [#SAchat](#) Question 5 asked how this experience might impact our field and the way we view equity in relation to our work. There were mixed feelings in terms of the future, from cautious optimism and hope that lessons learned from COVID-19 would be carried forward, to disappointment and doubt about whether this will

have a lasting impact on equity work at our institutions. A few observed that this situation has made equity barriers for students more evident and that we must remain student-centred in our approach to higher education. There is some hope that the long-term nature of this situation may result in more policy-level change towards greater equity and inclusion; for example, some shared an appreciation of the current emphasis that has been placed on the mental health of employees. However, at the same time, folks noted that there have been some decisions made that make things tougher on students, or adjustments to policy that feel temporary in nature – supports that might evaporate once quarantine is over. This is worrisome as institutions cannot solely rely on the emotional labour of individuals to move equity forward at our institutions; it must be part of the mission of the institution, with an understanding that meaningful equity work takes time and commitment.

Thinking about the future of student affairs, questions emerged around how this experience might challenge norms of when and how work is done, and how the scope of individual roles may be transforming to adapt to present circumstances. Concerns about going “back” to “business as usual” become especially worrisome when considering how the impact of COVID-19 mirrors many pre-existing equity issues, and to go “back” may mean going backwards. Given the investment and creativity that has gone into designing online programming, providing options for students to continue accessing virtual service delivery should remain - even once things shift back to being on-campus - as it offers students flexibility in engaging with our programs and services. Practitioners also emphasized the importance of carving out the time for reflection on what went well and what did not from an equity perspective, to help us grow as professionals.

Q6. What is a step - big or small! - that you can take/plan to take this month to continue to make our institutions and profession more equitable and inclusive? (e.g. reading about universal design, practicing allyship, etc)

Finally, to wrap up the [#SAchat](#), Question 6 asks participants to share one step they intend to take this month to advance equity and inclusion. Participants emphasized asking students how they are and what they need, and reiterated the importance of listening and responding to those needs. Leveraging privilege to advocate for equity remains crucial, as does bringing critical perspectives and continuing to ask questions about access and inclusion. Lastly, professionals shared their intent to engage in online learning offerings on a variety of subjects, from ending gender-based violence to collective action, as well as the value in learning from colleagues in order better integrate equity into their work.

This is a difficult time for all involved, and we need to centre empathy and adaptability as we move forward. In summary, as the [#SAchat](#) shows, COVID-19 highlights pre-existing equity concerns such as financial strain and barriers to access, as well as various identity-related challenges. We have much to appreciate, applaud, and celebrate in terms of how many of us quickly adapted and worked to support students during a global crisis. At the same time, we must remember that some students or needs should not be last on our list, treated as an “extra” piece to add on later. Equity and inclusion should be a fundamental part of the planning and development process. We must continue to be flexible and responsive to student needs as we create inclusive online spaces, and allow students to engage in ways that best meet their needs. In order to do so effectively, it is encouraged to reflect on what has worked well and what has not, and seek out learning opportunities that deepen our understanding of equity, inclusion, and accessibility. As we manage our own transition into remote or changed work responsibilities, we should remain critical, ask questions, and advocate for progressive policy changes and online offerings to become a staple of our profession. Ultimately, our response to COVID-19 is a good reminder that we need to be intentional and ground our approaches in equity, so that we can effectively serve and support *all* students.

Sania Hameed (She/Her) is a Career Educator at the University of Toronto and served as Co-Chair of the Equity Diversity and Inclusion Community of Practice (2019-20). She brings a strong equity lens to her work, particularly around issues of race and representation. Sania can be reached at sania.hameed@utoronto.ca or on Twitter [@hameed_sania](#).



Class of 2020: This Isn't How I Thought the Spring Term Would Go Either

by Logan Lorenz

I am a master's student at the University of British Columbia and a career educator at the Vancouver campus of the New York Institute of Technology. I took some time to reflect on COVID-19, what it has meant for me, but also what it has meant for the international students I work with. I wrote this opinion piece addressing the Class of 2020.

One week I was shaking your hand in the hallway before your class and I was letting you know how excited I was for spring to arrive. Seemingly the next moment I was connecting from home via Zoom and telling you I wasn't sure how COVID-19 would impact your career goals.

This isn't how I thought the spring term would go.

There are two moments in the academic year that bring me the most joy: new student orientations and graduation ceremonies. These are both deeply personal events for those involved (myself included). Both mark moments of transformation that are not easily undone. This week marked our first virtual new student orientation. It also marked the first time I have not shaken hands with new students after (seemingly) endless email exchanges.

The second moment of your academic life that I cherish is your graduation. This is the moment we've all been waiting for, the moment we see the final transformation. I always get a bit mushy around graduation, but I'd like to think I do a pretty good job of hiding it from you. I usually only have a short cry after the ceremony, when I have returned home and it sinks in that I am not sure when (or in some cases, if) I will see you again.

I have held many roles at the graduation ceremony, but my favourite of all is to fix your academic regalia right before you walk across the stage. This can sometimes involve tugging carefully on each side of your stole to make sure it hangs evenly, or pulling the hood up and evening out the sides or even rotating your graduation cap so you're wearing it the right way forward (despite the arrow clearly indicated inside the cap). Just like persuading you that you really only need to use one type of bullet on your resume or helping tie your skates really tight (even though I know so little about skating), these moments mark the final influences I am privileged to have on your education.

As I hurriedly fix each graduand's regalia before they walk across the stage, I take a brief pause to remember what I can about your student experience. I remember that time I took you on a snowshoeing trip and you experienced snow and the mountains for the first time. I remember that time I had to talk to you about your GPA and together we made a learning plan. I remember that time you told me about your career aspirations and I did my best to remain composed while I scrambled to think of how to help you achieve them.

Each of these moments we experienced together and we worked on together. Each of these moments and more I have had with countless other students. Each of these moments can represent both joy and frustration (and many other emotions too). Each of these moments remains fulfilling and beautiful to me that you let me experience them with you.

Like you, I am a student too and I'd like to think we have shared similar struggles. I am not quite finished my program, but I think, through you, I have learned a lot about what that might feel like, even in the middle of a pandemic. Through my work and through my education, I want you to know how much I have learned from you, and I am so grateful for having the opportunity to get to know you.

So here is a virtual "cheers" to you. I look forward to the day we can celebrate your success together in person. Hopefully by then I will be done my master's degree too. Again, this isn't how I thought the spring term would go either.

Logan Lorenz is a Master's student in Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia, and is Associate Director, Career Services at the New York Institute of Technology (Vancouver campus). Logan can be reached at logan.lorenz@hotmail.com or on Twitter [@lorenzy17](https://twitter.com/lorenzy17).

A version of this piece originally appeared on [LinkedIn](#).



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