Scaffolding a Transformative Transition to Distance and Online Learning
A Virtual Symposium Series

Introduction

In March 2020 post-secondary institutions all over the world were called to take immediate action in transitioning all in-person courses to distance and online learning formats. The University of Ottawa, like the majority of institutions across the country, experienced chaotic moments of pedagogic dissonance. During this transition, the University of Ottawa proposed a project to take stock and make sense of dilemma-ridden experiences, aiming to move instructors away from the "edge of chaos", as outlined by Kelly (2020), toward a clearer state of order and understanding of how to effectively design and facilitate learning in distance and online modalities. As part of an institutional SSHRC Connection Grant, the University of Ottawa proposed a series of three events spread across the 2020-2021 academic year to address the following key objectives:

1) to scaffold instructors in both reflection and dialogue regarding the transition of instructional practices to distance and online learning modalities, in support of the reintegration of renewed pedagogical perspectives and practices
2) to harness this period of reflection and questioning in order to rethink the teaching and learning paradigm, in particular the notion of student engagement (with the content, among fellow students, with the instructor, and with the relevant communities/professional partners) across a variety of instructional modalities
3) to cross-pollinate and exchange instructional and assessment ideas and practices across disciplinary boundaries
4) to foster opportunities to undertake and showcase action research examining instructional and learning experiences in distance and online modalities
5) to contribute to current research regarding the evolution of attitudes toward, and implementation of online pedagogies

Led by the Office of the Vice-Provost Academic Affairs and the Teaching and Learning Support Service (TLSS), the project was supported by the Student Academic Support Services (SASS), the university's Information Technology (IT) service, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning, and the members of the Advancement of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ASoTL) research unit.

The symposium series brought together three groups of university community members: a) instructors and graduate student teaching assistants; b) support staff from teaching/learning and student support services; c) scholars engaged both in action research related to their pedagogical practices and in research on distance and online learning. More specifically, a review of the statistics revealed the following breakdown in overall registrations: Administrators (n=34); Full-time Professors (n=131); Part-time Professors (n=145); Support Staff (n=89); Students/ TAs (n=41); and Other (librarians, members of external organizations, etc.) (n=39). Further review of the registration statistics revealed that 70% of the registrants were anglophone, 20% were francophone, and 73% of all registrants were affiliated with the University of Ottawa. Finally, the number of unique registrants who attended at least one session for each of the three symposium events is as noted: November 20th (n=92); February 17th (n=78); and May 10th (n=93).

With the generous support of D2L (Desire2Learn), a dedicated virtual symposium platform was co-created using the Brightspace learning management system. This platform served as a central hub for participants to connect to symposium sessions across all three events, on-demand resources and synchronous and asynchronous discussions. Access to the virtual platform will be maintained until early fall 2021, when session recordings and resources will be transitioned to a public uOttawa website.

Part 1: Symposium Summaries

An overview of the three symposium events will now be presented. Each symposium event began at 10:00 am and consisted of six interactive and informative sessions featuring keynote speakers, panelists, and the sharing of experiences leading to meaningful exchanges and discussions. Zoom links to each session were available on the platform and active 10 minutes before each session commenced.

First Virtual Symposium

The first symposium held on November 20th, 2020 initiated exchanges and discussions focused on 1) transforming attitudes toward distance/online modalities, and 2) transforming perspectives regarding the teaching and learning paradigm. Keynote speakers Benoît Raucent, Ph.D. (Université catholique de Louvain) and Jon Dron, Ph.D. (Athabasca University) offered insights into their own experiences with online teaching and learning and offered pedagogical suggestions for teaching and learning throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Session 1. The first session featured welcoming remarks from the Jill Scott, Ph.D. (Provost and Vice-President Academic, uOttawa) as well as an overview of student feedback provided through surveys and discussions about the university's transition to distance and online learning and meeting students' needs. Next, Aline Germain-Rutherford, Ph.D. (Vice-Provost Academic Affairs, uOttawa) introduced the purpose and goals of the symposium, highlighting the keynote speakers and individual sessions of the future events. The last 45 minutes of the session offered registrants an opportunity to reflect on and discuss dilemmas and challenges experienced during the transition to online instruction. Participants were assigned to small groups in Breakout rooms and using a series of guided questions groups were asked to document their reflections and discussion as a group in a Google Forms document. Following the activity, the results were anonymized, compiled and synthesized into a summary outlining common challenges and the most helpful strategies and resources used to overcome them. This summary was posted on this session page in the virtual platform.

Session 2. The first keynote presentation by Benoît Raucent, Ph.D. (Université catholique de Louvain), entitled *Key Questions and Reflections for Approaching Distance Instruction* served to provide those involved in distance education – professors, teachers, tutors, advisors, instructional designers, and management personnel – with insights into issues that arise when initiating distance education activities. The presentation also discussed fostering reflection geared

toward changing established distance education practices, with suggestions for improving the pedagogical online presence.

Session 3. Following the analysis of University of Ottawa survey data regarding instructor, student and teaching assistant transition experience, several key themes associate with these instructional issues emerged. This 45-minute session served to unpack and address these issues via a series of small group conversations. Facilitated using prompt questions in a Google Doc file to encourage solution-oriented collaborative brainstorming, registrants were invited to select from one of eight discussion topics by clicking on an associate link that was activated 10 minutes before the start of the session. Presentation topics included:

- *Topic 1: Active learning in online learning environments*
- *Topic 2: Designing and Implementing Meaningful Evaluations*
- *Topic 3: Presenting Cheating and Plagiarism*
- *Topic 4: Designing and Facilitating Group Work in a Virtual Context*
- *Topic 5: Teaching Large Enrolment Online Courses*
- *Topic 6: Community-building in online environments*
- *Topic 7: Ethics, Responsibilities and Netiquette*
- *Topic 8: Supporting Student Wellness*

Session 4. The fourth session entitled *Challenges and Opportunities* offered a snapshot of the lived experiences of transitions to online learning, featuring the following three professors:

- Alison Flynn, Ph.D., Faculty of Science (Chemistry)
- Judy King, Ph.D., Faculty of Health Sciences (Physiotherapy)
- Simon Beaudry, Ph.D., Faculty of Social Sciences (Psychology)

Panelists shared the most significant challenges encountered during the transition to online learning and the strategies they used to harness/leverage the opportunities this modality offers. Experiences were shared in English for a cumulative duration of 30 minutes with a 10-minute question period in both English and French.

Session 5. The second keynote presentation by Jon Dron, Ph.D. (Athabasca University) entitled *How Distance Changes Everything* discussed how in-person educational systems and teaching methods (pedagogies) have evolved and how these technologies have had adverse effects on learner autonomy and intrinsic motivation. Distance teaching creates new motivational problems of its own, especially with regard to social relatedness. However, it can solve some problems that are foundational and endemic in in-person learning, particularly in its support for learner autonomy.

Session 6. This final session entitled *Bringing it All Together and Looking Ahead* summarized the themes, ideas, practices presented and discussed throughout the day, this session aimed to present a sample toolkit of resources for educators to consider as they continued to plan, prepare and facilitate learning in online and distance modalities. Additionally, several resources were shared with participants including websites from various academic institutions focused on providing information, suggestions, tools, webinars, and modules to assist educators

with their continued online and distances learning experiences. Registrants were also invited to participate in the Participant Lounge on a continuing basis to engage in discussions and sharing with others and to provide feedback for further symposium events. Finally, registrants were informed about a publication envisioned after the symposium series has concluded, which will focus the lived experiences of those involved in the transition to online instruction.

Second Virtual Symposium

The second symposium held on February 17th, 2021 furthered exchanges initiated at the November 20th symposium, by focusing on 1) transforming attitudes toward distance/online modalities, and 2) transforming perspectives regarding the teaching and learning paradigm. Keynote speakers Martine Pellerin (University of Alberta) and Sean Michael Morris (University of Colorado) presented their work on motivation and attitudinal shifts in innovative and digital pedagogies.

Session 1. The first session of the February 17th symposium featured welcoming remarks from the Vice-Provost Academic Affairs of the University of Ottawa as well as an overview of the day's theme. The last 20 minutes of the session offered an opportunity to discuss the nature of attitudinal shifts in professors and students with respect to online instruction and learning. Using a short series of guiding questions, attendees were placed into small groups to share and learn from colleagues across disciplines.

Session 2. The first keynote presentation by Martine Pellerin, Ph.D. (University of Alberta), entitled *Distance/ Online Teaching and Learning in the Age of COVID-19: A Paradigm Shift to Transform Perspectives on Teaching and Learning* highlighted how the COVID-19 crisis is leading to transformations in pedagogical practices. In particular, Dr. Pellerin discussed how the role of the teacher is transforming into that of a coach, and that of the student into an active actor in the learning process. As a result, emerging pedagogical practices are aimed at engaging students through the co-construction of knowledge, the co-creation of content, inquiry-based learning and the development of solutions as global citizens to the global challenges and issues we collectively face. New technologies are also contributing to this paradigm shift by fostering new forms of presentation and expression of knowledge.

Session 3. During this third session, registrants were invited to select from four concurrent presentations. Focusing on resources and available services, these presentations covered a wide range of discussion topics, and resources shared during these presentations are included on the session page in the platform. The presentation topics included:

- *Online Transition of Student Academic Services* – presented by Olivia Faucher-Tatu (Manager of Academic Support)
- *Influencing the Indigenization of the Curriculum at the Faculty Level* – presented by Mona Tolley (Indigenous Curriculum Specialist)
- *Student Mental Health and Wellness Services* – presented by Rachelle Clark (Director, Wellness and Recreation Sector) and Audrey MacIntosh (Interim Case Manage, Counselling Services)

- *Rethinking the Netiquette* – presented by Marie-Pierre Dionne (Educational Development and Digital Learning Specialist)

Session 4. The second keynote presentation by Sean Michael Morris, Ph.D. (University of Colorado) entitled *Teaching through the Screen: Critical Digital Pedagogy after COVID-19* highlighted how a profound lack of literacy in digital pedagogies created a crisis that affected not only the curriculum, but the community of the classroom entirely. Many have supposed that out of this crisis might grow a new educational approach or institution—one that might support faculty and staff to advance educational equity and move away from the all too common one-size-fits-all approach of online learning. However, to affect this transformation, we must consider a critical digital pedagogy - one that integrates digital literacies with equitable practices to create meaningful learning on both sides of the screen.

Session 5. This session offered a snapshot into the lived experiences of two students and two professors from varied faculties about shifts in attitudes, perceptions, practices related to online learning and instruction. The student representatives included Samantha Toh (student in Second Language Teaching) and Tim Gulliver (student in Political Sciences), while Élaine Beaulieu (Professor of Biology) and Jacinthe Savard (Professor in Occupational Therapy) represented the experiences of professors.

Session 6. This final session entitled *Concluding Remarks and Looking Ahead* aimed to tie together the themes, ideas, and practices presented and discussed throughout the day. As a way of providing continuity to the conversations catalyzed during the symposium, an opportunity to participate in action research groups was highlighted. Inspired by Wenger's concept of Communities of Practice, the action research groups aimed to connect fellow instructors over similar online instruction/learning questions and areas of inquiry. The spirit of these groups was to dig deeper into these questions and find opportunities to collaboratively investigate them. Collaborative investigations might include sharing resources, collecting and analyzing data, and even reflecting on practice and research via a collective chapter or article. A first action research group meeting for each theme was proposed for mid-March, with the frequency of later meetings determined by each individual group.

Third Virtual Symposium

The last of the three-part symposium series held on May 10th, 2021 featured six informative and interactive sessions of keynote speakers and panelists reflecting upon their experiences from the last year of transitioning to distance/ online learning and the future of teaching and learning. In particular, this last event focused on 1) making sense of the mass transition to distance/online learning modalities and future directions and 2) showcasing instances of reintegrating practices at various institutional levels. Stephen Murgatroyd (Contact North), Pascale Blanc (Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie) and John Baker (D2L) served as speakers to bring together ideas, practices, and transformations from the former events along with current forward-looking research.

Session 1. The first session of this symposium commenced with welcoming remarks from the Vice-Provost Academic Affairs of the University of Ottawa as well as an overview of the

day's theme and results from the pre-symposium survey. The rest of the session featured a conversation with John Baker (CEO of D2L) and his views on transformations in educational technology and the future of distance/ online learning. The main take-aways from the discussion included the needs for personalized education to support students in attaining their individual educational goals. While the pandemic has revealed several issues with the use of technology in education, the session discussed how technology can break down geographical barriers, increase flexibility for students, and optimize the learning experience for all students. John Baker also discussed the ever-evolving nature of technology and shared his thoughts on how to ensure that all students continue to be supported in their learning.

Session 2. The first keynote presentation by Pascale Blanc, Ph.D. (Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie), entitled *E-Learning: Opportunities, Benefits, and a Lever for the Digital Transformation of Higher Education* highlighted how the almost exclusive use of videoconferencing education during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that the use of the Internet, educational technologies and digital educational resources to support learning was still very limited in terms of higher education teaching strategies. Dr. Pascale Blanc reviewed examples of e-learning and presented resources to support the implementation of digital e-learning approaches and the potential for educational transformation that they can bring about.

Session 3. During the third session, registrants were invited to learn about the uOttawa Community Service Learning (CSL) program and how it has transitioned during the pandemic. Guest speakers Alexandra Baril (Manager of Community Engagement, uOttawa) and Dr. Diana Mazutis (Telfer School of Management, uOttawa) provided course-based real-life examples of how students and employers have collaborated and supported one another during the pandemic, while also envisioning the future of CSL in the months and years to come. It was suggested that virtual placements will continue to expand not only in number, but in geographical and international partnerships to harness even greater opportunities for more strategic client-consultant projects to benefit all involved. The session concluded with questions from participants to further enrich the discussion.

Session 4. The fourth session featured a panel of four guest administrators from differing academic institutions in Ottawa including:

- Jill Scott – Provost and Vice-President, Academic Affairs (uOttawa)
- Jerry Tomberlin - Provost and Vice-President, Academic Affairs (Carleton University)
- Chris Janzen – Senior President, Academic (Algonquin College)
- Lynn Casimiro – Vice-Présidente à l'enseignement et à la réussite scolaire (La Cité)

Following the topic of *Lessons Learned and Transformations for the Future*, each guest administrator addressed educational changes within their institution over the last year and how these changes will inform future teaching and learning. Between panelist presentations, time was devoted to questions, discussion, and the sharing of experiences.

Session 5. The second keynote presentation by Stephen Murgatroyd, Ph.D. (Contact North), entitled *The Challenge of Shifting to a New Paradigm for Learning* highlighted how both learners and instructors had to adapt to new ways of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While some created exceptional learning environments, others failed to adapt to the opportunities. What the experience of "remote teaching" revealed was a limited understanding of pedagogy or the potential of engaged, peer to peer and constructivist learning models and approaches. Overall, the focus of the presentation was to provide insights into what is possible, the need to rethink learning as a process, and to re-examine our assumptions about assessment.

Session 6. The final session of the third virtual symposium aimed to tie together the themes, ideas, and practices presented and discussed throughout the day. The session also highlighted the direction of scholarship emerging from this three-part symposium series. As a way of providing continuity to the conversations catalyzed during the symposium, the opportunity to share one's lived experiences during the last year with the transition online/ distanced learning and the transformations that have occurred was discussed. Through connective writing and multimedia, a collection of testimonies will be compiled and disseminated towards a publication. Registrants of the symposium series will be contacted at a later date with more information about this opportunity, with the process beginning in the Spring/Summer 2021 semester and continuing through to the Fall 2021 semester.

Part 2: Thematic Analysis and Integration

Throughout the series of symposium events, several important themes emerged. The following section will highlight the main themes from each individual symposium, including pre-symposium surveys as well as emergent themes from applicable breakout room discussions. Next, the section will provide a thematic analysis across all three symposiums, integrating literature focused on higher education and the transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Emergent Themes from the First Symposium Event on November 20th, 2020

In a pre-symposium survey, registrants were asked to share three words to capture the online teaching experience. Reponses to this question centered upon five main themes including: 1) social isolation experienced by professors and students (i.e., feeling disconnected and awkward, a lack of engagement from students, and alienation from colleagues and peers); 2) positive professional development opportunities (i.e., exploring new approaches and engaging in pedagogical reflection that was challenging but rewarding; 3) the emotional toll of online learning (i.e., feeling fatigued, stressed, frustrated, exhausted, and anxious); 4) a dynamic and diverse space of possibilities (i.e., online teaching required creativity, flexibility, innovation, experimentation and adaptation, but it was transformative and exciting); and 5) an overwhelming increase in workload (i.e., online teaching was viewed as time-consuming, demanding, intense, and endless).

The second question asked respondents to share concerns with regard to students' online learning experiences. Responses to this question centred upon three themes: 1) Improving the online/distanced learning experience for students; 2) Ensuring equity and accessibility; and 3) Gauging the limits of online/distanced learning (i.e., how to know what students are actually learning and what are the possibilities in this online modality).

Several additional (and supporting) themes emerged during the Breakout discussions in Session 1, as well as each of the following sessions of keynote speakers and panelist discussions. In terms of the Breakout discussion groups, six main themes emerged: 1) the negative social and emotional consequences to student well-being; 2) the need for flexibility (i.e., with Zoom meetings, office hours, deadlines, and assignments); 3) managing an increased workload (for students and professors); 4) ways to monitor and increase student engagement and class interactions; 5) re-thinking approaches to how and what type of feedback is provided to students; and 6) logistic difficulties and concerns (i.e., technical difficulties and barriers, limitations within Zoom or other apps, and finding resources/ tools).

Discussion themes from the keynote featuring Benoît Raucent, Ph.D. (Université catholique de Louvain) focused on missed or hidden opportunities, fostering a learning community amongst colleagues and students, promoting student engagement, and creating a pedagogical presence online. Alternatively, discussion themes from the keynote featuring Jon Dron, Ph.D. (Athabasca University) focused on "un-teaching", de-coupling assessment and learning, balancing innovation with students' expectations, and personalizing education to meet students' educational needs. Finally, discussion themes from the panel featuring three professors from varied faculties and disciplines focused on academic integrity, student and professor well-being, building a community with students, course design, and the importance of collaboration (with students and colleagues).

Emergent Themes from the Second Symposium Event on February 17th, 2021

As with the first symposium, registrants to the second event were also asked to complete a pre-symposium survey. Responding to the same questions, similar themes emerged but with greater depth. When asked to share three words to capture the online teaching experience, responses centered upon: 1) the overwhelming and stressful nature of online/distanced teaching; 2) positive professional development opportunities; and 3) social isolation. Reponses to this question in the previous symposium saw professional development opportunities and the dynamic and diverse possibilities of online teaching as two separate ideas, however this time respondents appeared to view those dynamic and diverse possibilities as more directly related to professional development and increased competence. The emotional toll and overwhelming nature of online learning remained at the forefront of the teaching experiences, as well as feeling isolated and disconnected from others, with a greater focus now on teachers' own feelings of isolation.

Following the same format as the previous pre-symposium survey, the second question asked respondents to share concerns he or she may have with regard to the online learning experience of the students. Responses to this question centred upon three themes: 1) improving the online/distanced learning experience for students; 2) improving student engagement and motivation; and 3) supporting students' mental health. While the first theme re-emerged from the previous survey, the second and third themes shifted towards connections, community, reducing social isolation, and mental health concerns. Importantly, these three emergent themes from the second question continued throughout each session of the February 17th symposium event.

In terms of the Breakout discussion groups during the first session of the second symposium, three themes emerged: 1) pedagogical flexibility (to meet students' academic and social needs, and to improve student engagement); 2) the importance of collaboration (for both students and professors); and 3) addressing and supporting mental health concerns.

Discussion themes from the keynote featuring Martine Pellerin, Ph.D. (University of Alberta), on the development of autonomy, well-being, increasing student engagement, and creating a pedagogy of care. Alternatively, the most important themes from the keynote featuring Sean Michael Morris, Ph.D. (University of Colorado) included "teaching *through* the screen" and creating a pedagogy of care with human beings at the core of learning. This session furthered conversations about creating a pedagogy of care, with several attendees attempting to re-position themselves within their own disciplines and curricula. Finally, emergent themes from the student and professor panel included the importance of communication and listening to students, flexibility in varying educational contexts, addressing mental health concerns, and shifting away from traditional teaching methods.

Emergent Themes from the Third Symposium Event on May 10th, 2021

The pre-symposium survey for the final symposium of the series asked participants to respond to different questions than the previous two pre-symposium surveys. In the first question, registrants were asked to reflect upon their teaching experiences in the last year and list three tools, strategies, and/or practices they would keep. While emergent themes do not apply to this question, the tools listed included polls, Kahoot, quizzes, lecture tools, Q&A tools, videos, class recording, eClass, Zoom, and MS teams; whereas the strategies and practices listed included screen sharing, asking students to have cameras on, weekly evaluations, take-home exams, student consultations, group work, in-class problem-solving group sessions, case scenarios/case studies, flipped classroom design and indigenous approaches to the facilitation of learning.

In the second question, registrants were asked to list an instructional practice he or she would change or improve in their own teaching context. The two emergent themes from the response to this question include: 1) increasing student interest and engagement (practical applications); and 2) altering online platform options to better meet educational needs.

Several additional supporting themes emerged from keynote speakers and panelist sessions. Discussion themes from the keynote featuring John Baker (CEO of D2L) included personalized education to better meet educational needs, decreasing geographical barriers and increase flexibility for students, and optimize the learning experience for all students. In the keynote featuring Pascale Blanc, Ph.D. (Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie) discussion themes focused on the importance of collaboration, student-centered learning, experiential and peer learning approaches, and supporting teachers and administrators in the post-pandemic digital transformation and pedagogical shift. Alternatively, discussion themes from the keynote featuring Stephen Murgatroyd, Ph.D. (Contact North) included authentic assessment in online courses, the importance of collaboration (i.e., team course design), peer-based learning, stackable skills, individualized learning, and increasing students' digital competencies.

Finally, the third symposium of the series included two panel sessions. The first panel session focused on community service learning and the second featured senior administrators from four Ottawa-based academic institutions. Themes from the community service learning (CSL) panel centered upon: 1) increasing local and international partnerships, 2) decreasing barriers and increasing flexibility for students; and 3) building student competencies through increased opportunities. Further emergent themes from the panel of senior administrators included: 1) the caveats to offering fully online courses (i.e., time differences for international students, difficulties with technology, emotional fatigue for students and instructors, inclusivity); 2) offering the best academic experiences possible (i.e., all student services should be offered through remote delivery as well); and 3) pivoting post-secondary education to a hybrid format as a "new normal."

Overarching Themes Throughout the Symposium Series and Integration

A cross-analysis of the emergent themes from each of symposium was completed to determine if new themes emerged across events and how recurring themes changed as discussions deepened throughout the series. The cross-analysis distilled down to four principal themes.

One of the most prominent themes throughout the symposium series (pre-surveys and breakout discussions included) was *supporting the mental health and well-being of both students and teachers*. During the first symposium, the concern about mental health focused on feeling anxious, overwhelmed, and socially isolated from others. These concerns were directed towards both students and professors and there was a strong sense of uncertainty in how to support students' mental health and well-being. As the symposium series progressed, discussions included the concrete methods professors were using to support student well-being (i.e., checking in with students, adopting a more flexible pedagogical approach, and adapting the course design to meet students' needs). Even though specific requirements within disciplines may differ, and there is no "one" best strategy to learning in a virtual context, registrants appeared to be gaining confidence in their distanced/online teaching practices.

Originally conceptualized as two separate themes of *increasing student engagement* and *collaboration*, it became clear that the underlying theme was *the importance of building a community*. Present throughout each symposium event, this second overarching theme included professors' desire for collaboration with colleagues for support and to decrease feelings of isolation as well as promoting student interactions (i.e., offering group work opportunities or group chats) to decrease feelings of social isolation from their peers. Throughout the symposium series, discussions also highlighted the efforts of professors to build a community with their peers to improve the learning experience, making it more human and less disconnected.

The third overarching theme throughout the symposium events was *changes in pedagogical approaches to improve the learning experience.* During the first symposium, the focus of this theme was directed more towards learning how to use different online platforms and finding ways to be flexible in adapting course content to an online modality. As the symposium series progressed, registrants continued to reflect on previous assumptions about teaching and learning. As such, the nature of this theme broadened to inclusivity, academic integrity, and increasing flexibility in pedagogical approaches. By the third symposium, the theme broadened

further to a shift away from traditional teaching methods to experiential and student-centered learning as we move into a post-pandemic future. Continuing to ask, "How can we improve?" discussions focused on personalized learning approaches, meeting students' individual learning needs, ensuring that additional services are available remotely to students, and decreasing barriers to learning to ensure a more human learning experience for all students.

Finally, the fourth theme present throughout the three symposium events was *professional development and opportunities*. While teachers initially described the online modality as frustrating, exhausting, time-consuming, overwhelming, and emotionally draining, they also saw the positives and the possibilities. They viewed these possibilities as exciting and dynamic, allowing them to develop digital competencies alongside the students. Additionally, they now had a diverse space for creativity, innovation and experimentation that transformed their educational practices. As the symposium series continued, teachers shared strategies and pedagogical approaches they have adopted to mitigate the time-consuming and overwhelming nature of online teaching, and they continued to be excited and optimistic about future online teaching experiences.

A review of current literature brings forth the widespread effect of the pandemic on higher education and the transition to online learning. Countries all over the world have all attempted to document and make sense of the mass transition to online learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the current literature published in 2020 and 2021 focuses on the effectiveness of e-learning implementation (see Al-Kumaim, Mohammed, Gazem, Fazea, Alhazmi, & Dakkak, 2021; Cicha, Rizun, Rutecka, & Strzelecki, 2021; Saxena, Baber, and Kumar, 2021; Prestiadi, 2020) and relies on surveys as the main (and sole) method of data collection. For example, Saxena, Baber, and Kumar (2021) surveyed 435 students in India to examine variables influencing e-learning quality and satisfaction. Contrasting themes present in this symposium series, results showed that increasing social interaction and instructor empathy did not increase the students' satisfaction with online learning. However, in a survey of 445 students and 139 faculty members in the United Arab Emirates to understand initial experiences and satisfaction with the transition to online learning in March 2020, results found that both students and faculty members believed in the opportunities and advantages of distance learning, suggesting that learning institutions should continue to offer distance learning in the post-pandemic future (El Refae, Kaba, Eletter, 2021). These findings are consistent with themes present with this symposium series.

Focusing directly on mental health outcomes of college students in North America, Fruehwirth, Biswas, and Perreira (2021) surveyed 419 first-year students attending the University of North Carolina. Results showed a significant increase in anxiety for all students, particularly for white females and sexual/gender minority (SGM) groups. Additionally, general difficulties with distance learning and feelings of social isolation contributed to increases in both depression and anxiety for students. Researchers concluded that colleges may be able to reduce the mental health consequences of online learning during COVID-19 by investing in resources to decrease difficulties with distance learning and offering support services to reduce social isolation. While the symposium series at the University of Ottawa did not delineate specific types of mental health concerns and/or where students were in their degree, supporting students' mental health was a prominent theme.

While the University of Ottawa also surveyed professors, TA's, and students, the attempt to understand the facilitation of teaching and learning in distance and online modalities in higher education during a pandemic continued well past initial surveys into deep and enriching discussions where lived experiences were shared amongst a broad group of diverse university community members. Another prominent distinction from the current literature was who was involved as participants. The majority of the research examined students' and or faculty members' perspectives from only one institution at a time. In the case of the symposia held by the University of Ottawa, the scope of who was involved from the university community was much broader and extended to participants affiliated with differing universities across Canada, and even several from abroad.

Part 3: The Future of Teaching and Learning

As part of the intent of the third symposium, each session offered insights into the potential future of teaching and learning. Dr. Blanc suggested reducing lectures and redesigning courses to hybrid courses with a competency-based approach, fostering a deeper culture of sharing and enriching digital educational resources, and preparing students as informed citizens for jobs and digital competencies that are yet to exist. Meanwhile, Alexandra Baril and Dr. Diana Mazutis (Telfer School of Management, uOttawa) highlighted a CSL future with increased local and international partnerships while breaking down barriers and increasing flexibility for students as they build digital competencies. During the panel discussion with senior administrators, the panelists all agreed that online and remote delivery should extend beyond specific courses offered to include all services (i.e., student services, counseling, etc.) to better support the full experience of post-secondary education. The panelists also envisioned that higher education will not go back to "normal" and that a hybrid approach will likely be the future of post-secondary education at the institutions represented in this panel session. Finally, Dr. Murgatroyd predicted that "the game" of education and online/ distanced learning is changing, but that these changes will not be entirely transformative. Instead, these changes will happen gradually over time, and only if we take the steps to ensure that the lessons learned during the pandemic are not lost.

Overall, the discussions and experiences shared throughout this three-part symposium series indicate that the future of higher education following the COVID-19 pandemic will follow a hybrid educational model for its courses. Within this hybrid model, education will include a more focused approach to supporting the mental health and well-being for students and professors in varying educational contexts, as well as breaking down geographical barriers and harnessing international relationships to offer greater flexibility and accessibility to students. Finally, based on discussions throughout the symposium events, the future of education will involve a shift away from traditional teaching methods towards student-centered, experiential, and personalized learning approaches to better meet students' needs and promote a more human learning experience for all students. It is important to note, however, that while these comments, reflections, and experiences are valuable as we consider the online modality as a worthwhile investment for post-pandemic education, we must be mindful of context. For example, the stressors and challenges shared during the discussions may have related to the urgency with which teaching and learning transferred to the online modality. Additionally, contextual factors related to the pandemic itself may have influenced the experiences shared during the symposia and may not be solely representative of online teaching and learning. While the lessons learned during the symposia may

help to leverage and bolster existing strengths of the online modality towards an enhanced learning experience, more information is needed once the pandemic comes to a close. Specifically, how might online teaching and learning evolve when students willingly register for online courses that instructors have had an appropriate amount of time to purposefully design? In conclusion, the mass transition to distanced and online teaching and learning in the wake of COVID-19 brought a great deal of stress, confusion, and anxiety. However, discussions brought forward throughout this three-part symposium series have highlighted the resiliency of the academic community and an optimistic outlook towards the future.