

## **Editorial for Inaugural Issue of Canadian Perspectives on Academic Integrity**

### **Abstract**

Canadian higher education practitioners working in the area of academic integrity encounter challenges when attempting to locate and share information, research, and resources. This article reviews these challenges to help underscore the need for this new open access journal.

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I am excited to be part of creating an open access journal for practitioners working in the area of academic integrity. As a practitioner myself, I know first hand the struggles of locating information to help inform approaches when addressing issues of academic integrity, whether at an institutional, unit, or classroom level.

There are several challenges that I will identify below that support, from my perspective, the creation of an open access journal on academic integrity for practitioners working within Canadian post-secondary institutions.

### **Few positions are dedicated exclusively to academic integrity**

For many of us, working in academic integrity is but one responsibility and it can be challenging to prioritize this issue amongst the other competing demands. While there are positions that exist that focus exclusively on academic integrity, these are rare, at least in Canada. Having a 'go to' centralized resource that provides assistance for challenges and circumstances unique to Canadian campuses will be valuable both in terms of content but also in the time that will be saved spent trying to locate relevant information.

### **Diversity of roles involved in academic integrity**

Those working in the area of academic integrity hail from a variety of areas across post-secondary institutions, and in fact some are external to the university or college (e.g. high school teachers). Within the academy, the work may be centralized within units including but not limited to student affairs, libraries, research units, governance or secretariats offices, and teaching and learning centres. Also, efforts arise out of academic units including

work done by administrators, faculty, and academic advisors. With such a broad range of participants involved in academic integrity, much of this work goes unreported both within and outside institutions.

### **Challenges in networking given diversity of roles**

Although there is an *International Centre for Academic Integrity (ICAI)*, which has been a vital resource for many years, there is a need to create a dedicated Canadian resource that enhances the work of ICAI, along with other discipline specific groups. Also, limited financial resources may restrict opportunities for membership or attendance at annual conferences. There are also other academic and professional opportunities that compete for time and money and one with a singular focus, such as academic integrity, may not be prioritized.

### **Lack of literature with a Canadian focus**

The literature on academic integrity is growing. The recently published *Handbook on Academic Integrity* (2016) attests to the complexity of the problem and the necessity to work across units and disciplines to effectively address the issues. Although there were Canadian contributors to this valuable resource, there is more to be done and in particular, sharing of institutional level initiatives, programs, and policies. This type of information is not typically what is submitted to peer reviewed journals. What may work at a large research-intensive institution may not work at a small undergraduate school.

### **Need to encourage the scholarship of practitioners**

While many practitioners working in this area hold graduate degrees, they likely failed to publish their thesis as a student, at least those within higher education studies (Jones, 2012). Contributing to scholarship is not always an expectation with professional practitioner positions; it is seen as more as a value-added achievement than a requirement.

Throughout my career I have worked to keep my feet in both worlds: professional (student affairs practitioner) and academic (doctoral student). Despite this intentionality, it has remained a challenge to find the time and sustained effort to prepare an article for publication in a peer reviewed journal. Moreover, from a cost benefit analysis, the readership of these journals is small (typically graduate students and faculty) and the impact low (does not get to the audience who would benefit the most, other practitioners). While submitting to one's professional organization's journal is an option and is indeed less onerous, the audience is specific to that community and given the multidisciplinary nature of academic integrity, may again fail reach those who would find it helpful. Advancement in digital communication has created opportunities for sharing outside of the traditional pathways for scholarship. An open access journal is one such opportunity that will help to bring knowledge and expertise closer to each of us regardless of where we are in Canada.

My hope is that what I have shared has resonated with you and your own experiences and that your interest is piqued. My co-editor and I hope that you will see the benefits of contributing an article and sharing your expertise and ideas that will help your Canadian colleagues address issues related to academic integrity. The first article of the inaugural edition will be a piece co-written by Sarah Elaine Eaton and me that will provide some guidance and encouragement as well as some practical advice on getting started on your own written contribution.

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### **References**

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