Looking Backward, Moving Forward

Dalhousie University commenced its 200th anniversary celebrations with a re-telling of the institution’s history by esteemed alumnus, seventh parliamentary poet laureate, and Nova Scotian, Dr. George Elliott Clarke. The university’s decision to commission a bicentennial poem to look backwards as it also moves forward emphasizes how historical context follows us well into the future.

During Dalhousie’s history many difficult, oppressive, and complex legacies have made themselves known, forcing the community to seriously consider the university’s historical impact on the present, “… un passé qui ne passe pas.” While the institution’s namesake carries the colonial weight of its founder, the university has been working towards intentionally recognizing the effects of such a legacy. In particular, a panel led by Dr. Afua Cooper is in the process of examining Lord Dalhousie’s associations with slavery and racial injustice. The release of their findings is expected during the bicentenary (McNutt, 2018).

Other initiatives that publicly address legacies of the colonial past include a mace re-visioning committee tasked with managing a process to create a symbol inclusive of all Dalhousie community members. Partnerships with under-represented student and faculty populations, and the inclusion of medicine pouches at convocation for Indigenous graduates and kente sash for African Canadian graduates begins to create space for a variety of voices. The introduction of curriculum modifications and addition of new programs such as the certificate in Indigenous Studies, an Indigenous Health Program in medicine, and a first-year course on Aboriginal and Indigenous Law in response to the TRC Calls to Action begin to address injustices that influence the present teaching and learning context. In The Story of Dalhousie; Or, The University as Insurgency, Dr. Clarke (2018) mentions important formative historic initiatives that encouraged some of the university’s most recent endeavours:
Arguably, anyway, the most rad uptakes at Dal were the Transition Year Program and the later Indigenous Black and Mi’kmaq Law Initiative, both urged on by Burnley “Rocky” Jones’s analysis—to whitt, that one way that the poor and Indigenous, the criminalized and “Coloured,” remain perpetual paupers, social outsiders, is via their supposed inadmissibility to university and law-school palaver—those organs and engines of bourgeois hegemony. Add to these programs the Maritime School of Social Work and Dal Legal Aid, and Dal evolves into a nexus, a matrix, of potential change-agents (i.e., Saul Alinsky acolytes)....

While these ventures move Dalhousie toward an improved future, there’s still much relational work to be done to achieve the ideal to which the institution aspires.

On May 2-3, 2018, those in attendance at the Dalhousie Conference on University Teaching and Learning (DCUTL) will tackle the theme “Exploring the Future(s) of Higher Education: Supporting Inclusive Teaching Excellence.” As a significant teaching and learning celebration during Dalhousie’s bicentenary, the DCUTL acknowledges that, “What it means to know, to learn, and to teach has changed significantly over the last 20 years, yet some aspects of our collective and individual teaching and learning practices have not changed at all. …Our choices about which pathways we will embrace are a crucial conversation for higher education” (Centre for Learning & Teaching, 2018). Participants at the conference are encouraged to envision and discuss what the future of teaching and learning could and should look like.

Imagining the future isn’t an easy task and often relies on what have become expected tropes. For example, my own work explores how popular agricultural exhibitions and World’s fairs often included futuristic elements as an opportunity to define progress and educate visitors according to that meaning. In 1934, the unique technological developments on display at the Calgary Exhibition & Stampede included Alpha the Robot—a “mechanical man” weighing 7000 lbs, and billed as “one of the scientific marvels of the age.” The “Salute to 100 Years of Progress” celebrated the centenary of Canada’s first act of Confederation and incorporated a display of laser beam equipment, video-telephones, and the “Rocket Man” who would zoom off into space twice daily (Joudrey, 2013). When we consider “the future” it can be difficult to ignore the science-fiction promises of flying cars, personal robots, or space settlements (I’m looking at you “The Jetsons”). These visions of what-could-be were heavily invested in mechanical and technological gains with less consideration for improving societal relationships.

Occasionally, we adopt a similar outlook when considering the future of higher education. It’s not surprising that many research hours have been dedicated to the important and influential technological and mechanical futures of post-secondary institutions. The technological changes in our society have been rapid, and educators and learners both hope to understand the impact of various technologies on learning. However, Jessica Riddell (2018), the Stephen A. Jarislowsky Chair of Undergraduate Teaching Excellence at Bishop’s University, recently had the opportunity to ask university presidents, administrators, faculty, educational developers, staff and students about the latest trends, opportunities, and challenges in learning and teaching. Responses were varied and included a range of concerns such as online learning, experiential learning, accessibility, mental health, Indigenization and inclusion. She suggests that we need multiple round tables to fulfill the individual desire to be treated with dignity and self-determination, and the first step is to,

…invite under-represented and marginalized people to our existing tables within the university. We must insist that every table includes the voices of our Indigenous peoples—as elders, administrators, faculty, students, community leaders. We must insist that students sit at every table. We must ensure that our existing tables are spaces that reflect equity, diversity and inclusion.

Like Riddell, the articles featured in this edition of Focus takes the importance of relationship very seriously. In anticipation of the DCUTL, the authors reflect on the future of teaching and learning at the university. Where have we been? Where are we going? How can we get there?

The authors’ commentaries speak to one other. All of the contributions demonstrate concern for future students, and hope to create space for diverse populations, diverse ideas, and diverse learning. In “Journeying towards inclusion,” Dr. Fiona Black, (Associate Vice-President, Academic) reminds us that
The very nature of inclusion means that teachers and learners may have deeply personal visions and expectations of what the term should mean, and different expectations of what a journey towards inclusion should look like. I have been humbled for many years—at Dalhousie and elsewhere—by the generosity of spirit of those who have helped me on my own learning journey about what it means to be truly inclusive. At Dalhousie, we have reports and plans that have contributed materially over the past five years to an increasingly shared sense of the meaning of inclusion. Some early conversations about inclusive teaching excellence were spurred by documents available to all members of the Dalhousie community on a website called, simply and importantly, Belong. All of these documents were in response to some form of systemic concern, including of course the Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Through individual and collective efforts, many of us can point to changes we have made in program content and teaching methods. These are to be celebrated, whilst recognizing that our journey towards inclusive teaching practices has really only just begun.

The published scholarship of teaching and learning has long provided evidence that inclusive approaches to program development and teaching broaden the minds of all involved as well as creating welcoming learning environments.¹ Inclusive approaches impact the teacher as much as the learner since such methods lead to learning environments where respect for difference is a clear foundation. The rationale for “respect for difference” is, for some, self-evident, due to the horrendous political and cultural inequities faced by so many of our planet’s residents. Others might argue that western ways of knowing and of scientific inquiry along with the dominance of English as our

¹ A helpful literature review and commentary is found in Daryl G. Smith, “Student Learning and Success,” chapter 7 in Diversity’s Promise for Higher Education: Making it Work. 2nd ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015, pp. 210-242.
lingua franca (with all the results that brings) justify a continued focus on “business as usual.” One challenge for all of us as instructors is that “we do not know what we do not know.” Several intervening variables have shifted the landscape and propelled those in post-secondary education to engage in self-reflection. The first of these has been growing exponentially in recent decades due to the availability of relatively cheap flights for travelling the globe. This variable has materially impacted the numbers of students, and to a lesser extent, instructors, who travel to learn and to teach. A second intervening variable that has complex interactions with, and impacts on, the first one is the ubiquity of mass news media that rarely provide neutral and balanced reporting. A further variable is individual and institutional uncertainty in the face of changing expectations. These expectations include: those we set for ourselves as instructors that often require specialist guidance; those from students who hope to improve society through meaningful work; and beliefs held by taxpayers about the purposes of education.

Goals to foster meaningful change in any complex institution require an underpinning of optimism, persistence and fortitude. Such goals also need to be jointly developed, ideally with all stakeholders. Dalhousie’s overarching strategic priorities were developed through such a method and are, as a result, worded in relatively general terms. Digging deeper into the objectives for each teaching and learning priority, and aligning them with the goal to “foster a collegial culture grounded in diversity and inclusiveness” is where the rubber truly hits the road. If we are to innovate or help evolve our curricular content and our methods for teaching without considering diversity and inclusion, we are doing a disservice not only to our students, but to ourselves and the future of our planetary home. Meaningful curricular work for diversity and inclusion is rigorous and therefore hard work, and cannot in all fairness be left to the few to champion. Across all too many institutions, we speak with honest intent about including perspectives new to us, and then we rely on a relatively tiny group of colleagues to come into our classrooms to present those perspectives. This is a step forward in some ways, and an entirely misjudged approach in others. We all need to learn what it means for our disciplines, and our life on Earth, to approach our scholarship with different lenses, to develop our courses through probing and challenging questions, to teach in a way that invites clarity around different perspectives and that fosters respectful debate.

Wanda Thomas Bernard has written of the individual and institutional responsibilities for diversity and inclusion, especially in relation to social change, and characterizes this work as “creating brave spaces.”

Evolution of academic programs occurs iteratively and is driven by new scholarship, new methods for teaching, as well as by Faculty or institutional level goals. Evolution also occurs when academic quality assurance processes actively support such goals. Approval of academic programs and their ongoing quality is part of the mandate of Senate. Support for the evolution of existing programs and the development of new ones is part of my mandate as a member of the Provost’s team. Senate committees and the Provost’s Office work closely together and, collectively, we pose supportive yet challenging queries about the proposed content for new programs. Significantly, the proposed new Senate Policy for Faculty Reviews of Academic Programs, includes the following section: “Culture of Respect and Inclusivity. Dalhousie seeks to increase diversity and inclusion through program design and delivery.” The Policy then poses questions that program leaders as well as review teams need to address: “How does the program ensure inclusive program design and teaching practices that include different ways of learning and knowing and intercultural perspectives? If the program controls its own recruitment and admissions, how does the program contribute to access and pathways for historically underserved student populations? How diverse is the faculty complement delivering the program as measured by the categories in the Dalhousie Census? What plans are in place to maintain or increase the diversity?” By posing such questions for all program reviews, Senate is expecting, and supporting the goal of, greater diversity and inclusion across all of our programs.

Inclusion is the opposite of exclusion. In Canada, we aim to welcome debate on difficult topics, whilst upholding federal and provincial laws that protect rights and freedoms. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees certain freedoms.

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2 Dr. Thomas Bernard contributed the lead article, about experiences in Dalhousie’s School of Social Work, in CLT’s themed issue on diversity and inclusiveness: Focus on University Teaching and Learning 23.3 (Fall, 2015): 1-3.
to everyone in our country including freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression. We are on a determined—and determining—journey at Dalhousie to ensure that we fully recognize difference as a part of inclusiveness, and as part of avoiding discrimination. There is one element relating to inclusion that, while discussed within some Faculties, has recently been taken up by Senate colleagues. This element relates to the very definition of a student and has a connection to the need to avoid discrimination related to age, family circumstance, etc. I feel very encouraged that we may adopt a definition of a Dalhousie student that is inclusive of our learners in designated pathways or professional development programs. Program structure and timing should be as inclusive as program content. In some cases, separation of professional development from direct-from-high school as well as entry-to-practice degree programs is justified. In other cases, however, we do a marked disservice to many mid-life learners through a calendar structure that largely ignores the evening and weekend hours when many of these learners are able to study.

Inclusion’s scope is broad and deep and one of the many benefits of Dalhousie’s investment in our excellent Centre for Learning and Teaching is the recent appointment of Tereigh Ewert-Bauer, specialist in diversity and inclusivity. Actively pursuing inclusion in a teaching and learning environment is complex, hard and essential. Our journey is far from over. In years to come, I trust that higher education will have played a key role in helping this bonnie blue planet to be a place where we live in harmony with all members of our own and other species.

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**The Centre for Learning and Teaching and the Faculty of Graduate Studies Welcome**

Dr. Nanda Dimitrov  
Director, Teaching Support Centre, Western University


**Supervising Across Cultures**  
**Thursday, October 4 from 9:30 am to 12:00 pm - Macdonald Building, University Hall**

*Faculty and instructors workshop.*

The session will explore strategies for supporting graduate students and supervisors who collaborate across cultures on international and interdisciplinary research teams, at the intersection of multiple cultural and disciplinary backgrounds and identities.

**Building Successful Academic Relationships Across Cultures**  
**Thursday, October 4 from 2:00 to 4:30 pm - Macdonald Building, University Hall**

*Graduate student and postdoctoral workshop.*

During the session, graduate students and postdocs will work together to develop strategies for responding to challenging supervision scenarios; practice giving and receiving feedback across cultures effectively, navigating the power gap between you and your supervisor and explore strategies for getting the mentorship you need to succeed in a global academic and professional environment in graduate school and beyond.

For full abstracts and to register for the events, visit dal.ca/clt.
Dr. Craig Steven Wilder, PhD, MIT professor, author, prison reformer and social activist, was on the Dalhousie campus March 28th and 29th as the initial speaker in the 2018 Belong Forum series devoted to diversity and inclusion. His book *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities* details how many universities were founded on and sustained through the slave trade.

During one of the informal sessions following the Forum, a student asked how to generate change if students from different cultural groups are not interacting with one another? This made me wonder, if the students at Dalhousie are not encouraged to foster relationships beyond their own communities and personal comfort, how then do we effect change? Dr. Wilder referenced the Black Lives Matter movement, which started in 2013 and is active on many university campuses. One reason for the effectiveness of the movement is that it attracts support from the whole community, not just from students of colour. He suggested that an effective method to raise awareness of longstanding issues is to have a coalition of student and faculty voices joining together.

The best way to accomplish change is when the whole community lends its collective voice. I applaud President Florizone for the many efforts he has supported to truly make Dalhousie a learning community for all. However, if the entire community, including faculty and staff, don’t actively and intentionally adopt his approach, university initiatives will lack impact. We can only generate true change if the beneficiaries of the power imbalance are willing to step outside of their comfort zones and join the struggle.

As I reflect on the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination, I can’t help but acknowledge that, to some extent, we have come a long way in opening educational opportunities to people of colour. The opportunities may not have been given freely but I am optimistic that change will continue if we persist in making our presence known and voices heard.

Dr. Wilder’s presentation and subsequent discussions made me reflect on my travels through our educational system. By the time I arrived on this university campus as a very mature student, I knew it was my right to be here.

The Belong Forum continues throughout Dalhousie University’s bicentenary with a variety of diverse speakers. I hope the Dalhousie community — faculty, staff, students, and alumni — take advantage of the opportunity to support diversity and inclusion in this and other ways on campus.

We can only generate true change if the beneficiaries of the power imbalance are willing to step outside of their comfort zones and join the struggle...
Bias and the Internet: The Role of Libraries and Information Literacy

Introduction

Few people still view the internet as a death blow to libraries, but many are unsure under what terms they coexist. When libraries first opened their stacks to an increasingly educated public, librarians quickly found that the system of organization that made so much sense to them made none to their patrons. When librarians rose to the challenge of helping their patrons interpret this system, reference as a service was born (Tyckoson, 2011). During a time when the public was becoming increasingly educated and information was proliferating, the librarian’s role was to provide access to and help patrons use the resources (Tyckoson, 2011). This role has not changed. What has changed is the idea of the librarian as a gatekeeper to a world of information that their profession has curated. We still have excellent collections of books and subscription databases that match our users’ needs. But we also have the internet, where most of our students live, interact, and at least (in some cases end) their research. The internet is a varied and often polarized place, and the role of the librarian is to help students develop ways to critically distill fact from opinion, science from spin and, more recently, information from “disinformation,” or, information that is purposely misleading (Fallis, 2015).

Cognitive bias

We all have cognitive biases, and they can limit our judgment. The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (Reber, Allan, & Reber, 2009) defines confirmation bias as “[t]he tendency to seek and interpret information that confirms existing beliefs.” Recently, the media has focused on the impact of confirmation bias with regard to the influence of false or heavily biased information. Librarian Lane Wilkinson (2017) expressed it best when he observed that fake news has found a way to monetize confirmation bias, though I don’t think fake news is the first to do so. Our susceptibility to confirmation bias is partially about protecting our identities, and wanting to believe information that positions us on the right side of truth.

We have to reckon with confirmation bias whenever we encounter new pieces of information, particularly those that ask us to take a side on an issue or believe something that many others do not.

Part of helping learners negotiate the divergent and contradictory nature of online information is giving them an opportunity not only to confront their own biases, but to confront bias in the search algorithms they use as well. Safiya Noble (2018), an Information Studies scholar, has published a new book called Algorithms of oppression: How search engines reinforce racism. Noble’s work looks at how Google search results and autofill suggestions impact how we see ourselves and the world around us; how our own biases shape and are shaped by search algorithms. We use Google for searching and “lookup,” but Noble reminds us that Google does not use an information retrieval algorithm designed to find the “best” information. Rather, Google uses an advertising algorithm that is designed to present users with a series of links that are appealing to that user, popular with others, and beneficial to advertisers. Acknowledging personal and search engine biases is the first step toward a more critical relationship with online information.

Information literacy threshold concepts

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) approved a new Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education in 2015, and it is grounded in threshold concepts theory. Threshold concepts are likened to portals that open up previously inaccessible ways of thinking, or a transformation of understanding (Meyer & Land, 2003). They represent difficult core concepts within disciplines that, once grasped, allow learners to move forward in the discipline. Among the threshold concepts posited for information literacy, two in particular stand out as relevant to this discussion: “Authority is Constructed and Contextual,” and “Information Creation as a Process.” Put simply, we should be asking learners to think about who created the information they are consuming and by what means, or how, it was created.

“Authority is Constructed and Contextual” as an information literacy concept suggests that learners begin to recognize established authorities in their discipline,
and also determine how established authority might prevent marginalized voices from being heard (ACRL, 2015). Badke (2015) makes the distinction between expertise and authority. The former is a characteristic of an individual after years of study or work, and the latter is granted externally by a community. Given the ease with which information can be gathered online, Badke uses Patrick Wilson’s terminology to suggest students have developed an “administrative” rather than “cognitive” sense of authority. In other words, students understand scholarly work as authoritative because they have been instructed to see it that way. Students should instead be encouraged to think about authority in terms of expertise, to consider by what means a person might become authoritative on a subject, to become accustomed to investigating the credentials of the individuals whose words they choose to share, reproduce, or cite.

Understanding “Information Creation as a Process” involves realizing that the process by which a piece of information came into being can reveal clues as to its credibility (ACRL, 2015). Evidence of process might include links, citations, interview quotations, or a notation of peer review. Process also could be evident in the writer’s status as a journalist at an established news source and thus subject to journalistic integrity, or a person with first-hand knowledge of a subject developed through years of experience.

A study from Columbia showed that 60% of links posted to social media were not clicked. In other words, the majority of users were sharing content on social media without even scanning the article. A multi-state study from Stanford (Wineburg et al., 2016) found that students are adept at using platforms, but not at evaluating information. Parts of the study showed that students are likely to accept claims at face value rather than investigating the source of those claims. In order to think critically about the information we encounter online, we not only have to engage with the content itself, but we also need to return to the source and question its validity.

What we can do

1. Provide learners with frameworks against which to evaluate online information

Many are familiar with the cheekily named CRAAP test (Blakeslee, 2004), which asks learners to evaluate online information for Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose. The slightly modified RADAR (Relevance, Authority, Appearance, Reason) approach (Mandalios, 2013) is less well-known. Both, as Wilkinson (2017) points out, emphasize an article’s usefulness rather than its reliability, and both unrealistically assume students are always in the position to appropriately judge the content of articles that may be beyond their scope of expertise. Both CRAAP and RADAR are useful starting points, and are worthwhile for students to know. However, instead of understanding every claim made in an article, learners should be encouraged to look to the source of the information – the news site, the journal, etc. – and beyond (Wilkinson, 2017), to consider what else they can learn about the topic by looking elsewhere, and to discover what they can about the source that published the information in question. Learners should ask themselves, “given the source of this article, and given the way the issue is reported elsewhere, can I trust what I’m reading?” (Wilkinson, 2017, para. 17). As we help learners develop good fact-checking and critical evaluation habits, we should encourage students to return to the source and ask either, “who said this?” or “who decided to publish this?”

2. Help learners acknowledge their own biases

Without acknowledging our brain’s limitations when encountering information that contradicts our beliefs, any framework for evaluating information will be inadequate. Educators should provide learners with opportunities to consider and even discuss their own biases, in addition to how their biases might influence their perception of new information.

3. Invite librarians into your class and encourage students to visit the reference desk

Librarian work involves helping students evaluate online information, directing them to the best sources for their work, and teaching strategies for effective research. The spirit of that work has not changed. Students can seek one-on-one help with critical research elements of their assignments. Although librarians are also well-positioned to teach information literacy concepts in classrooms, information literacy engagement is more than just research skills. Given how often students interact with online information and the extent to which most internet users lack critical evaluation skills, we would do well to consider ways of embedding opportunities for information literacy skill development at every level of the curriculum.
Stop for a second and look around. What do your physical surroundings say about the space you’re in? How do they suggest you interact with others? Is it quiet and calm? Bustling with chatter? Do you feel comfortable? Can you see natural light? What colors are on the walls or underfoot? Have you ever taken time to think about how the physical space may influence how we teach or how our students engage with us, each other, and our material? Perhaps it’s time for us to start thinking about how our classroom spaces make us feel and influence the effectiveness of learning.

When we enter a classroom, we tend to take for granted our physical surroundings, and quite often we ignore the impact that the layout, furniture, technology, and even colors, textures, and light can have on our time in class. The consideration of classroom design on teaching and learning has been referred to as “built pedagogy” (see Mohanan, 2000 & 2002), and suggests that our physical learning environments can be designed to either restrict or encourage a range of interactions that reflect the values and characteristics of the learning enacted in our teaching and curriculum (Mohanan, 2000, p.1).

A great example of this is moveable chairs and their ability to encourage peer and group work by providing an adaptable environment for students and instructors. As researchers become increasingly interested in how built pedagogy influences teachers’ and students’ experiences in classroom spaces, we learn more about how simple features such as flexible seating and writing surfaces, lighting, colours and textures can enhance the student experience (see Rands & Gansemer-Topf, 2017 for a review of this evidence).

But let’s not get lost in the physical characteristics of a learning space, since the dynamic between teacher-student and student-student is at the heart of teaching. Rather, our classroom spaces should reflect this interaction in a way that allows (and encourages) versatility, adaptability, and transformation of these relationships. The unseen characteristics of our environment – such as power, intimidation, freedom, safety – can influence the outcome of classroom time, for both the instructor and the student. Such
dynamics can be captured through the human geography theory of place attachment, where physical spaces become places when meaning and connection are formed within them (Tuan, 1979). More recent conceptualizations of place within higher education have differentiated between learning spaces and learning places as:

…space is a box where things happen, place on the other hand is a site shaped by the relationships between the subjects and the objects that connect in a given situation. Each place or site is the product of the social context out of which it has emerged… (Neary et al., 2010, p. 42).

If classrooms are thought of as learning places, rather than spaces, we can view them as non-physical environments that are shaped not only by built features but also by the teaching and learning that occurs within them. It’s much like the way we refer to a house as the physical structure, and the home is considered the unseen dynamics created within and beyond those structure walls.

As Dalhousie University enters its 200th year, we can envision the future possibilities for our campus as we begin reimagining what learning spaces look like and discussing how teaching methods can harmonize with the physical environment to create significant places of learning. We need only to look at the current construction of the Emera IDEA Building, or the recent renovations of the Student Union Building, or the new Collaborative Health Education Building (CHEB). These spaces are constructed with the goal of creating educational experiences that foster creativity, collaboration, inclusivity, shared and active learning. Imbuing both our spaces and teaching with these values, we can create a place for learning to flourish.

When considering the next 200 years, I can only begin to imagine how classroom and communal student places may evolve to meet the needs of our learners, while integrating important physical and non-physical dynamics that nurture the heart of the learning experience.

References

Building Inclusion in the Classroom and Beyond
Molly Marcott

-This article is reprinted with permission from Dal News, and was originally published 3 April 2018.

As Dal’s student population has grown more diverse, so too have the university’s efforts to foster a more welcoming classroom environment for all.

Tereigh Ewert-Bauer joined Dal’s Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT) in January as its first Senior Educational Developer for diversity and inclusivity, tasked with helping faculty better integrate inclusive perspectives and methods into curricula and pedagogy.

“The university is focusing on how the campus environment is enriched when diverse voices are heard,” says Ewert-Bauer, who spent 17 years working on inclusive pedagogies and Indigenization at the University of Saskatchewan before joining Dal.

Inclusion within learning environments
Ewert-Bauer’s role at CLT ranges from awareness-building and dispelling misconceptions, to promoting inclusive teaching strategies, assessment, inclusive curricula, programmatic outcomes, and intergroup relationships.

She endeavours to address issues of inclusion in the Dal community at every level and to collaborate
with faculty as they continue to develop an awareness of their students’ diversity and intersectionality.

“We are all made up of different aspects of identity — gender, race, ability, nationality, religion, and so many more. We are never one thing at one time and it’s important to address that in classes,” says Ewert-Bauer.

Brad Wuetherick, CLT’s Executive Director, says advancing diversity and inclusivity in the teaching and learning environment is critical for Dal as it enters its third century.

“Whether in the curriculum we develop, the pedagogies we use, the assessments we design, or the environments we create in our classrooms, moving forward with diversity and inclusivity requires the engagement of every instructor on campus,” he says.

Wuetherick notes that Dal is among only a handful of institutions in Canada to create a dedicated position to support faculty in this area — a testament to the commitment of the university in creating a more diverse and inclusive campus.

“This new position in CLT is an important signifier that Dalhousie takes diversity and inclusivity very seriously, but collectively we have a lot of work to do to move forward,” he says.

Ewert-Bauer remembers speaking to an Indigenous student who felt that when they entered a classroom, they had to check their identity at the door. This raised the issue of belonging, a critical component of inclusion CLT hopes to address.

While creating a sense of belonging is not an easy task, Ewert-Bauer believes it can be done through capacity building and equitable representation in both teaching and learning.

“Our goals around inclusion require a paradigm shift. One of the most important things is capacity building, making sure diverse voices, experiences, knowledge and world views are equally represented in program and curriculum design as well as policies and procedures” she says.

A catered approach

CLT’s strategy is to start working with people from ‘where they are at.’

“In some areas tremendous strides have been made, but in others it is just starting as people see that diversity and inclusion as relevant, regardless of the discipline” she says.

To that end, Ewert-Bauer has been integral to the development of the Building Belonging series of workshops taking place throughout 2018 as part of Dal 200’s broader Year of Belonging initiative.

The first session held Thursday centred on themes raised as part of the inaugural Belong Forum Wednesday night with MIT historian Craig Steven Wilder. Similar CLT-hosted sessions will be held after each forum.

Campus leaders, faculty and others, including Dr. Wilder, gathered Thursday to share their thoughts on racism and inequities in post-secondary institutions.

With diverse life experiences and identities herself, Ewert-Bauer empathizes with diverse peoples. She says she recognizes her privilege and feels a responsibility to do her part to create a better, more just environment for everyone.

“We have a long way to go, but engaging in this work will help move us towards an inclusive and equitable campus where everyone can achieve their potential.”
Atlantic Universities' Teaching Showcase 2018

Engaging Learners Through Experiential and High Impact Practices in Higher Education

Saturday, October 20, 2018

Cumming Hall, Agricultural Camps, Dalhousie University, Truro, Nova Scotia

Call for Proposals

There have been numerous calls both within and outside of higher education to ensure that our graduates have the skills needed for the 21st century. Accompanying these messages have been calls that we need to adopt high impact and experiential teaching and learning practices to create the most meaningful educational experience possible for our students. As a feature teaching and learning celebration during Dalhousie’s 200th Anniversary, the 2018 AAU Teaching Showcase will encourage dialogue about what it means to create real-world learning experiences through high impact educational practices. Whether in the context of individual courses, programs or across an entire institution, these practices are called high impact because they facilitate learning both within and outside of the classroom, require interactions between students and instructors, encourage critical reflection on experience, invite collaboration with diverse peers or members of external communities, and provide students with frequent, meaningful and substantive feedback. Although they can be time-consuming, evidence shows that participation in these high impact practices can be “life-changing” for our students (Kuh, 2008).

Have you developed experiential or high impact teaching practices that have had a significant impact for your students, your program and/or the broader community that you would like to share with others? Have you discovered easily implemented high impact strategies that you think might make a difference in other institutions? What challenges have you faced and how have you overcome them? Do you want to learn more about how high impact practices, particularly through experiential learning opportunities, create meaningful learning outcomes for our 21st century graduates?

The deadline for the submission of proposals will be Tuesday, July 3, 2018 at 11:59 p.m.

To learn more about the Teaching Showcase and how to submit a proposal, visit www.dal.ca/clt.