The SoTL-ESL News
Special Issue 2023

GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE
CENTRE FOR Preparatory & Liberal Studies

UDL and SoTL

Dear Colleagues,

We are marking our third SoTL-ESL anniversary with a special edition focused on Universal Design for Learning (UDL). With this edition, we recognize how UDL has transformed teaching and learning, impacted our mindset and informed our approaches to educational technology within the School of ESL and Immigrant Education.

How did UDL gain importance at George Brown College? In the Dean's Insight, Susan Toews shares with us the history and development of UDL at the college – from the initial spark to the development and delivery of a UDL Certificate course that is now available to other colleges through eCampus Ontario.

At the School of ESL and Immigrant Education, more than 40 faculty members have completed the UDL Certificate creating a strong UDL community of practice. Our own EAP faculty and UDL facilitators, Anna Bartosik, Maria Glass, Ryan Morrison and Valerie Scovill have contributed to advancing an understanding of UDL in curriculum, educational technology and anti-racist education. In the spring term, we will hear from our CPLS colleagues, Elena Chudaeva, Sharon Hauck, Raj Khatri, Sarika Narinesingh, and Anne Song as they present a report on the findings of the *Faculty's UDL Mindset and Practices and their Barriers to UDL Implementation* research project. Examining faculty attitudes and perceptions toward UDL, the barriers to UDL implementation and the teaching practices being applied in classrooms, this project will inform further directions to UDL integration and implementation.

Sharing both her personal and professional perspectives of UDL, curriculum design, and teacher development, Valerie Scovill is featured in our Faculty Interview. Valerie shares her expertise with us, challenges our preconceptions about teaching and learning spaces and advocates for reflective and authentic experiences for our students.

In closing, a note of gratitude for all who share their knowledge with us through professional development activities while upholding teaching excellence in their classes!

Ana-Marija Petrunic
Co-Chair, SoTL-ESL

Member Highlights

We are pleased to congratulate the following members at the School of ESL and Immigrant Education on their important contribution to our SoTL-ESL community:

Grant

Anna M. Bartosik, *2022 STLHE Educational Developer Grant* recipient
  Project Title: *Tracing Learner Autonomy in Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions through Publicly Available Syllabi*
  This study will examine several components in Canadian post-secondary institutions' public-facing outlines/syllabi as the primary data source to examine if learner-directed and autonomous learning is evident at the point of instruction, identify areas for improvement, and whether regional differences exist.

Publications

Bartosik, Anna M. (2022). *Learning to stay ahead of the curve: A netnographic analysis of professional Development in English language teacher chats on Twitter* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/123569

Glass, Daisy, & Glass, Maria. (2022). *Integrated-skills activities for English language instructors*. eCampusOntario—Open Library. https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/rpa21/

Kushkiev, Plamen. (2022). *A critical exploration of the evolving identity and online pedagogical realisations of an EAP teacher during the COVID-19 pandemic: An autoethnographic study at a Canadian public college* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Sheffield]. White Rose E-theses Online. https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/31670/

Morrison, Ryan. (2022). *Large language models and text generators: An overview for educators* (ED622161). ERIC. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED622163

Itwaru, Sharmaine, & Scott, Donald. E. (2022). College instructor education: A model for effective student leaning. *International Journal for Leadership Learning. 22*(2), 31-67. https://doi.org/10.29173/ijll20

Presentations

Bartosik, Anna. M. (2022, November 15). *Prepping like an optimist, teaching like a pessimist: Considering the ethics behind the tech in order to be inclusive* [Conference presentation]. eCampusOntario TESS Conference, Toronto, ON, Canada. https://www.ecampusontario.ca/tess-2022/

Carozza, Nicola. (2022, August). Spotlight – Anna Bartosik: An interview with Anna Bartosik. *TESL Ontario Contact Magazine*. http://contact.teslontario.org/spotlight-anna-bartosik/

Costa, Celina. (2022, June 4). *Engaging your learners with virtual field trips* [Conference session]. TESL Toronto Spring Conference, Toronto, ON, Canada.

Costa, Celina. (2022, October 26—28). *Innovate your ESL teaching with accessibility tools* [Virtual presentation]. TESL Ontario Annual Conference, Toronto, ON, Canada.

Costa, Celina. (2023, February 4). *Google jamboard: Tips, tricks, and templates* [Conference session]. T4T TESL Toronto Conference, Toronto, ON, Canada.

Interview with Valerie Scovill

Valerie is entering her 40th year as a teacher and during those many years, she has taught at all levels from kindergarten to university. For 16 years she worked for the East York Board of Education, later amalgamated into the Toronto District Board of Education, and when she left, she moved into the college sector, first at Centennial College and then at George Brown in 2002. At GBC, she's been able to enjoy secondments in Staff Development (now the TLX) and Academic Excellence as well as participate in a variety of special, cross-departmental projects. However, she is always most at home with her EAP colleagues.

Thank you for joining us today for sharing your insight through our SoTL-ESL Newsletter. Could you please briefly share with us your professional background, including your work in the EAP curriculum development process?

Over my many years of teaching and learning, I've come to realize that curriculum design and revision plays an integral role. Approaching curriculum design from the perspective of where one wants to end up allows a systematic process in which all roads lead to the established outcomes, and designing curriculum in a collaborative way, which can be messy, offers benefits to our students with the program and individual courses better streamlined and more closely related.

In addition, as professionals working together toward a common goal, we can better support our students when we understand more about the program as a whole, and we can support our professional development through our experience with the curriculum design process.

In 2020-2021, I had the opportunity to support the curriculum revision at all (nine) levels of our full-time EAP program. In addition to aligning the EAP levels with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), faculty members at the School of ESL and Immigrant Education worked together to revise and create new content and develop assessment tools designed to evaluate course outcomes. We shared our ideas with one another, giving feedback and suggestions and celebrating the wonderfully creative and learner-focused tools and strategies that were produced collaboratively.

As we have learned, UDL, curriculum design, and teacher development are some of the areas which you are interested in. Would you briefly tell us about this particular interest and how they have influenced your (EAP) teaching in the process of supporting our students as well as our colleagues in their academic endeavours at the School of ESL and Immigrant Education?

It's my feeling that when we get curriculum right, we all—learners, teachers, and program—benefit. I have had many interesting opportunities over the years to work with individuals and whole programs, including EAP, to create and update curriculum. As colleagues work together and support one another in the process, we will, I hope, continue to build curriculum expertise throughout our division that we can apply as we revise and respond to teaching and learning changes and challenges of the future.

A few years ago, I was offered the chance to become involved in a proposed initiative at the college—the integration of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies into curriculum design and teaching/learning practices.

> "Approaching curriculum design from the perspective of where one wants to end up allows a systematic process in which all roads lead to the established outcomes, and designing curriculum in a collaborative way, which can be messy, offers benefits to our students with the program and individual courses better streamlined and more closely related."

> "UDL has helped us to build strategies into our teaching which encourage autonomy in our learners (engagement), to deliver information and concepts in a variety of ways (representation), and to give learners options for demonstrating their learning (action and expression) without built-in distractors and without compromising the integrity of the learning outcomes."

What does the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at the School of ESL and Immigrant Education (SoTL-ESL) mean?

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at the School of ESL and Immigrant Education (SoTL-ESL) was launched on November 4 of 2019 at George Brown College's School of ESL and Immigrant Education in order to enhance student learning through scholarly works among faculty members teaching English for academic purposes (EAP). Honouring the core values of SoTL and the nature of English language teaching and learning at the School of ESL and Immigrant Education, SoTL-ESL is defined at the School of ESL and Immigrant Education as the systematic study of teaching and learning in the English language teaching (ELT) field (*Research in ELT*) that involves the public sharing of the study findings and promotes scholarship among ELT teachers (*Scholarship in ELT*) in order to improve instructional practices and maximize learners' language learning. In addition, SoTL-ESL provides ELT teachers with opportunities for professional development (*Teaching and Learning Community of Practice in ELT*) at the School of ESL and Immigrant Education.

Building upon Felten's (2013)* principles of good practice in SoTL, SoTL-ESL includes inquiry into ELT that is methodologically sound and learner-focused, incorporates an awareness of the challenges unique to the ELT field, is conducted in partnership with learners in GBC's context, and is publicly available for critique and application.

*Felten, P. (2013). Principles of good practice in SoTL. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry: The ISSOTL Journal, 1*(1), 121-125.

SoTL-ESL: Three Domains
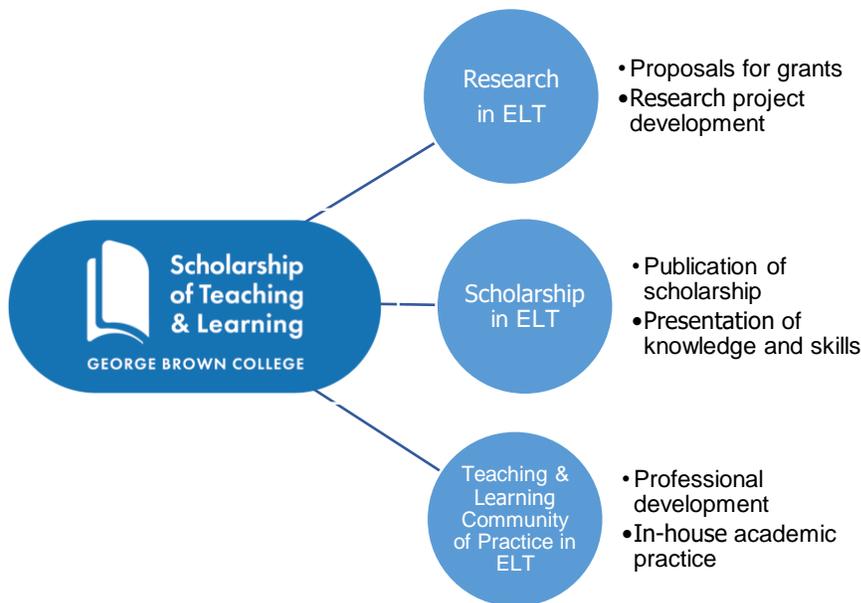
The SoTL-ESL Committee

Raj Khatri and Ana-Marija Petrunic (Co-Chairs)

Sharmaine Itwaru (*Research in ELT*)

Jeff Brown (*Scholarship in ELT*)

Andrea Rankin (*Teaching and Learning Community of Practice in ELT*)

Invitation to submit articles

SoTL-ESL is now accepting feature articles for its future issues. Faculty members are encouraged to submit their article with a maximum length of 1,000 words, including references. Articles previously published will not be accepted for re-publication. Review of articles submitted can take from 2 weeks to 1 month. Articles may address research in ELT or may highlight practical tips and strategies, including use of technology, instructional methods, materials and resources, curriculum design, universal design for learning (UDL) or assessment strategies in the field of TESOL and applied linguistics.

Dean's Insight

Universal Design for Learning: A Short History of UDL at George Brown College

By Susan Toews

"UDL [Universal Design for Learning] is a mindset, not a checklist." These words, spoken by Frederic Fovet, a well-recognized UDL scholar, at George Brown College's first UDL conference in 2016, continue to resonate with me, which often prompts me to ask: What does it mean to have a UDL mindset and why is it so important?

To me, a UDL mindset means believing that everyone can learn, given the right conditions, that learner variability is the norm, rather than the exception, that barriers to learning can and should be anticipated and reduced, and that the learner and the teacher are partners in the learning journey.

Thanks to many amazing faculty, administrators, and support staff at George Brown, the GBC community has made a great deal of progress over the years. The following is a summary of efforts, categorized under four strategic priorities. In my attempt to summarize, however, I am bound to overlook important work. Creating the culture shift to embrace UDL takes all of us, and every effort, whether recognized formally or not, is an invaluable part of this shift.

1. **Education**: Formal training is critical to establishing a common understanding of the UDL framework, concepts, and language. To establish this foundation, a team of faculty led by Ravinder Brar, former UDL Integration Lead, created *Universal Design for Learning: Inspiring Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education*, eCampus-sponsored UDL Certificate course in 2021 that is now being accessed by post-secondary institutions across the province. Mandy Bonisteel, CPLS (Centre for Preparatory and Liberal Studies), Jessie Paterson, Academic Excellence, and Joanna Friend, ECE/TLX worked with Ravinder to develop this well-received course. Faculty in EAP and other areas of CPLS have taken on leadership roles to lead cohorts through this training, and CPLS leads the way with the highest number of UDL Certificate graduates.

2. **Curriculum and Program Design**: A considerable amount of course development and program revamping has taken place in CPLS over the last three years. The UDL framework has served as a tool in this work with dedicated teams of faculty working collaboratively, often with Valerie Scovill, CPLS' resident curriculum specialist and UDL coach. One of the largest initiatives was the 2020 EAP all-levels curriculum development project, where UDL was used as a tool in creating incredibly high-quality online learning program that is well-respected within and outside of the college.

3. **Research and Communities of Practice**: In 2017, as Director of Student Affairs, I collaborated on a UDL research project with four academic divisions, including CPLS, along with multiple service areas. Our goal was to discern the factors that positively impact UDL adoption among faculty. The project explored the role of Chair leadership, peer support, coaching and resources. Participating faculty received guidance from Valerie Scovill and resources from various departments, including the Library, Academic Excellence, TLX, and Accessible Learning Services. Results showed that faculty benefited most from time to explore UDL, tailored guidance relevant to their specific courses, recognition and encouragement from their Chair, and support from their peers.

> "To me, a UDL mindset means believing that everyone can learn, given the right conditions, that learner variability is the norm, rather than the exception, that barriers to learning can and should be anticipated and reduced, and that the learner and the teacher are partners in the learning journey."

In 2020, we created the role of UDL Champion in CPLS, and many faculty from across CPLS engaged in this work, supporting training, developing resources, presenting at conferences, or providing guidance to their peers. At our annual mental health conference in March, a group of CPLS faculty will be delivering a workshop on UDL and student well-being, while another group of CPLS faculty from all four Schools has been working collaboratively over this last year on a research project to examine the factors that influence and conditions that support a UDL mindset and associated practice. A report is scheduled to be completed this spring. This important work will help us determine next steps in supporting faculty in UDL adoption across the College, as well as contributing to the limited body of academic research on UDL in higher education.

A Note of Gratitude

Members of the SoTL-ESL community at the School of ESL and Immigrant Education would like to thank Dr. Maria Glass for her service to the community. Dr. Glass co-led the *Teaching and Learning Community of Practice in ELT* for three years from 2019 until 2022. During her leadership, she played a key role in the establishment and promotion of SoTL-ESL at the School. Collaborating with Ms. Andrea Rankin, she created numerous professional development opportunities for faculty as part of their commitment to advancing SoTL-ESL initiatives and helped guide SoTL-ESL. In 2022, in collaboration with her sister, Daisy Glass, she published a book titled *Integrated-skills activities for English language instructors*, which is available online on eCampusOntario—Open Library and is one of her many SoTL-ESL highlights: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/rpa21/. Thank you, Dr. Glass, for your contributions!

To access our previous interview with Dr. Glass, please click here.

Dean's Insight

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4. **Policies and Systems**

In 2017, Academic and Student Affairs (ASA) created a self-audit tool for service areas, built on the UDL framework. Post-audit, all ASA service areas worked on initiatives to widen access and increase engagement and inclusion. For example, Academic Excellence revamped policies and processes for new program development and program review to include specific reference to UDL. We presented our UDL service review initiative at the second Pan Canadian Conference at the University of Prince Edward Island that year and also coordinated a conference for the ASA division, focusing on designing services for access, engagement, and inclusion.

In 2018, we created the role of Access and Inclusion Coach and hired Ravinder Brar to work with teaching faculty and accessibility consultants to advance understanding of UDL and to reduce the need for the most common accommodations, such as extra time on tests and notetaking, through course design and integration of technology. At a provincial level, we advocated for collaboration across colleges and academic and service areas to improve as a sector on issues in accessibility and inclusion. In 2020, we created a GBC Designing for Inclusion taskforce, bringing together administrators across the college to raise awareness of issues and work collaboratively on solutions as well as a UDL Committee to steer UDL education, communities of practice, and SoTL work. Connections were made with Higher Education Quality Assurance Council of Ontario (HEQCO) to help build a provincial network and many CPLS faculty participated in and presented at UDL conferences. This work led to the creation of the Inclusive Learning Mandate, now part of Strategy 2026.

As we move forward into this new year, building on this solid foundation of UDL exploration and development, I thank all of those who have opened their minds and hearts to learning about UDL and those who have stepped up to provide leadership to others. To me, there is nothing more important than creating accessible, engaging, inclusive and barrier-free learning experiences at George Brown College, where everyone has a sense of belonging and an opportunity to be the driver of their own learning journey. UDL has the potential to help us achieve this goal.

Learn & Share Corner

Check out the following information for the latest developments in the field.

Journals and Newsletters

a. The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
b. The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language
c. TESL Canada Journal
d. TESL Ontario CONTACT
e. TESOL Connections

Conferences and Workshops

a. AAAL 2023 Annual Conference (March 18-21)
b. TESOL 2023 International Convention & English Language Expo (March 21-24)
c. STLHE 2023 Annual Conference (June 13-16)

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

a. Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Canada
b. International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSoTL)
c. Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE)

Awards and Grants

a. CDAG's (Curriculum Developers Affinity Group) Research, Innovation, and Scholarship – Call for Proposals (Deadlines: March 3, 2023)
b. Canada Educational Foundation Grant and Scholarship (Deadline: April 3, 2023)

Member Highlights

Presentations

Kucanin, Erna. (2022, October 26—28). *TechKnow session: Spatial.io for engagement in English language learning programs* [Virtual presentation]. TESL Ontario Annual Conference, Toronto, ON, Canada.

Kushkiev, P. (2022, August 5—7). *EAP teacher identity as pedagogy: Why our personal and professional stories matter* [Conference presentation]. MMVC22 Annual Virtual Conference. Toronto, ON, Canada.

Kushkiev, P. (2022, December 2—4). *(Re-)Constructing reflexive and projected identity facets through language: an EAP teacher identity negotiation during the emergency online teaching* [Virtual presentation]. Connect & Exhale: Educators Post Pandemic. Mount Saint Mary College, Newburgh, NY, United States.

Itwaru, Sharmaine. (2022, November 16—18). *Decolonizing higher education pedagogy: From Theory to practice* [Virtual presentation]. Curriculum Developers Affinity Group Annual Conference. ON, Canada https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/rpa21/

Interview with Valerie Scovill

As Professor at the College, would you mind sharing with us your role and how you have engaged in supporting students and teachers, particularly at the time when all instructional and curriculum activities are online?

When the pandemic started, the program I had been involved for 13 years on and off—College Teachers Training Program (CTTP)—was suspended and I was seconded part of the time into the Teaching and Learning Exchange (TLX). The TLX faculty had been hit with the major and immediate challenges of supporting faculty across the college to move their courses online and adjust their teaching practice. Many teachers were fairly comfortable with teaching online and needed a few tweaks, but many had not taught in the online environment and were distressed and anxious about how to best work with their students. The TLX faculty needed some help, and although I was no expert, I did my best to support both my TLX and my teaching colleagues. The learning that we gained through that experience which was forced upon us was more than any of us could have imagined, but what rises above that for me was the dedication shown by teachers as they figured out how to do whatever was necessary in order to create the environment that would lead to the success of their learners, and how we came to manage within the understanding that we were all struggling in our own ways.

In addition to your teaching and curriculum development across the College, you continue to professionally engage at the same time in and outside of GBC. Could you share your insights into how we, faculty members at the School of ESL and Immigrant Education, can continue our professional development opportunities and stay current in the field while supporting student success at the same time?

We have so much expertise and experience to share with one another within the School of ESL and Immigrant Education and beyond. This fall, we are working more closely than we ever have before with many of our colleagues in CPLS, and this is an opportunity for sharing what we do and perhaps making some partnerships that will benefit our own learning as well as the success of our learners. We can also continue to benefit from the curriculum and pedagogical lessons learned during the pandemic teaching, use the best of the technology tools available to support our learners, and share our knowledge and expertise with and learn from colleagues in and outside GBC as part of our professional development in the field.

> "The learning that we gained through that experience which was forced upon us was more than any of us could have imagined, but what rises above that for me was the dedication shown by teachers as they figured out how to do whatever was necessary in order to create the environment that would lead to the success of their learners, and how we came to manage within the understanding that we were all struggling in our own ways."

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at the School of ESL (SoTL-ESL)

Learn something; share something!

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