

*Theme Issue: Self-care, Health and Well-being
in the Academy*

JENNIFER LOCK
GABRIELLE WILCOX
YVONNE KJORLIEN
Guest Editors
University of Calgary

With growing expectations of productivity, it is not always easy to achieve a balance between research, teaching and service, between competitiveness and collaboration in the academy, and between work and personal life. Both new and experienced academics are in search of achieving a “happy medium” or a notion of “balance” to meet the expectations of the academy, the students they teach, the communities they serve, and in their own personal lives. In today's competitive higher educational settings, how are academics personally and professionally attending to their well-being and the well-being of their colleagues? As well as, how are they modeling such practices to students? For example, how are academics modeling ways to take care of themselves, increase balance, healthy behaviours, happiness to students, and to their colleagues? How are institutions, through policies, expectations, and other initiatives, supporting academics in this endeavour?

These types of questions were taken up by the authors in the eight articles of this special issue of the *Journal of Educational Thought*. This special issue explores and offers critical perspectives on the themes self-care, health, and well-being in academia. The articles reflect three lenses, the individual, the courses and programs, and the moral and ethical focus, that need to be attended to by both the individual and the institution.

Wilcox and Schroeder, in their article, *An Academic's Ethical Obligations for Self-Care*, acknowledge the high levels of stress occurring in the workplace and the impacts it has psychologically, physically, and on productivity. They argue that ethical guidelines for psychologists can help guide academics in decision making related to self-care choices. Further, they advocate that institutions play a major role in supporting self-care practices of academics.

Three articles focused on individuals and their experience in relation to the concept of self-care. First, Nelson, Jurkova, Groen, Aljarrah, Mace, Wu and Roy, in *Transcultural Perspective Development: Implications for Cultivating Our Well-Being as Emerging Academics*, share the transcultural journey of five

doctoral students within an international doctoral seminar as they developed a sense of well-being as emerging scholars. Second, Burn, Brown, Eaton and Mueller, using a thematic analysis of narratives of pre-tenured female academics, explore the choices and access to supportive environments that foster and promote wellness in a university community in their article in *A Day in the Life: An Examination of Women's Choices in the Academy*. Third, Kawalilak, Groen, Poitras Pratt, and Danyluk, using autoethnography in their article *Navigating a Pathway for Individual and Collective Well-being – Academics Speak Out*, acknowledge the importance of co-creating spaces to nurture and celebrate individual and collective well-being.

The next set of three articles, examine wellness from a course or program perspective. Russell-Mayhew, Ireland, Murray, Alberga, Nutter, Gabriele, Peat and Gereluk present a case study in their article, *Reflecting and Informing Health and Wellness: The Development of a Comprehensive School Health Course in a Bachelor of Education Program*. In their article, they share the process including essential conditions within a university context that fostered the implementation of a health and wellness course in a Bachelor of Education program. Makarenko and Andrews in *An Empirical Review of the Mental Health and Well-being of Online Instructors*, conducted a systematic literature review to examine the mental health and well-being of online instructors with particular attention given to gender differences. In *Self-Care and Well-being in Social Work Education: Creating New Spaces for Learning*, Drolet, Samson, Tanchak, Kreitzer, and Hilsen explore teaching and learning strategies with a relationship between ethics, self-care, and reflection in two undergraduate Social Work courses.

The special issue concludes with *A Mindful Community of Praxis Model for Well-being in the Academy* by Crowder. Like Wilcox and Schroeder, she acknowledges that high stress levels is a serious issue in Canadian academics. She critically reflects on the issues currently associated with mindfulness-based intervention programming. She advocates for a community of praxis framework to enhance well-being at the individual level and to foster systemic change at the academy level.

It is evident from the eight articles that self-care is not only being grappled with at the individual but also at the institutional levels. There is a need for a call to action to attend to this issue in our research, teaching, and practice. It is one thing to write and talk about self-care, it is another to take action. The change in terms of self-care begins today and begins with *me*.