THE FAX

MHC FACULTY ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

FA FACULTY ASSOCIATION *of Medicine Hat College*

DECEMBER 2019

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P.D. REPORTS

Annual Gratitude

I've been thinking about the upcoming holiday period! My wife loves the Christmas season (yes there are already decorations up at our house) and she really plans and shops for it year-round. Me - I like the days off, but aside from some eggnog and watching my grandsons open their presents, I could take it or leave it. Pine trees belong outside!

Which, strangely, brings me to gratitude. In late November and early December, I annually have to remind myself to be grateful. Of course, there is my family (healthy, intact, thriving), my work (I really do like where I work and what I do), and my community. I don't get out much by choice, but I say and often think about things that I like about Medicine Hat. I can be anywhere in about 15 minutes; the parks and coulees are accessible and enjoyable, and our overall quality of life is good! It's still good to be an Albertan.

So why this "soul dump"? If you encounter me most days, I might be a little too focused on issues, problems, or ideals. But I do have the capacity to be grateful. And I really am, just not always right up where it can be seen!

So in the coming days and weeks, drink some eggnog (rum is optional but highly recommended)! Watch someone else do something fun. Join in if you can. Pause. And embrace the joy!

Happy Holidays.

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MHC FACULTY ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

NEXT ISSUE:

Second week of January 2020

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Faculty Association of Medicine Hat College or its Committee members.

Christmas Tree Safety

submitted by Lesley Tuchscherer
Reference: National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)

As you deck the halls this holiday season, be fire smart. A small fire that spreads to a Christmas tree can grow large very quickly.

Picking the tree:

Choose a tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.

Placing the tree:

Before placing the tree in the stand, cut 2" from the base of the trunk. Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, like fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents or lights. Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit and add water to the tree stand, daily.

Lighting the tree

Use lights that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use. Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Read manufacturer's instructions for number of light strands to connect. Never use lit candles to decorate the tree. Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.

Facts:

- More than one of every four home Christmas tree fires is caused by electrical problems
- Although Christmas tree fires are not common, when they do occur, they are more likely to be serious.
- A heat source too close to the tree causes one in every four of the fires.

The FA FAX Newsletter asks the question.....

Can We See Your Tree?

With the holidays approaching, many of you will be bringing a Christmas tree into your home and decorating it with gusto. The FAX would like to peek into your holiday traditions. Send us a photo of your holiday decorations, trimmed tree, menorah, or whatever you do to deck your halls in celebration of this holiday season.

All submissions will be featured in the January FAX, and every submitter will receive a $10.00 gift card to Common Grounds or the MHC cafeteria. Open to all faculty & staff.
Please forward your photos to facultyassoc@mhc.ab.ca by Monday, January 6th, 2020.

Pensions

One of the great benefits of working in the public sector has always been the promise of a pension during retirement. Our LAPP is a defined benefit pension plan, meaning that depending on your earnings and pensionable years of earnings, you will receive a guaranteed amount throughout your retirement years. This is different than a defined contribution pension, which mandates a percentage of income as a contribution during your working years, but your pension benefit is based on the performance of the pension fund to which you have contributed.

A few years ago, the PC government of Alberta floated the idea of changing certain public sector pensions from defined benefit to defined contribution arguing that taxpayers should not responsible to underwrite pensions in the case of a shortfall. Their plan fell through then, but did not die. Jason Kenney has publicly stated his own predisposition for a defined contribution plan for the reasons stated here. The possibility remains that this government could transition our pensions to a defined contribution fund, but for now there is no clear mandate from the government to that effect.

However …
When the October 24 budget was released, one of the first stories to break was around pension consolidation. For those who have not heard it yet, the UCP is planning to consolidate the major public-sector pension funds under the management of a Crown Corporation called Alberta Investment Management Corporation (AIMCO). These are the Alberta Teacher's Retirement Fund (ATRF), Special Forces Pension Plan, Public Sector Pension Plan and LAPP.

For our members, LAPP is currently managed by AIMCO. So in the short-term, this change affects other pension plan holders far more than us. For instance, ATRF has seen excellent returns on their pensions over the past few years; better returns than our AIMCO-managed funds. You can see why the Teachers and others would be angry.

So, while our pensions remain under the management of AIMCO, recent legislation tabled by the UCP government raises concerns. You received an email from me last week that outlines those concerns. In summary, this government is racing to legislate a change in the governance of our pension fund. The two main concerns are that 1) unionized employees have lost one seat, meaning a reduction of representation below 50% and 2) the removal of LAPP's right to move to a new fund manager after a five-year period, which was implemented by the NDP government.

This will likely be an ongoing area of concern, and I would encourage you to stay informed by watching our pension fund's website at www.lapp.ca.

Rick Robinson
Instructor & Coordinator, Business
President, Faculty Association

FA Helping SA

The November 2nd Fall Faculty Social Silent Auction brought in $451.00 in revenue. The entirety of these funds were donated to the Students' Association to assist students in financial need.

The photo to the right shows Betty Koch, Chair of the Fall Faculty Social Committee, presenting the Students' Association President, Dalton Ehry, with the cheque.

Thanks to all faculty who attended the Fall Faculty Social. Please mark your calendars for next year's gala on Saturday, November 7, 2020.

Jason Openo
Manager,
Teaching & Learning

Teaching & Learning

"Are we becoming what we want to become?"

I recently presented a paper at the World Conference for Online Learning in Dublin, Ireland. The theme for the conference was "Transforming Lives and Societies," and the best part of the conference was listening to critical voices seeking to understand how lives and societies are being transformed, why, and what are the long-term implications of these transformations? One of the closing plenary speakers was George Siemens; he was my research methods instructor at Athabasca University and one of the reasons I chose the Athabasca program. In a fairly popular blog post from 2015 entitled "Adios Ed Tech. Hola something else," Dr. Siemens announced a personal transformation:

It's time for a change. A curious disconnect has been emerging in my thinking, one that has been made clear with the hype-oriented buzzwords of today's edtech companies. I no longer want to be affiliated with the tool-fetish of edtech. It's time to say adios to technosolutionism that recreates people as agents within a programmed infrastructure.
In his plenary, Dr. Siemens asked if technology is helping us to become what we want to become?

It certainly is for Ireland. Ireland's Minister of State for Higher Education, Mary Mitchell O'Connor, clearly stated Ireland's aspirations to become the "tech capital of Europe, and that includes educational technology." In many respects, Ireland already is a tech-hub with headquarters for Google, Ancestry.com, LinkedIn, Facebook, and the National Institute for Digital Learning. As with all online learning conferences, this one was also full of optimism for the future of educational technology.

Here are snippets of key takeaways that I overheard from the many dialogues of transformation taking place at the World Conference on Online Learning:

- Students have to be at the epicenter of all decisions about online education. This includes synchronous support – live calls because relationships with students are important.
- It may also include a "regulatory environment" that supports the use of technology to supplement and strengthen the intrinsically interactive nature of teaching and learning. Courses and programs must consistently incorporate the frequent and substantive personal interaction that is central to the learning process.
- Online education requires a redefinition of our understanding of teaching and learning. It is neither Sage on the Stage nor Guide on the Side. As someone from MHC stated in ThoughtExchange, "Universities must evolve their paradigm, from student to learner, from teaching to designing and managing learning experiences, from degree based to continuous learning."
- Everyone is striving to think beyond the 18-24 year old and beginning to think into genuine lifelong learning. Upskilling is the future of education. 30-50% of adult learners will need to be reskilled during their careers.
- Credentials are the core business of education. Alternative digital credentials potentially mean less time to spend, and less bills to pay. "Universities and colleges that fail to adopt the Alternative Digital Credential movement will experience a slow decline in relevance and market position."
- "It is a precious thing to have a job. After all, we all have jobs, whether you think that's the primary role of education or not."
- There are a lot of quality assurance frameworks in online education, but all are little used – institutions have to use a credible framework, modify an existing one, or develop their own.
- Our current assessment system (grades) undermines all attempts at learning.
- "We need to put forth collective effort to better understand and address the challenging conflicts in online higher education contexts to make openness and innovation authentic dialogues rather than just rhetoric."

Dr. Siemens, in his closing remarks, admitted he was less interested in what is changing and how it is changing, and

Jason Openo
Manager,
Teaching & Learning

more and more interested in whether we are becoming what we want to become. And to become what we want to become, we will have to acknowledge systemic problems and resolve those, not with technology, but with morals, values, and principles.

Dublin is a city undergoing rapid technological transformation as Ireland strives to become a tech-hub of Europe, including educational technology.

Lions Club Partnership with ACIFA and MHC Faculty Association

The Medicine Hat College Faculty Association is partnering with the Lions Club in their fight against global blindness. The FA is collecting old eyeglasses no longer being used, they will be cleaned and refurbished and then distributed to those with vision impairment in less affluent parts of the world.

The Edmonton Millwoods Lions Club is also partnering with ACIFA to sponsor ACIFA's Scholarship of Teaching & Learning Award for the next three years.

If you have eyeglasses that you no longer use, please bring them into the Faculty Association office in F132. The FA office is open Monday to Friday from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm. Prescription glasses, reading glasses, and sunglasses in adult and children's sizes will be collected and donated to the Lion's Club throughout the year.

Thank you for you donation. It will brighten someone's life.

PD Report
As usual the PD Report covers the PD Queues, Noon-Hour Series, and PD happening on campus, but for the remainder of the year, it will be highlighting things that did not make it in the PD report that was circulated to the Board of Governors this past month. If there was something that you or a colleague accomplished that was not in that report and should be celebrated, please email me (MKaethler@mhc.ab.ca) and I will make sure it makes it in the FAX.

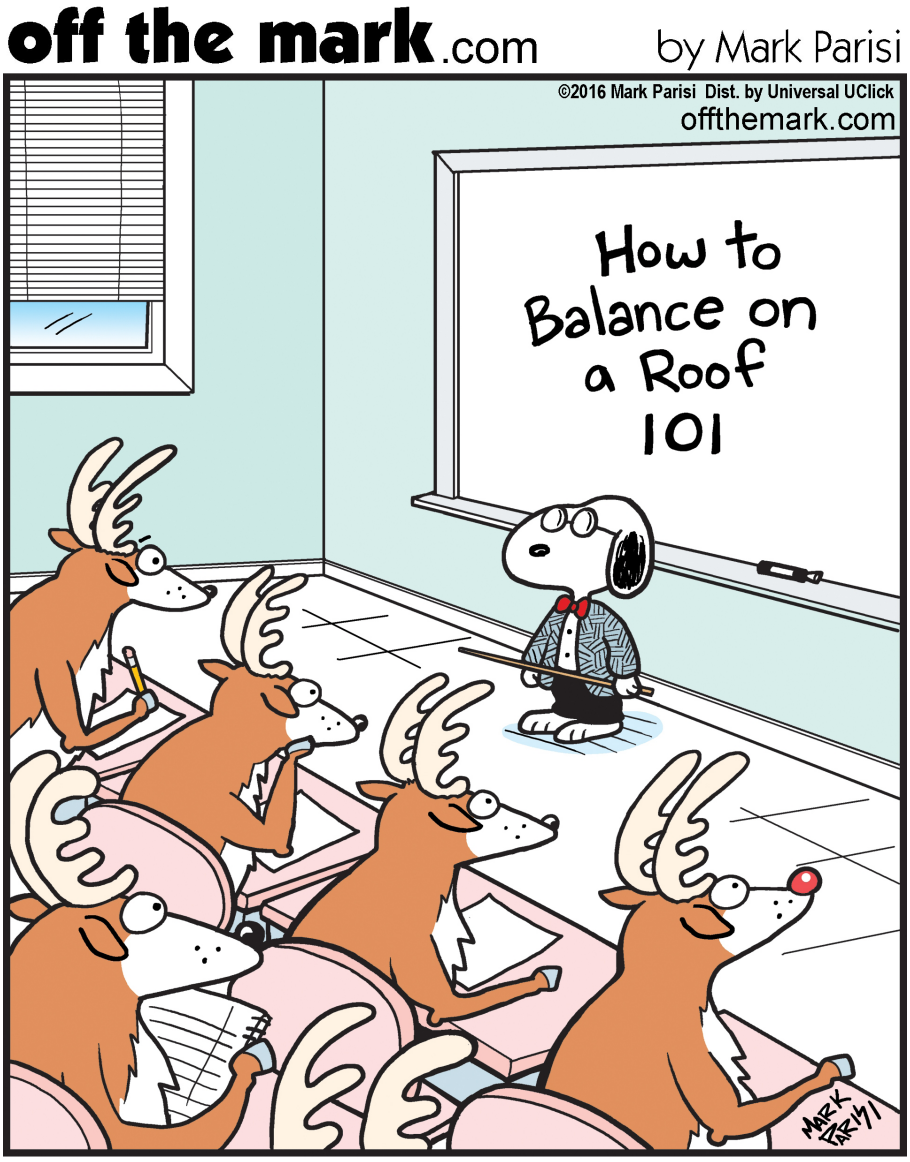
PD Queue:
On November 20th, Lorelei Boschman and Colleen Whidden from our Education Program delivered a terrific PD Queue on experiential learning that offered us some effective classroom strategies for the winter term and beyond. Reflecting on the need to have concrete experiences followed by reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, leading back ultimately to that original experience, Lorelei and Colleen worked with instructors to develop strategies for information technology, accounting, English, and science courses while also highlighting their recent ExCITE grant project with an education cohort at Elkwater. The conversation offered solutions or methods of dealing with restrictions around curriculum so as to still offer experiential options in the classroom, and cooperative learning was promoted as an alternative that could work in tandem with these teaching practices to liven up the classroom, maintain student focus, and ensure that students were learning the necessary lessons. CITE remains a great resource for faculty interested in experiential learning and the scholarship of teaching and learning, and we look forward to hearing more about Colleen's work as the centre's first fellow.

Noon-Hour:
On Tuesday November 19th, Brian Duffels presented on mental health for our noon-hour series, organized by Geoff Hamilton. Continuing the thread that Diane Gall started, Duffels questioned whether mental health disorders should be as strictly categorized as they currently are. Pointing to the criteria of the DSM-5, which is used by clinicians to diagnose persons with mental disorders, Duffels unpacked how the extant methods of deeming someone healthy or unhealthy are flawed, even though discussion did point out that for some disorders it was easier to pinpoint than others. Advocating for spectrums of disorder instead of disorders, Duffels then entered into questions of neuroethics and whether or not biology and evolution factored into these cases, leading us to wonder if these socially defined measures of healthy or unhealthy (in some cases veering toward moral determinations of good or bad) were arbitrary or at least not the person's fault.

Research:
Working with Faustin Kadima, Ahmed Kassem, and Elizabeth Pennefather-O'Brien, Nicole Burnett (UT Psychology) is researching PTSD symptoms, exposure to trauma, and the experience of culture shock in the rural immigrant population of Brooks and Newall County, Alberta. Participants included 189 immigrants living in the area, from 25 different countries. Participants completed a questionnaire that was translated in their preferred language, measuring PTSD symptomology, types of traumatic stressors, and symptoms of culture shock. It was found that 60% of the sample included refugees, and 63% were found to have active PTSD symptoms (more men vs. women). Further, 53% of participants were currently experiencing culture shock, with higher rates among those who also displayed severe PTSD

symptoms. The most common traumas included experiencing physical assault, being held captive, sustaining a life threading injury, and living in a war zone. Over 35% of the Brooks population includes immigrants (compared to 20.6% in other parts of Canada) and the findings of this research indicate that PTSD rates in the Brooks region are significantly higher than other parts of Canada. Over 60% of participants here were found to have active PTSD symptoms, whereas the prevalence rate of PTSD in the rest of Canada is 9.3% (Statistics Canada, 2013). The preliminary findings here suggest that the Brooks, Alberta region poses a unique challenge to the health services in the area. Future work will focus on education and destigmatizing access to mental health care in the target population. We also had a very successful initial mentorship series on how to start a research project in which faculty from across campus came together to share insights on what research is as well as the difficulties and process in beginning and honing a project. We are hoping to launch a second one next term, possibly on how to develop a PD plan with long-term goals and purpose.

We have a full roster of 8 PD Queues this year, thanks in large part to Monika, and more noon-hour series talks to come, so please come out and join the conversations or share what you're doing with your fellow faculty!



Permission for Farmer to use cartoon in print/electronic.

The Deadline to complete the ACIFA Climate Survey is Thursday, December 12, 2019

The survey was originally sent out by e-mail on Tuesday, November 19th. Please complete this confidential survey and let Monika know by calling 504-3616 or by e-mailing facultyassoc@mhc.ab.ca. Your name will be entered in a draw to win one of two $50.00 cash prizes.

The results of this survey are useful to the Faculty Association in assessing the current climate of the college, of faculty, and is especially helpful to our Executive team in determining the best course of action in facilitating positive changes during negotiations. If you require the link to complete the survey, please contact the Faculty Association office.

Faculty Appreciation Luncheon

A thank you from the F.A. for all you do.
Hosted by the FA Social Committee.

Friday, December 6th
11:30 to 1:15
Crowfoot Room
Menu - Chinese Food Favorites

Please RSVP to facultyassoc@mhc.ab.ca or call (403) 504-3616 by December 4, 2019

From the Editor's Desk

by Lorne Jeal

Free Speech

The Chicago Principles have recently become a source of discussion, and (inevitable) policy, for post-secondary institutions in Alberta. If the Chicago Principles aren't familiar to you, these principles arise from a University of Chicago committee and articulate that University's position on the debate, exchange of ideas, and free speech. The Alberta government's deadline for free speech policies in colleges and universities is December 15, 2019. Keyano College beat all other post-secondaries in Alberta to the punch by adopting a Freedom of Speech policy on July 11, 2019 [1]. A reading of their policy and the three-page University of Chicago committee report [2] shows the strong influence of that committee's conclusions, within a Canadian context.

As with every issue, there are at least two sides. Some people see the Chicago Principles and their implementation as a good thing. The president of the Privacy and Access Council of Canada considers the principles and their adoption as a valid social response that lessens self-censoring and silence - both rooted in fear [3]. Keyano College professes a desire to support "free speech, [the] acceptance of difference, and ownership of freedom of expression" [1]. Finally, the minister of Advanced Education says that "free speech is not only at the heart of the academic experience but it is also an essential pillar of democracy" [4].

In contrast, others maintain that the free speech initiative currently underway in Alberta is an avenue to protect and promote messages championed by the "privileged and powerful" [5]. That the free speech crisis is no crisis at all [6]. It is - some suggest - a way to actually restrict open and free debate [5] and to eliminate current voices and sources of dissent [6], while also reducing educational institutions to little more than vendors of commodified ideas [6].
Providing opportunities for rigorous debate and the honest, well-intentioned exchange of ideas seems to be the intention of the Chicago Principles. But those standards are in decline. In their place, shouting louder and longer has appeared. The space and opportunity for dialogue have been diminished. And previously reliable standards for discernment and decorum have atrophied.

I am left with only questions at this point!

What can be done in a time and place where free speech is codified? Does a policy on free speech immediately or even eventually place all views on an equal level? Do predominant views suddenly yield their dominance in an attempt to give space and voice to contesting views? Can the status quo change so that society fosters alternative ideas and welcomes their ascendancy.

I would argue that colleges and universities need to promote a spirit of inquiry for students, faculty, and administration to engage within. Ideas that are not illegal (within our Canadian context) should be able to find a place for expression and debate within our post-secondary system. And the challenge of not only contending with ideas we aren't familiar with but also understanding our own views, in contrast, may help to further our understanding.

[1]Keyano College free speech policy:
https://www.keyano.ca/Modules/News/index.aspx?feedId=72e0e9fc-92cd-4407-a32f-44779f48e66c&newsId=7b9167ae-aded-479f-a992-9e420858cf01
[2]University of Chicago free speech report:
https://provost.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/documents/reports/FOECommitteeReport.pdf
[3]https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/fort-mcmurray-chicago-principles-1.5230873
[4]https://www.mymcmurray.com/2019/07/29/keyano-college-affirms-freedom-of-expression-principles/
[5]https://albertapolitics.ca/2019/07/the-chicago-principles-are-code-for-the-right-of-the-powerful-and-privileged-to-shout-down-everyone-else/
[6]https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-the-real-free-speech-crisis-on-albertas-campuses-might-not-be-what/

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Complete and submit to FAX Editor, Lorne Jeal, for a chance to win two $10.00 MHC Bookstore gift cards. Draw date is Friday, December 6th at 12:00 noon. We thank all who submit solutions. FA members in good standing who submit correct solutions are eligible for the draw. Thanks.