



EXPERIENCE | ACTION | TRANSFORMATION

CHANGE

This is a time of year for change – change of pace, change in focus of activities, and (hopefully!) change in weather. During the winter term, there has been a great deal of change at Lakehead with an entire migration to the cloud and from MyInfo to MyPortal – and even changes to D2L. This is a lot of change!

As Dr. Jacoba so honestly points out in her Faculty Spotlight, while some may embrace change, others find it overwhelming. We decided that, in our spring newsletter, we would focus on change as our theme to share some changes that are happening at the Teaching Commons and to highlight that change is constant within reflective teaching.

The wonderful thing is sometimes small changes in our practice can have enormous impacts both for us as instructors and for our students. We hope that this edition of the newsletter will both support and inspire you during this time of change.

Strategic Spotlight

One of the strategies of the Academic Plan is "Developing People, Places, and Systems." Change is a key element of this process because it is through doing and then reflecting that we discover that changes are necessary to improve outcomes. Through change, we develop as professionals and positively impact our students' experience, our disciplines, and our institution.

Faculty Spotlight

Just Jump: A Personal Essay on Change

I am a creature of habit. Change does not come naturally to me, to put it mildly. For me, change is akin to balancing on the ledge of a high-rise: my gaze is fixed on the ground below as I try not to sway or lose my footing. Standing on the precipice, I shakily reach one arm back, feeling for the only thing that feels safe or steady; the wall behind me. Surely, if I cling to the wall, nothing bad will happen. Just. Don't. Move.

TMJ (Too Much Information)

In Fall 2015, I began making a concerted effort to change my persona as a university language instructor. Having followed my then-husband to the US, I found myself working as a Lecturer at Purdue, a public research university where many of the students excel in STEM. In previous positions, I had tried — naively and idealistically, but from a genuine enthusiasm and respect for knowledge — to embody the image of the "sage on the stage" who lived a life of the mind and expected students to strive to do the same. Truth be told, I was nervous and on-edge for every lecture, worried I would stray from my script and be unable to find my way back, unable to impart to the students a wealth of information they could have looked up on their own. After all my preparation and worry, I was dismayed to receive lukewarm student evaluations of my teaching.

Then, the professor overseeing the basic French-language courses at Purdue encouraged a more pedagogically robust vision of instructor-student interactions. Each lesson would ideally see students practice, in some measure, each of the four language competencies: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. In short, I wouldn't be doing all of the talking any more. And, for the first time in my then-limited experience as an instructor, I witnessed my students brighten as they entered my classroom. Even those who were not French majors seemed eager to attend class. Although I never asked them, sometimes I quietly wondered if, for some, language classes were a refuge from other, less creative, academic demands.

This musing was perhaps a projection for, in reality, the classroom had become a refuge for me: my marriage was coming undone. While tensions ran high at home, in the classroom I delighted in learning alongside my students who steadily taught me to improve my teaching. I learned to read the (class)room and gauge the efficacy of my teaching not only from students' test results but also from their enthusiasm, participation, and feedback. During my time at Purdue, I had the revelation that my own enjoyment of teaching was often a reasonably accurate measure of students' enjoyment of — and thus investment in — their learning. If I was invested in the class and having fun, it was more likely that they were too.

On the Flip Side

The dissolution of my marriage prompted me to look everywhere and anywhere for more stable employment. During this trying time, my best friend and I would chat about our love of teaching and our vision of the ideal job. If we could design the job of our dreams, what aspects of our current job would we keep and what would we change? This felt like professional fantasizing at the time, but I believe it's important to explore such questions. What would I do, given creative control over my classroom and the resources to bring my vision to fruition? Wouldn't it be incredible, I wondered to myself, if there were a teaching-focused job as a professor back home in Canada?

In Spring 2017, I applied for just such a teaching-focused job at Lakehead University. These less traditional positions were few and far between. I had never been to Thunder Bay, but I was excited to learn that LU was an access university where, thanks in part to LU's various UDL and SoTL initiatives and college-pathway programs, many first-generation students finally had access to post-secondary education. I sensed that after all my growing pains, both personal and professional, the position at LU as a teaching-focused instructor would be a wonderful fit while still leaving me room to continue growing.

My time at Purdue had taught me the value of handing students more power over their classroom experience. For my classroom to be truly student-centered — a concept I had parroted in my first teaching philosophy, years earlier — students would be required to take center stage while I encouraged them from the wings. *But how does that actually mean? What does a "student-centered classroom" look like? How could I design an educational experience that empowered students beyond participating in class?* This is the central query that has since guided my efforts to experiment in class with my students.

In the flipped classroom model, students complete readings and basic comprehension tasks at home. Class time is reserved for higher-order thinking skills (analysis, critique, problem-solving, etc.). Students are guided by the professor and by each other via discussions, group work and other forms of collaboration. The obvious pitfall is that this approach only works if everyone does their homework. And, if we have students who have multiple competing priorities and challenges (full-time employment, children, care-taking, food insecurity, etc.) as we often do at LU, over-reliance on this model can become unrealistic and even overwhelming for many students.

Changing Places

To help these students and still preserve student-centered learning, throughout my time at LU and with the support of the Teaching Commons, I have sought to adopt activities with one common underpinning: metacognition. Metacognitive activities act as a brain, allowing students to reflect on how they are thinking: *While it's busy learning, your mirror steals a glance at itself in the mirror. What does it see?* This invitation to think about thinking pulls the students into the learning process at whatever level of engagement their lives allow.

The following are three examples of lower-stakes, metacognitive activities that give students greater power in their learning experience, allowing them to think about their learning while reaping some of the benefits of the flipped classroom with less fallout if they arrive to class unprepared.

1. Editing workshops: In my upper-year classes in particular, I run editing workshops that require students to tackle specific areas of their writing. They edit for structure, stylistics, cogency, concision, etc. but focus on only one feature at a time. The most important aspect of this activity is that students know which aspect of their writing they are targeting in any given editing activity.

Presenting students with a focused, guiding checklist helps them stay on task, and putting them in small groups requires them to justify their suggested edits to the extent as well as react to others' suggestions. The editing process exemplifies the document to which a text is improved when it is edited significantly, while peer-to-peer correction allows most students to see, at some point in the exercise, examples of work whose quality surpasses that of their own.

2. Rubric Design: Whether detailed or simple checklist-style, rubrics can help students successfully complete an assignment by preventing important omissions and by helping them to assess their assignment before turning it in.

Having students work in groups to design the rubric they would use if they were the course instructor is one way to have them review and synthesize class materials as well as predict various ways in which students could demonstrate knowledge. One assignment they do, for example, is create a CV. A CV or résumé may vary in presentation and content but always carries the same goal of convincing the employer to invite the candidate for an interview. So, when considering their CV construction, students should think about the myriad possibilities and use them when creating a rubric for this assignment. This practice of rubric reflection not only helps them create their CV, but it also helps them assess more accurately how much time a quality assignment will take to produce.

In an expanded version of this activity, you could also have students design their own assignment — complete with instructions, rubric, and pedagogical rationale — before asking them to complete and submit the assignment they designed. Original assignments have become my favourite to grade (if one can say such a thing about grading!).

3. Choice of Assignments: Allowing students to choose between two types of assignments (a final paper or an exam, a photo essay or a video project, a close reading or a preface for an imaginary anthology, etc.) empowers them to choose an assignment that is more enjoyable to them and that plays to their strengths. (Some students even choose the assignment that will help them improve on their weaknesses!)

I usually propose one more traditionally "academic" option and a second, creative option. I also put rules in place: students may not work on the same book for two different assignments, for example. You could also require students to do at least one "traditional" assignment over the course of the semester. As long as the rules are clearly outlined in the syllabus, students are usually very excited to "choose their own adventure"!

Just Jump

When I was first asked to write about change, I was somewhat hesitant. I did not want to be disingenuous, waxing poetic about the beauty of change when even minor changes make me rather nervous. It is also difficult for me to describe my relationship to change without thinking about the ways in which my personal and professional life were somewhat intertwined, particularly at the time of my life when I decided that change was necessary. This is one reason why I chose talk deliberately to overshare in the opening of this piece: it felt impossible to about academic growth in isolation from the rest of my life.

The next reason for oversharing directly concerns a belief I have about the role of empathy in building rapport. A not-insignificant percentage of the generation of students that we teach is affected seriously by anxiety. This is not exclusive to LU students, but I do suspect its effects are amplified by the trying circumstances in which some of our learners find themselves. Whether or not we believe that they should be leading a "life of the mind," for many of them, such academic tunnel vision is not in the cards. Preparing ourselves to empathize with them, regardless of our dearth held (or formerly held) ideals, is more productive than ignoring who they are. The personal and human part of my own history is what has allowed me to remove whatever metaphorical "sage" cloak I used to envision myself wearing and meet my students where they are so that I can help them grow from there — wherever their "there" might be.

People outside of the university sometimes picture academics as being locked up in an ivory tower from where we look down on the world. It is up to us to give the lie to that stereotype by stepping out of our tower and getting to know our students as learners and, to an appropriate degree, as people. My own experience has taught me that if I stand out on the ledge of that tower, remove my trembling hand from the wall behind me and just jump, most often, without even knowing they are doing so, my students will catch me. I encourage you to try it too!

Sarah Jacoba teaches French as an Associate Professor (Teaching) in the Department of Languages. She joined LU in 2017 and has won a Teaching Innovation Award (2019) and a Contribution to Teaching Award (2022). She is particularly interested in studying how peer assessment can be used to lower student anxiety.



Indigenous Spotlight

Conversation or Talking Circles in the Classroom - An Invitation to Change

Conversation or talking circles "are an accessible way for educators to draw upon and model Indigenous pedagogies [which] offer collective forms of learning and are grounded in relationality" (Danylyuk & Hanson, 2021, p. 1). They encourage reflection of our own thoughts and experiences as well as students' own thoughts and experiences. Online conversation or talking circles draw upon the sense of disconnection and isolation. Thus, having a positive impact on your teaching and your students' learning by helping transform relationships that can create change in your learners.

It is, of course, important to differentiate between sacred circles, sharing circles, and conversation or talking circles for the classroom. "A ceremonial sharing circle is a 'sacred tradition' that requires the presence of an Elder and usually involves sacred objects. In contrast, talking for conversation" circles draw upon tradition, but are less formal and can be used in the classroom" (Danylyuk & Hanson, 2021, p. 2). Talking or conversation circles are organized discussions "when a topic has no right or wrong answer. The purpose is to share ideas and points of view but not to reach decisions or consensus" in this way, everyone has a chance to express themselves and share their perspectives of their learning (Nelson Education Ltd. 2006, p. 1). It is such conversation circles that I want to focus on here. It is this slowed down pace of discussion that creates an atmosphere of respect which allows for emotional and spiritual ideas to enter into the discussion.

To keep the discussion open, where everyone feels welcome and participating, it is important to follow a talking or conversation circle protocol. It is the responsibility of the host of the talking or conversation circle to ensure that guidelines and protocols are followed. It is also important to remember that different nations use different protocols. It is important to learn circle protocols. "Everyone in the circle is treated equally. Not everyone agrees with each other, but everyone agrees that anyone who wants to speak should be given the opportunity. A speaker talks without verbal interruption until she/he is finished. Each person who sits with the Elders [or other learners] in the circle of learning assumes responsibility to either listen, to share, to teach, or to learn." (Archibald, 2008, p. 63). The goal is to make everyone feel valued and a respected part of the circle.

Once the circle returns back to the host it is important to acknowledge the participants for their contributions, clarify comments in a non-judgmental way, and, if questions are posed, this could be where they can be answered.

Please note: It is always advisable to connect with community Elders and Knowledge Keepers to learn appropriate protocols and their significance.

If you are interested in learning more, please reach out! jour1@lakeheadu.ca

Tech-Enabled Focus

Improvements to MyCourseLink!

Real-time integration for myCourseLink has been implemented. This upgrade automates the creation of online course sites and synchronizes enrolments in real time for an improved student and instructor experience. What this means for instructors and students starting Spring 2023:

- Instructors will see course sites in mycourselink without having to request them through MyInfo.
- Crosslinking between course sites has been improved.
- Course shells will initially be empty, meaning instructors can decide when and what content they want to transfer to their sites through the import feature.
- Registrations and withdrawals are immediately reflected on mycourselink classlists.

More information can be found on our [improvements to mycourselink 2023 web page](#).

Starting in Spring 2023, the email tool in mycourselink will be integrated with Lakehead's Gmail system meaning messages that are composed in mycourselink will be delivered to the intended recipient's Lakehead email address. To learn more about how the email system will function after the upgrade, visit the [mycourselink email tool webpage](#).

Faculty Development

SUMMER TEACHING INSTITUTE

Tips, Tools, and Techniques for Alternate Assessment

Tuesday, June 13, 2023 - DAY 1

Summer Institute Opening
9:00 am to 9:15 am

Group Work and Collaborative Assessment: Effective Strategies and Practices
9:15 am to 10:30 am
Speaker: Kelly Brennan, Instructional Designer, Teaching Commons

Indigenous, Adapting and Co-creating Communities
10:45 am to 12:15 pm
Speaker: Jeni-Lynn Orr, Indigenous Curriculum Specialist, Teaching Commons

Team-Based Learning I
1:00 pm to 2:30 pm
Speakers:
Dr. John Gowals, Graduate Coordinator, Associate Professor, Kinesiology
Prof. Brett Shaman, Business Professor and Program Coordinator, Confederation College

Team-Based Learning II
2:45 pm to 4:00 pm
Speakers:
Dr. John Gowals, Graduate Coordinator, Associate Professor, Kinesiology
Prof. Brett Shaman, Business Professor and Program Coordinator, Confederation College

Wednesday, June 14, 2023 - DAY 2

Integrating Technology into Course Design: Building Teaching with a Technology Toolbox
9:00 am to 10:30 am
Speaker: Kelly Brennan, Instructional Designer, Teaching Commons

Exploring AI in Higher Education
10:45 am to 12:00 pm
Speaker: Dr. Kevin Brooks, Social Justice Studies Program Advisor

Indigenous Perspectives and Social Assessment
1:00 pm - 2:30 pm
Speaker: Jeni-Lynn Orr, Indigenous Curriculum Specialist, Teaching Commons

Using Google for Collaboration, Presentation, Communication, and Organization
2:45 pm - 4:00 pm
Speaker: Kelly Brennan, Instructional Designer, Teaching Commons

Thursday, June 15, 2023 - DAY 3

Blended Learning and the Use of Videos
9:00 am to 10:15 am
Speaker: Kelly Brennan, Instructional Designer, Teaching Commons

Teaching Perspectives Inventory and Your Teaching Philosophy
10:30 am - 11:45 am
Speaker: Kelly Brennan, Instructional Designer, Teaching Commons

Closing
11:45 am - 12 pm

In-Person Social Event
12:00 pm - 2:00 pm
Thunder Bay and Orillia Campuses. RSVP required, see registration link.

Registration

Registration will allow you to choose your campus and specify any dietary needs for the in-person social event. All workshop sessions will take place over Zoom (except in-person social).

[Summer Teaching Institute Registration Link](#)

SoTL Spotlight

Carter, Patricia L., and Aliki Nicolaidis. "Transformative Learning: An Emotional (R)Evolution." Carter - 2023. *Wiley Online Library*, 14 Feb. 2023. <https://online.library.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ace.20476>.

Transformative learning is the process of constructive and meaningful learning that goes beyond knowledge acquisition and supports learners to make meaning of their lives. This update to Mezirow's Transformative Learning theory seeks to improve on the understanding of this theory and "stimulate new thinking about this topic in literature."

SoTel Spotlight

Flavián, Carlos, et al. "Intention to Use Analytical Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Services – the Effect of Technology Readiness and Awareness." *Journal of Service Management*, Emerald Publishing Limited, 21 Sept. 2021. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JOSM-10-2020-0378/full/html>.

This article discusses the "deep automation bias" inherent in AI systems. Flavián et al. explore the discord between the design and application of AI technologies in this short paper and how to detect this deep automation bias and suggest cautions or solutions for working around the biases.

High-Impact Practice

As the landscape of higher education continues to evolve, it's important to consider how transforming your teaching practice can help support the changing needs of today's students. Here are some valuable tips to help you embark on this journey:

- 1. Embrace Technology:** Incorporate digital tools and platforms into your teaching practice to enhance student engagement and facilitate remote or blended learning. Utilize online discussion boards, interactive simulations, and multimedia resources to make your lessons more dynamic and accessible.
- 2. Foster Active Learning:** Move away from traditional lecture-style teaching and prioritize active-learning strategies such as group discussions, problem-solving activities, and hands-on projects. This encourages students to be active participants in their own learning process, leading to better retention and application of knowledge.
- 3. Promote Inclusivity:** Create an inclusive learning environment that recognizes and values diversity among students. Use inclusive language, incorporate diverse perspectives in your curriculum, and provide accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure all learners feel welcomed and supported.
- 4. Provide Timely Feedback:** Regularly provide constructive and timely feedback to students on their progress, assignments, and assessments. This helps them understand their strengths and weaknesses and allows for improvement and growth.
- 5. Cultivate Critical Thinking:** Encourage critical thinking skills by posing open-ended questions, promoting discussions, and challenging students to think critically about real-world problems. This allows students to make meaning of the concepts and topics they are learning.

Remember, transforming your teaching practice is an ongoing process. Start small: "Rome wasn't built in a day," as they say. Making one small change each semester will allow you to scaffold change over time and gives you time to feel comfortable with the new strategies you've implemented. Stay open to feedback from students, reflect on your teaching methods, and continue to learn and adapt to the changing needs of your students. By taking these steps, you can create a transformative learning experience that empowers your students to thrive in the modern world.

Events Calendar

In addition to offering teaching and learning workshops for all faculty and graduate students throughout the Fall and Winter, the Teaching Commons is happy to provide individual and small-group consultations as well as department-specific workshops to your unit from May to July. Feel free to contact us with any specific topics or issues you would like to have addressed in an individual, small-group, or unit-focused session.

Some general topics you might like to have tailored for your unit, for example, could include Universal Design for Learning, Backward Design, Online Course Design for All Course Modalities, Providing Feedback Using Rubrics, Assessment Of and For Learning, etc.

In addition, recent academic developments may have brought new concerns to the fore, and you might like to have those addressed. Again, please reach out, and we will be happy to help: the summer is an ideal time to explore options, address concerns, and/or implement changes.

We also have a [Professional Development](#) section on our website that lists the self-study options. Perhaps these, too, can be of assistance to you and/or your academic unit.

[Professional Development Link](#)

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