LSAC West Session Descriptions

Wither We Bound in Winds of Change? Roundtable on Learning Specialists as a Profession
Roundtable led by: Aaron Chubb, University of Lethbridge

Learning specialists, under many names, are found on post-secondary campuses across Canada. We work in a variety of spaces and have diverse backgrounds in our education and experience. There is currently no mandatory accreditation body for learning specialists across Canada. There are no universal standards across the country. This makes us vulnerable as a profession to the winds of change in academia—most dramatically with budget cutbacks—and the lack of such credentials leaves us vulnerable to criticism from students, faculty and administration.

To survive as a profession, we must begin to think of ourselves as a cohesive, knowledgeable and legitimate group of experts. We must be able to express how the work we do is unique; and how it requires a certain skill-set. We must have a collective grasp of where and how we learned these skills. This is a monumental task. It will take years, even decades. However, we have to start somewhere.

The intent of this session is a round table discussion on the background, education and experience we think one needs to call themselves a learning specialist. I will provide a brief synopsis on learning specialists as a profession, work that has been done towards accreditation; and then move on to what will be a lively discussion. This is a grassroots approach to the national question of qualifying standards for learning specialists, beginning with our Western Region members.

Taking the Leap: Transitioning from a Paid to Volunteer Peer Program
Presenters: Kristin Fulton and Courtenay Smart, Mount Royal University

Prior to Fall 2017, the Peer Tutor Program at Mount Royal University was a source of student employment. Like most on-campus student jobs, Peer Tutors were paid hourly for their work. However, as the minimum wage increase came into effect and program objectives were revised, it became clear that this model was no longer meeting our outcomes.

This past September, after a year of contemplation, assessment, and careful consideration, the Peer Tutor Program began operating as a volunteer leadership experience instead. In alignment with the conference theme of change, we thought this was an ideal opportunity to share with you the successes and struggles of transitioning from a paid to volunteer peer program. If you have ever considered making a major change within your organization, you might be interested in attending this presentation to learn about:

- The context and challenges that initially inspired us to consider restructuring our Peer Tutor Program
- Steps taken to manage the transition, including communication with key stakeholders
- The impact of rebranding from the Peer Tutor Program to the Peer Learning Program, including effects on recruitment and retention

- Results of the change now that it has been an academic year post-implementation

Examining Potential Risk Factors for Diverse Learners
Presenter: Sheilagh Grills, Brandon University

This session will present a study of potential risk factors that may affect the persistence of first-year learners transitioning to a small, primarily undergraduate university. First-year learners identified as potentially higher risk for post-secondary attrition are encouraged to take a Success Course to help with multiple transition issues. Students may select the course independently (i.e., self-identify that a transition course could be useful), or may be advised into the program. The diverse class includes those who have been academically unsuccessful previously, are anxious about university, mature learners or students whose previous education was in a remote school district. The LASSI-2 was used as a pre-post measure for students' awareness and use of learning strategies (Weinstein, Palmer & Schulte, 2002) in both the Success Course and a control group of Introductory Psychology students. Additionally, the academic performance and persistence of both groups of students were tracked longitudinally to help build a more data-driven representation of resiliency. Session participants will:

- Examine factors that may characterize learners as potentially higher risk for attrition,
- Discuss the process of encouraging students with risk factors to take the Success Course, and
- Compare the LASSI-2 scores, academic performance outcomes and persistence rates for direct-entry, sequential students and more diverse learners.

How Do We Provide a Strong Tutoring Program as Student Demand Grows and Budgets Shrink?
Roundtable led by: Jaime Morasch, University of Lethbridge

Tutoring programs offer a vital support to many students. However, as enrollment numbers and student demand grow each year, how do we maintain a quality program that stays on budget and doesn't overstretch your team? How do we adjust to factors such as budget cuts, increases to minimum wage or staffing shortages while staying student focused? The goal of this round table discussion is for attendees to share the different strategies they have tried – both successful and unsuccessful – to maintain a strong tutoring program in an ever changing environment.

Supporting the Transition to a Liberal Education
Presenters: Glen Ryland and Michael Sauve, Mount Royal University

We will discuss our experience of including philosophical, political, and literary texts into a study strategies course as a way of introducing first-year students to the idea of a liberal education as a foundation for transitioning and understanding their university experience. Since its inception in 2008 at Mount Royal University in Calgary, Undergraduate Studies 1001 – Effective Learning in the Undergraduate Context (UGST 1001) has provided students with the opportunity to discover and reflect on learning theories, principles, and strategies through course readings, lectures, activities, and assignments.

For the past three semesters, we have included a reading component on general education that challenges students' notions of post-secondary education by exploring nineteenth and twentieth century views of the university and reflecting on how these compare to the students' own perspectives. As well, students grapple with a nineteenth-century novella to contemplate life-choices that connect to career choices, and they read a twentieth-century political essay to examine the connection between post-secondary education and employment prospects. Aside from the value of these texts as thought-provoking works that contribute to academic preparation, the texts also present students with topics outside of themselves on which to apply the study strategies that they learn in the course.

Although we have at least partially achieved our objective, the newest iteration of UGST 1001 has had the unintended consequence of increasing pre-existing challenges for students and professors. These challenges seem at least partially to result from individuals' motivation for taking UGST1001, their level of preparedness, and pragmatic reasons students have for attending university.

Getting SAASy: Designing and Redesigning a Student-Athlete Academic Success (SAAS) Program
Roundtable led by: Andrew Derksen, Lethbridge College

Student-athletes (SAs) give me sass all the time, so I decided to give them some SAAS right back. Over the last five years, I have designed and redesigned a Student-Athlete Academic Success (SAAS) program at Lethbridge College. Each semester, my team and I work with SAs, coaches, admin, and the Athletics Director to support SA academic success. We've used bootcamps, workshops, appointments, discussion boards, and other activities to (we hope) engage, encourage, educate, entertain, and retain SAs. The SAAS program has adapted to winds of change coming from many directions: raving and scathing reviews, capacity concerns, attention spans, hungry stomachs, and more. I'd love to talk (round-table-style) with (an intended audience of) colleagues interested in SA support programming about their ideas and experiences with similar programs.

Building Resiliency in Students (and Staff) in Changing and Uncertain Times
Presenters: Cynthia Halligan and Karma Black

When something goes wrong, do students tend to bounce back or fall down? When they face stressful, challenging, or difficult situations, how do they respond?

Adversity is an inevitable part of life but students as well as staff can learn to be more resilient by changing how they think about adversity, stress, and opportunity.

From the perspective of active resiliency, we explore the importance of introducing students to resiliency enhancing strategies that assist in building social emotional factors. We also delve into what it means for staff to engage in and promote resilient practices for a diverse student population.

High School to University Transition
Presenter: Kelsey Harkness, University of Lethbridge (student)

Through my applied study I have been studying the major factors of change associated with the transition from high school to university and the associated effects on students. When self-reporting, students rated their first year as the most stressful, regardless of their current year of study (Zascavage, Winterman, Buot, Wies, & Lyzinski, 2012). This is important since if stress is high and academic success low there is a decreased level of retention, which can be detrimental to both the student and the institution (Krumrei-Mancuso, Newton, Kim, & Wilcox, 2013). Not only is there a significant shift academically with the transition to high school there is also a momentous change with respect to environment, both social and physical, that must be considered. By being aware of the change that occurs from high school to university, institutions can be more proactive with programming geared to first-year students as well as encouraging positive coping methods. For my presentation, I hope to offer a fresh perspective on the high school experience, which has seen change with the increasing level of technology available to students and teachers.

Drafts and Draughts: Venting Viewpoints in Online Writing Support
Panel: Tatiana Boryshchuk, NAIT; Kirsten Ng, MacEwan University; Rylan Spenrath and Andrew Derksen, Lethbridge College

Gales and gusts blast online writing support to and fro, continually changing the practice and approach for post-secondary institutions, administrators, writing specialists, and students. For some years, the eTutor Alberta online writing feedback service received warm funding chinooks from the Government of Alberta, but chinook season has passed, leaving participating members and other online writing support services to adapt to atmospheric pressures in their own contexts. A variety of adaptations and responses serve students. Some institutions offer online writing support to students who fill online forms and attach digital documents. Other schools integrate support with Learning Management Systems or engage students through online conferencing tools. Support is synchronous or asynchronous, targeted to specific groups or offered to all students. It can be limited by time-restrictions or submission limits and subject to student attempts to circumvent these limits. Some institutions employ one staff member to support writing and consortiums leverage the strengths of a bank of tutors. In these draughty contexts, writing specialists respond to drafts, attempting to improve students' writing while managing the common and persistent student desire for editing and proofreading services. Meeting the sometimes conflicting expectations of writing pedagogy and student perspective challenges tutors to craft efficient and effective responses. Panelists for this discussion vent their viewpoints on how air currents affect the current state of online writing support.

BUILD(ing) a Successful Transition to University: the Impact of UWindsor's BUILD Program on First Year Students' Post-Secondary Experience
Roundtable led by: Chantal Vien, University of Windsor

Transitional programs help prepare students with learning disabilities for the initial scholastic and societal demands that arise when entering a post-secondary institution from high school. However,

research concerning the lasting influence of these programs on student's identity status are limited despite the increasing prevalence of youth with learning disabilities. The Bridge to University for Individuals with Learning Disabilities (B.U.I.L.D.) transitional program at the University of Windsor offers youth with documented learning disabilities skills and resources to help ease this transition. In this ongoing exploratory study, surveys were distributed to B.U.I.L.D. 2017 participants' (n=12) on several characteristics such as sense of community, academic stress, self-efficacy, and individual's group, self, and disability identity prior to commencement of the program and one semester following. Interviews to gather qualitative data are currently ongoing. This mixed method study evaluates the impact of the B.U.I.L.D. program on the identity status and psychosocial adjustment of students with learning disabilities to expand this body of research on both identity salience and learner empowerment. The theory of identity status used was developed by James Marcia (1980), which focuses on identity crisis and adolescent development by examining the varying degree to which an individual explores and commits to an identity. The preliminary findings suggest that the B.U.I.L.D. program acts as a promoter for the development of new constructs that are more encompassing of the person's identity which reflects students either committing to an identity or exploring it. It is important to note that this study's primary concerns are with the individual student experience and impact, not an evaluation of the B.U.I.L.D. program. The data collected in this study will help implement changes for future students contributing to the larger picture of the B.U.I.L.D. program.

Sensory Processing Sensitivity (SPS) and Irlen Syndrome; Using Neuroscience to Support Neurodiversity in the Classroom
Presenter: Kaaryn Cater, Whitireia, New Zealand

Neuro-education combines neuroscience, psychology and education to inform optimal teaching and learning strategies, environments and policy. Studies using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) provide evidence of the brain activations associated with particular forms of information processing. Sensory processing sensitivity (SPS) and Irlen Syndrome are atypical forms of information processing that can present significant barriers to learning. fMRI studies are adding to existing empirical biological and psychological knowledge in these recent fields of research. SPS is a genetically-based sensitivity trait that manifests itself in greater awareness of and responsiveness to environmental, internal, social and emotional stimuli. It is present in approximately 20% of the population and has been identified in over 100 animal species. The measure of SPS in the human population is the Highly Sensitive Person Scale (HSPS) (Aron 1997). High scoring SPS individuals tend to process things more elaborately than low scoring individuals, which can lead to them needing more time to process information as a result of the complex connections they make. High scoring SPS individuals may become overwhelmed by the physical environment or when they become stressed. However, given the adaptive nature of their interaction with the environment, are able to flourish in supportive environments. Irlen Syndrome is a visual processing anomaly that leads to visual stress and distortions and can disrupt learning. Coloured lenses and overlays have been found to alleviate symptoms. Current research in New Zealand is exploring possible correlations between SPS and Irlen Syndrome, and the development of strategies for assisting neuro-diverse students to thrive in an educational environment

Is the Two-Hour Study Rule Still Relevant Today?

Article summary by: Ashley Burke, Lethbridge College

A review of "Questioning the Two-Hour Rule for Studying" by Dr. Lolita Paff. Article retrieved from *Faculty Focus: Higher Ed Teaching Strategies from Magna Publications*.

Link to article:

https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-and-learning/questioning-two-hour-rule-studying/