

## Educational Challenges of 2020 and Hope for 2021

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The year 2020 began much like any other year with hopes for a new beginning and the commitment to resolutions. By late January and early February when our motivations to keep our resolutions faded away, COVID-19 appeared in conversations with colleagues, friends, and family as a problem only experienced by individuals in a distant land. Little did we know that after the 2020 International Conference of the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) held in March in Portland, Oregon, our lives would change in dramatic and sometimes frightening ways because of the rapid spread of this virus to North America.

As an incoming co-editor in chief of the *Canadian Perspectives on Academic Integrity* to work alongside co-founder and co-editor in chief, Brandy Usick, I reflect upon the early days of the pandemic and the many events that have followed. It has been a year filled with an unexpectedly fast-paced ride of new demands and new fears. In my work as a Faculty Specialist (Academic Integrity) at The Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, University of Manitoba, I have experienced an over 1,200% increase in the number of consultations with faculty members and sessional instructors, workshops, and presentations than in previous years. It may be safe to assume that the pandemic and the shift to online learning has motivated academic staff to seek ways to educate their students about academic integrity and prevent academic misconduct in their new remote teaching and learning environments.

The job of educators has not been easy during this pandemic as fears of rampant cheating abound, including concerns that contract cheating services are in higher demand (e.g., Newton, 2020). Established ways of teaching and assessing students' learning have also been disrupted, forcing educators to rethink their practices (see Gamage et al., 2020) and often looking to 'authentic' assessment to design out cheating, but which are not immune to cheating (Ellis, et al., 2020). COVID-19 has been a game changer for faculty members and sessional instructors, and importantly, it has changed how and where students learn. Students have also been required to navigate the new reality of completing courses in an environment that they had not anticipated and may not even prefer, which can be frustrating, stressful, and disorienting. The situation is not unique to teaching and learning, as our lives beyond the virtual classroom are markedly different than they were at this time just one year ago – the anxiety related to health and well-being and the socio-economic consequences of this pandemic are very real (Taylor et al., 2020).

Despite the chaos, I feel that I have been fortunate (at least so far). I am grateful for my health and the health of my family, and that I have a job that allows me to work from the safety of my home office. Because of these feelings of safety and security, I dare to imagine that 2021 will bring opportunities to move away from the “fight or flight” response to academic misconduct toward new ways to teach that encourage deep learning, new ways to assess learning, and new ways to support all members of educational communities to uphold the values of honesty, trust, respect, responsibility, fairness, and courage. Now is the time to set high expectations for 2021.

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