

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEVENTH VOLUME OF PAPERS ON POSTSECONDARY LEARNING AND TEACHING

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The seventh volume of Papers on Postsecondary Learning and Teaching (PPLT) is a collection of peer-reviewed papers from the 2023 University of Calgary Conference on Postsecondary Learning and Teaching, addressing the theme Collective Transformation: How Blended and Online Learning Have Changed Postsecondary Education.

We believe it is important to share our positionality and situate our roles as editors. Cheryl Jeffs, founding editor, was born on Vancouver Island and is a second and third-generation settler. As a first generation academic, I have the privilege of learning, teaching, and leading in higher education in both British Columbia and Alberta and currently at the University of Calgary. Managing editor, Kristi-Mari Fedorko-Bartos, was born in Winnipeg and raised in Calgary as a first generation to immigrant Eastern European parents, she is an academic and graduate student at the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary. Michelle Scott, associate editor, is a Mi'kmaw scholar born and raised in Tkarronto, and is Associate Dean, Indigenous Education in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Calgary. We collectively bring together the dedicated editorial team, authors, and reviewers from across Canada and from diverse disciplines to the successful publication of this open-access journal.

Context

March 2020 began the global transition, swift and unexpected, to online teaching and learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With time, reflection, and opportunities for research, academics have begun to document the impact on teaching and learning in higher education. Papers in volume seven were developed from presentations at the 2023 University of Calgary Conference on Postsecondary Learning and Teaching. Presenters were invited to explore the conference theme “Lessons learned on how blended and online learning changed postsecondary education” and the multiple aspects of the collective transformation experienced since the spring of 2020. Authors in this volume contribute their perspectives, practices, experiences, and scholarship related to the COVID-19 pandemic and how they, students, and their institutions adapted, thrived, and ultimately transformed or informed postsecondary teaching and learning.

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Papers in Volume Seven

Setting the tone for this volume and showcasing how the COVID-19 pandemic created opportunities for renewal is the paper by Patrick **Kelly**, Cari Din, Craig Ginn, and Robyn Mae Paul (2024), “Becoming lyrical: Our reflective journeys”. They inspire us to open our minds, be creative, and imagine teaching and learning through the literary genre of Poetry. The authors provide an organized and scholarly rationale for writing poetry in academia from diverse disciplines and show us the benefits for both faculty and students. Each of the authors provides some background to set the context, present their original poem, and then give a thoughtful reflection. Their papers provide readers with valuable insight and view of navigating to online and blended learning and thriving during the pandemic experience.

The important work of decolonizing academic spaces and privileging Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating in online learning spaces are taken up by two papers in this volume. From Royal Roads University, colleagues Valeria **Cortés**, Kelly Loffler, Christina Schlattner, and Tim Brigham (2024) “Transforming online teaching through relational ways of being” extended their previous research into practice by discussing the naturalization of IKS (Indigenous knowledge systems) in their Professional Project Administrator Program. Centering an anti-oppressive pedagogy, they highlighted the importance of Indigenous community partnerships, relational design, hiring, faculty development, and holistic rubric assessment tools to benefit staff, faculty, students, and society. Through an interview with two Anishinaabe instructors/professors, Anita **Vaillancourt**, Denise Baxter, and Lana Ray from Lakehead University, in their paper “Teaching Indigenous content in an online environment: An interview with two Anishinaabe instructors” discussed the curation and implementation of the Indigenous Content Requirement Policy Framework they designed. The key components: 1) Curriculum content and delivery; 2) Institutional support and commitment; 3) Decolonizing policy and practice; 4) Indigenous authority; e) Decision making; and 5) Centering Indigenous peoples were outlined with emphasis on anti-Indigenous racism, and Indigenous principles and pedagogy.

Helping us understand blended learning (BL) as more than a modality, Sandra **Hirst** and Carole-Lynne LeNavenec’s (2024) paper “The context of blending learning environments: Lessons learned” offers insight going beyond content and into the context of BL. The authors conducted a systematic literature review and identified contextual challenges to implementing BL. Pragmatic strategies are provided for each of the challenges and recommendations for institutional support and resources to enhance the potential of BL for both instructors and students.

As academics, we wonder and speculate how the sudden shift to online and blended modalities impacted student learning. Nausheen W. **Sadiq** and Tabussom Qureshi (2024) provide some answers in their paper “Understanding how students navigate an upper year science laboratory course in a post-pandemic era”. This research is situated in an undergraduate science program which includes experiential learning (EL) in laboratory settings. Sadiq explores the switch to online learning during the foundational years and the impact of learning as students return to a physical laboratory setting. Retrospectively students report despite the challenges of

unexpected online learning they were able to move forward in their studies re-entering the physical lab environment. With a similar focus on EL, Peter **Gimby**, Wesley Ernst, Christopher Cully, and Ania Harlick (2024) examine the topic of experiential learning (EL) during the restrictions of COVID-19 in “Creating accessible spaces for experiential learning in an online environment”. They describe a successful collaboration between technical staff and instructors and advocate for the pragmatic and sustainable benefits of this approach. Detailed descriptions of their creative solutions and applications are adaptable to enhance online learning opportunities in higher education.

In contrast, the next paper is from the perspective of an existing online program. Madeline **Springle**, McKenna Sperry, Samantha Jones, Leah Pezer, Thomas O'Neill, and David W. Eaton (2024) show us how they were prepared for the challenges when COVID-19 globally changed teaching and learning in higher education. In their paper, “Interdisciplinary training for future leaders through the CREATE-REDEVELOP graduate student program”, the authors advocate for the value of online programs to enhance skills required in hybrid and remote working environments. Their paper further describes how diversity, culture, and geography can be integrated into the program and the various strategies that can be adapted for successful outcomes.

The theme of mental health and well-being is explored in the next two papers. Riley **Martens**, Mary Hou, Susan Isherwood, and Colleen Cuthbert (2024) “Exploring COVID-19’s impact on undergraduate nursing students” documented challenges such as clinical placements, mental health, and academic integrity. Although a limited sample of nursing students, the authors provided detailed evidence of the loss of clinical placements during COVID-19 and implications of online learning, such as students’ lack of confidence, increased academic dishonesty, and mental health challenges. This information can guide educators and institutions in preparing for future contingencies. Thomas **Qiao** (2024) shows us that the pandemic heightened the awareness of the significance of faculty development focused on test anxiety. “Faculty engagement in professional development” explores a program designed for faculty to support students returning to in-person learning. The flexible and accessible program was co-developed with the student wellness centre and instructors. Applying a change management framework, Qiao studied the factors that facilitate or hinder faculty participation in faculty development. Suggestions to enhance professional development include revisiting existing institutional practices and strategies for the well-being of faculty.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) was the subject of the next two papers. Megan **Bylsma** (2024) considered the student experience of juggling the uncertainties of the pandemic. “Here to help: How pandemic pedagogy made for face-to-face change”, shows us that being intentionally student-centred and focused on UDL can be effective strategies in online, blended and in-person learning that address student stress. Bylsma provides details of each perspective and strategy that individuals can adapt and adopt for postsecondary institutions’ new and constantly changing reality. Also addressing UDL from a change perspective is Lynne **Kennette** and Morgan Chapman (2024) “Shaping inclusive learning: A comparative study of UDL

engagement pre- and post pandemic in one Ontario college”. They found moving to an online teaching environment encouraged incorporating more UDL elements such as audio and visual recordings and electronic texts. Overall, participants reported these changes enhanced teaching and learning.

With a goal of supporting graduate teaching assistants (GTA), Cari **Din** and Martin MacInnis (2024) demonstrate their educational leadership in “Blended learning and lab reform: Self-paced SoTL and reflecting on student learning”. They designed a professional development program for GTAs with an instructional team. This approach was beneficial to teaching and learning in their department and was enhanced and sustained by a community of practice. The authors described the details of this lab reform and concluded with questions to consider for teaching development.

Wrapping up this volume is a paper on end-of-term surveys. It became apparent after moving to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic that the response rates to student evaluations of teaching (SET) had decreased. To delve into the low response rate, including concerns of bias, Moira **McDonald**, Michael-Anne Noble, Brigitte Harris, Valeria Cortés and Ken Jeffery (2024) conducted a study with undergraduate students on a re-designed survey. The authors described in their paper “Fostering a teaching and learning opportunity: Toward equity in student feedback and teaching” the development of a new midcourse and end-of-course student evaluation surveys and do a comparative study to the old survey design. Overall, the introduction of these surveys, combined with instruction on giving feedback was beneficial to the learning community.

Conclusion

The authors in the seventh volume of Papers on Postsecondary Learning and Teaching provided their perspectives, practices, experiences, and scholarship related to online and blended learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they adapted, thrived, and ultimately transformed or informed postsecondary teaching and learning.