

“Working Together toward a more Virtual Seneca” with Teaching & Learning Day Fall 2021

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by **Kevin Pitts, Lara McInnis, Laura Page, and Linda Facchini**, faculty members in the **Teaching & Learning Centre**

Members of the Seneca community joined the Teaching & Learning Centre on Oct. 25, 2021 for *Teaching & Learning Day Fall 2021* in conversation to explore a timely theme, “Working Together Toward a More Virtual Seneca.” Over 140 participants joined the Teaching & Learning Centre Director Amy Lin and the Teaching & Learning Centre Team to envision a more virtual Seneca as we move beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.



In the morning, participants engaged in critical discussion related to four critical areas:

What is Working? In the first conversation, participants considered what is already working well at Seneca and what we would want to hold onto as we envision what changes may be coming to higher education. Meaningful action between students and instructors are essential to student success, regardless of the mode of learning.

Who is Unheard? Participants discussed strategies to ensure equity, inclusion, and belonging in a more virtual Seneca. Using John A. Powell’s concepts of belonging and bridging, participants explored how to foster inclusive and transformative virtual learning environments by acknowledging power and privilege, prioritizing accessibility, incorporating principles of Universal Design for Learning, and engaging students as co-constructors of curricula and co-designers of their own learning experiences.

Are We Okay? Participants considered how a more virtual Seneca could play a role in sustaining our mental health and wellness. We reflected on the ways in which instructors

brought care, compassion, and flexibility into their teaching practice during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we discussed how this compassionate lens could be maintained moving forward. The group explored the work of Dr. Mays Imad, whose research on “trauma-informed pedagogy” has identified the importance of prioritizing safety, empowerment and choice, and connection among students.

Are We Connected? The conversations closed with a discussion of what being connected in a virtual space means to students and instructors. Together we explored the new ways technology allows us to connect in our virtual “classrooms.” Using a framework that considered cognitive presence, teaching presence, social presence, and emotional presence, participants shared strategies for improving student-content, student-instructor, and student-student interactions in online learning environments.

In the afternoon, participants selected from 10 different workshops covering topics in digital assessment, online course design, accessibility and inclusivity, wellness, library resources, and professional development. Resources and recordings are available on the [Teaching & Learning Day Fall 2021 website](#).

The Teaching & Learning Centre held *Micro-teaching Sessions* for the rest of the week, one focused on formative assessment and one focused on Flexible Delivery in the classroom.

Join us on February 28, 2022 for *Teaching & Learning Day Winter 2022*.

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