

Editorial

Further Contemplations: Inaugural Canadian Symposium on Academic Integrity

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Abstract

This editorial shared the contemplations of three symposium participants who are also scholars and educators in the field of academic integrity: Jennie Miron, PhD, Brenda M. Stoesz, PhD, and Brandy Usick, MEd. We share our individual reflections that underscores our optimism and enthusiasm for the future of the field of academic integrity scholarship within Canada.

Keywords: academic integrity, Canada, Canadian Symposium on Academic Integrity

Opportunities to meet as a collective to transfer knowledge, share ideas, current best-practices, research, and future opportunities are just a few of the many reasons to hold a symposium focused on the topic of academic integrity. Higher educational organizations across Canada, and in fact the world, continue to be plagued with efforts that undermine the integrity and mission of post-secondary education. In April 2019, the first [Canadian Symposium on Academic Integrity](#) (2019) devoted to the topic of academic integrity was held in Calgary, Alberta, Canada and welcomed researchers, educators, and practitioners from across the country to participate in discussions about opportunities in the field of academic integrity. The following are reflections from three symposium participants who are also scholars and educators in the field of academic integrity.

Jennie Miron, PhD

As an educator in a professional course of study, the importance of acculturating students to the values of academic integrity is of paramount importance. The values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and the courage (International Center for Academic Integrity, 2014) required to consistently live and demonstrate these values aligns with

many professional codes of ethics. The merit of setting expectations to these values in studies is amplified when we consider how these values are demonstrated through actions. Consider the importance of trusting in the integrity of the engineer who builds the bridge you travel on every day to work, the nurse who is caring for your critically ill loved one, the primary school teacher responsible for your child's foundational educational experience, the researcher searching for a cure or treatment for a deadly disease, or the business analyst providing you with advice about your financial investments. These are but a few practical examples of how these values, once established in the educational setting, would influence graduates in professional and industry practice.

The symposium offered me an opportunity to learn something, reflect on what I already know, and collaborate with like-minded educators and professionals around best-practices, current research, effective teaching strategies, and challenges to academic integrity that we continue to face across the educational sector. A deeper dive into one current challenge, contract cheating, was a high point for me and provided me an opportunity to hear first-hand from international experts and researchers in the content area, like Dr. Tracey Bretag and Dr. Thomas Lancaster. Their presentations and the ensuing discussions inspired me to continue the discussions at my home educational organization and with the provincial group I belong to that is focused on promoting academic integrity across postsecondary settings in Ontario ([Academic Integrity Council of Ontario](#), AICO, n.d.). Additionally, the opportunity to be part of a national discussion inspired my continued research efforts that aim to understand the national narrative here in Canada. While inspiration can be influenced in a number of ways, the importance of such efforts like the Canadian Symposium should be recognized for the incredible networking and learning opportunities they provide.

Brenda M. Stoesz, PhD

The Canadian Symposium on Academic Integrity provided an opportunity to learn from key experts in the field of academic integrity. Specifically, hearing from Dr. Tracey Bretag (University of South Australia) and Dr. Thomas Lancaster (Imperial College London) about their research findings on contract cheating and other work they are doing to bring awareness of academic misconduct and the damage rampant cheating is having to student learning was important for understanding the issues more deeply. Conversations with Bretag, in particular, led me to think more about the teaching and learning of academic integrity in primary and secondary education in Canada. As students graduate from high school and make plans to enter post-secondary studies, it is becoming increasingly apparent that many students have insufficient knowledge and skills in writing, citing, and studying (among other skills), and are unsure of the expectations for acting with integrity. The expectations for academic work and assessment can be dramatically different between

the two education levels. A high school principal once told me that academic integrity was not an issue for high school students and educators because students were just becoming scholars by grade 12. I argue that this way of thinking disadvantages students and does not prepare them for lifelong learning.

The motivation to officially launch the [Manitoba Academic Integrity Network \(MAIN\)](#) (n.d.) came when attending a session facilitated by Andrea Ridgley, Jennie Miron, and Amanda McKenzie (2019). The presenters described the history and current activity of AICO and then asked attendees to form small groups based on the province of their institutions. Attendees from Manitoba and Saskatchewan came together to discuss the initiatives we were involved in and how we could come together to work on common projects. The Manitobans around our table talked about the [Academic Integrity Inter-Institutional Meeting \(AIIM\)](#) (2017) that the University of Manitoba launched in 2017 and how it had continued to be hosted by other Manitoba post-secondary institutions. We discussed the possibility of forming MAIN and how this network could support the continuation of AIIM and be involved in spearheading provincial projects (Stoesz et al., 2020). We then shared our ideas with the larger group and attendees from British Columbia showed particular interest in attending AIIM and learning from us as we began MAIN.

Brandy Usick, MEd

I have worked in the field of academic integrity for many years (see Taylor, Usick, & Paterson, 2004) and to me the Canadian Symposium on Academic Integrity was a high water mark for those who are engaged in this work as educators, practitioners, and researchers. The quantity and quality of the presentations spoke to the promise of maturity in this still young field in Canada and the representation of participants from across the globe highlighted that we as a country have something meaningful to contribute. It was quite remarkable to hear about cutting edge research being conducted in Australia and the UK and also hearing about innovative programming and inquiry at the national and regional levels. I left feeling immensely proud and very inspired by the work being done across Canada. Events like the Canadian Symposium on Academic Integrity serve to bring colleagues together who share a common purpose, to share original research as well as share novel program ideas and models, and to spark ideas that contribute to ongoing progress in the area.

My own personal contemplations on the symposium also led me to reflect on the original goals that Dr. Sarah Elaine Eaton and I had when we set out to create this open access journal. In my inaugural editorial, I highlighted the challenges we face working in this field (Usick, 2018). These challenges included working in a siloed way both within and across institutions; the lack of Canadian literature that speaks to our specific contexts; and the

persistent trend of practitioners not publishing their work. It is remarkable that in two short years how much progress we, collectively, have made in all of these areas. The work of Dr. Eaton warrants special recognition. She has been a driving force behind these successful initiatives - inaugural Canadian Symposium on Academic Integrity and the Canadian Perspectives on Academic Integrity journal and has led or collaborated on several original research projects that has furthered the research agenda on academic integrity within Canada.

She was recently formally recognized for her achievements by being selected as the 2020 recipient of the Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education (CSSHE)'s Research and Scholarship Award. She was honoured for her contributions to research and scholarship about academic integrity in Canadian higher education. This is a national-level award conferred once a year on a mid-career scholar who "has a significant publication record, and an established reputation for publishing research on aspects of Canadian higher education" (CSSHE, n.d.).

I am pleased that in Volume 3, Issue 1 we feature seven excellent submissions that further contribute to the Canadian literature on academic integrity and help to support the work being done by researchers and practitioner scholars across the country. In their comprehensive review of the literature on academic integrity in Canada, Eaton and Edino (2018) identified a lack of collaborative research and concluded with some key recommendations one of which is to build up research on a national scale. Many of the articles in this issue were prepared by group authors from across the country that highlights the collaborative nature of this work and speaks again to the advancement of our field.

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