A Message from the President of STLHE: Pathways to Empowering Learners and Effecting Change

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DOI: 10.22329/celt.v10i0.4899

The volume you are reading offers a rich record of the proceedings of STLHE's 2016 Conference, but it also makes possible new pathways into the wealth of materials shared at that landmark meeting in London, Ontario. Those of us who attended the conference each had our own pathway to through the event itself, and this edition of *CEL T* enables us to re-live some of that experience and to supplement it by "attending" (virtually) some of the sessions we had to miss. For those of us who were unable to make it to London, here is a volume that invites you to follow whatever pathway best meets your needs at this moment into a treasure-trove of evidence-based, learner-centered scholarship and practice.

"Pathways" was the theme of the 2016 pre-conference held at Fanshawe College, suggested by the seamless collaboration of co-hosts Fanshawe and Western University. As we moved along Oxford Street or up Western Road in London, we were experiencing just one of the many empowering pathways being mapped out for 21st-century learners amongst the various sectors of post-secondary education in Canada. And this movement was aligned symbolically with another memorable feature of the 2016 Conference: the final phase of our year-long celebration of the 30th anniversary of the 3M National Teaching Fellowships in the hometown of 3M Canada. What gave this moment extra zest was the renewal of our contract with 3M that included a long-overdue extension of eligibility for the Fellowship to outstanding teachers in all sectors of higher education, including Canada's Colleges, CEGEPS,

Institutes, and Polytechnics. When it comes to teaching and learning, we are all on the same page, despite the apparent differences created by provincial context, institutional size, or curricular mandate.

My own pathway to the 2016 conference wound through the "Threshold Concepts" Conference at Dalhousie University (held the week previous), so I arrived filled with ideas about how our most important work as a Society involves facilitating transformational processes. In 2015 in Vancouver, for example, we had been reminded by Dee Fink that our challenge is to shift the focus from *teaching* to *learning*, a shift that involves nothing short of reconceiving our identity: from being "teachers" or "Educational Developers" to being *facilitators of learning*, regardless of context. From this concept we can trace a path to the 2016 Conference theme: we must think of our work as "empowering learners" in order to "effect change," whether that be in a workshop for faculty on curriculum design, in a hands-on culinary class, or in a 1000-seat "Introduction to Astronomy."

This change in perspective, in turn, explains why we always need such resources as the present edition of *CEL T*. The shift in identity and practice from teaching to facilitating learning is itself a threshold concept, and to navigate its liminal space we need continuously to review and re-assess its implications. For college and university faculty, this shift in focus is captured in such phrases as "I don't teach *electrical engineering*; I teach students *how to learn* electrical engineering." For Educational Developers, it

similarly involves a shift from teaching (say) curriculum mapping to becoming a kind of mentor for metamorphosis: guiding faculty from the self-concept of subject-expert to that of scholarly teacher, and from there to midwife of learning.

With these transformations in mind, then, I invite you to enter this new set of collected essays by whatever pathway best suits your needs at this stage in your process. How fortunate, meanwhile, that we are all on these pathways together: collaborating, sharing our research, guiding and being guided—a “society” in short. And on that note, may I take this opportunity to thank Neil Haave and his editorial team at the University of Alberta and across Canada for editing this volume—and the previous two—with consummate skill and generosity. His work stands as a symbol of precisely how we can “empower learners” (in this case, the readers of these volumes) and thereby truly “effect change.”