INTRODUCTION: EXPLORING CREATIVITY IN POSTSECONDARY LEARNING AND TEACHING

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INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST VOLUME OF PAPERS ON POSTSECONDARY LEARNING AND TEACHING

Creativity ignites our imagination and inspires us to think in new ways. At the 2016 Conference on Postsecondary Learning and Teaching, delegates gathered to explore the meaning and potential for creativity in postsecondary education. Academic staff, students, postdoctoral scholars, and staff at the University of Calgary and wider academic community shared, critically examined, and expanded on our collective knowledge of teaching and learning.

The articles in this first volume of Papers on Postsecondary Learning and Teaching (PPLT) provide a legacy to the annual conference and enhance the scholarship and sharing of our collective knowledge. This was the first year a call for papers was issued for the new open-access publication. Authors were asked to submit papers on their conference presentation and include additional reflection following their session. Papers are peer-reviewed and published in this open-access format. PPLT is a collaborative project, with The University of Calgary Libraries and Cultural Services hosting the platform for the publication, and the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning providing the editorial and publishing functions.

We are pleased to introduce the eight authors and their collective works in this first volume. The conference theme, exploring creativity in postsecondary learning and teaching, reflects on how creativity crosses and connects all disciplines. It is embedded in our culture, work and conversations. The literature provides many examples of creativity in scholarly endeavours, how it is defined and described, and the ways that many advocate for its inclusion throughout postsecondary education (Kelly, 2012; Marquis & Henderson, 2015).

Creativity is articulated at the institutional and provincial levels (University of Calgary, 2015; Alberta Learning, 2002) and employers call for creativity as a skill required to contribute to the workforce (Conference Board of Canada, 2013). Creativity inspires how we approach and practice our teaching and learning, but do we really understand and appreciate the meaning and potential for creativity in higher education?

While each of the papers is distinct and from various disciplines, they have in common a shared focus on exploring creativity in postsecondary learning and teaching. The papers in this volume explore graduate student supervision, the role of the teaching assistant, active learning, classroom settings, design thinking, threshold concepts, and lifelong learning. A book review is also included on the work of one of the conferences' keynote speakers, Jos Boys.

Jos Boys was a keynote speaker at the 2016 conference and she set the stage for conversations about and on creativity in postsecondary learning and teaching. Nancy Chick provides an insightful and thoughtful book review of Boys' *Toward creative learning spaces*. She brings to our attention that Boys talks about the importance of conceptual spaces as well as physical spaces for teaching and learning. Chick points out that although the new Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning at the University of Calgary is an exemplary example of a conceptual and physical space, even in a $40 million building dedicated to teaching and learning, there is much more to creatively discover and explore when it comes to learning.

Three articles focus on the pragmatics of creativity in learning and teaching and the authors share their experiences, models, and applications. Ayman Aljarrah's teaching experiences inspired him to conduct a literature review on creativity in classroom settings. In his article, *Creativity in classroom settings: Multiple paths are the rule, not the exception,* he shares both his and his students' challenges with learning environments that lead him on a path that explored the origin and nature of creativity in postsecondary institutions. Not satisfied with his search, Aljarrah built on this knowledge and classified and described his findings into seven guiding metaphors, overcoming obstacles, divergent thinking, route-finding, expanding possibilities, collaborative emergence, and birthing, as a guide for creativity to emerge and flourish as educators.

David Hall's article, *Flexible approaches to using online case data coupled with textbook based case studies in medical sciences teaching and learning*, documents how his conference session sparked a discussion on fostering creativity. Hall presented how case studies are enhanced with the use of online material. Conference participants generated additional suggestions, including that context matters, guiding questions that can foster learning, and the caution that information overload can limit creativity; therefore, they promoted the idea to provide information selectively rather than all at once. Another consideration that is often overlooked, yet should be considered, is the challenge for funding to support learning resources.

Laura Taylor presents her creative approach to engage students through a professional skills development workshop. In her article, *Using active learning activities to enhance student engagement in a business English program*, she describes in detail how specific elements of a workshop using the game-based strategies 'Barnga' and 'Chinatown' were selected to enhance student engagement. It is interesting to note the format of the workshop was optional and not-for-credit, yet students participated in this opportunity. Based on the initial evaluation of the workshop, Taylor calls for further research on this topic to provide more insight on how this type of activity could impact learning and student engagement.

Moving from the pragmatic perspective of the first three articles to the theoretical, this next article by Shaily Bhola and Gale Parchoma introduces us to the importance of the notion of threshold concepts and peer to peer collaboration. In their article, *Threshold concepts and conceptual change processes*, Bhola and Parchoma describe the complex nature of learning and the transformational outcome when students master a threshold concept, compared to a 'learning barrier' if not mastered. Through the lens of conceptual change theories, Bhola and Parchoma document how collaborative learning situations provide students the opportunity to construct and share knowledge. They argue this peer to peer collaboration can influence the learning of threshold concepts and enhance future learning.

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The next two articles focus on the topic of graduate student education. One is from the perspective of teacher education, and one is from the perspective of supporting graduate student supervision. A professor and her students, Olive Chapman, Jessica Pia, Kelly Craigue, Janeska Leiva-Sandino, Scott Godin, and Michael Hilton co-authored *Integrating design thinking into teacher education to foster creativity,* which provides us with a detailed description and definition of design thinking. They argue that the complexity of our world and work requires teachers to develop collaborative, creative, and analytical competencies: the elements of design thinking. The article is a case study of a teacher education course, and it provides examples of classroom activities used to stimulate creativity. These tasks are described in detail, as well as the outcomes of a design thinking group assignment, which provide support for this approach to teacher education.

Addressing the multiple challenges to graduate student supervision, Hawazen Alharbi and Michele Jacobsen offer a creative resource to support faculty members. In their article, *Educational development for quality graduate supervision,* Alharbi and Jacobsen review the complex roles of a graduate supervisor and the factors that can contribute to success for both the supervisor and student. The main notion of 'caring supervision' is highlighted as an ideal model, which includes elements of motivation, clarification, expectations, mentoring, toleration, feedback and challenging/encouraging questions. They explore the types of support offered for graduate student supervisors and have proposed a plan to design, develop and evaluate a mini-Open Online Course (miniMOOC) which will be more accessible for all faculty. The expected outcome of the miniMOOC will be a tool for the development of supervisory skills and relationships that will foster enhanced student outcomes.

Completing this volume is the paper by Sandra Hirst, Carole-Lynne LeNavenec and Robert Stebbins*, University of the 3rd age (U3A): Coming to Calgary.* In their article, Hirst, LeNavenec and Stebbins build an argument for the establishment of U3A and outline a plan for a partnership which includes implementation, evaluation and sustainability. They demonstrate the health and social benefits of lifelong learning and meaningful activities in academic settings. They take a creative approach to promote an understanding of this issue. Based on the literature, a U3A model has the potential to enhance the quality of life for both teachers and participants.

In summary, the collection of these proceedings from the 2016 University of Calgary on Postsecondary Learning and Teaching provides us with a range of perspectives, and multi-disciplinary approaches to thinking about, discussing, and exploring creativity. The authors share with us a range of practical resources and theoretical concepts that we can critically examine and use to build on our collective wisdom, scholarship and experience. It is our hope that PPLT will continue to enhance learning and teaching and provide an opportunity to disseminate scholarship.

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