

Building Confidence, Building Community

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Building Confidence, Building Community: Seneca Polytechnic's Teaching & Learning Summer 2023 Conference and New Faculty Orientation

by **Lara McInnis, Professor in the Teaching & Learning Centre**

The Teaching & Learning Summer Conference 2023 and New Faculty Orientation (NFO) were resounding successes this summer, helping new and not-so-new faculty get ready for the 2023-2024 academic year. In addition to boosting their confidence and networking with colleagues, faculty filled their educator toolkits with an abundance of enthusiasm and a stronger desire to address and adapt to the changes, challenges, and innovations in higher education.

Held on August 24-25, the Teaching & Learning Summer Conference 2023 engaged faculty in formative assessment and feedback strategies, flexible learning approaches, academic integrity, inclusive design, peer collaboration software, and other ed-tech tools such as H5P. Faculty also got some hands-on practice by teaching each other in small groups, getting the chance to try out new strategies, reflect on peer feedback, and then, in a follow-up micro-teaching, apply new techniques and skills they had learned earlier in the conference. Participants remarked on the value of reflecting on colleagues' mini lessons, something we rarely have the chance to do in our day-to-day work life.



"The feedback from my peers improved from the day before, so I am pleased to know I was able to effectively use the suggestions from the day before."
-Summer Conference 2023 participant



Dr. Brian Beatty's keynote address "HyFlex Teaching and Learning: From Pandemic Survival to Moving Ahead Strategically" connected deeply with the faculty audience, many of whom are teaching in Flex this fall. Using concrete examples from [his own teaching experiences as a Flex instructor at San Francisco State University](#), Dr. Beatty illustrated how being intentional and strategic in our Flex lesson design allows us to respond to the realities faced by students which may affect how they traditionally learn. In other words, we can honour student choice by prioritizing their learning needs and preferences, promoting accessibility, and building community in three modalities at once: synchronous online, synchronous in person, and asynchronous. Dr. Beatty's responded to insightful questions from faculty, who were keen to apply inclusive Flex design and delivery strategies using a critical and thoughtful approach.



Watch Dr. Beatty's keynote and review the rich resources from the Summer Conference on our [Summer Conference 2023 Resources webpage](#).

After a successful Summer Conference, New Faculty Orientation welcomed participants to the Seneca Polytechnic community. We overviewed key policies that guide our practice, engaged with representatives from over ten departments during a Services Fair such as the Seneca Libraries, Global Learning, Applied Research, and many others. Teaching & Learning faculty members Linda Fachini and Todd Malarczuck led an engaging "Getting Started with your Courses" session, and Heather Leckey, Director of Accessible Learning Services, took us through the steps of student accommodation and responded to faculty questions. And in the afternoon, new faculty attended Learn@Seneca training workshops to refine their skills in online course design and delivery.



This year's start-up events allowed faculty to explore topics important to the Seneca Polytechnic community while strengthening their skills and knowledge as developing practitioners in higher education. Keep an eye out for future Teaching & Learning Centre events and offerings so you can do the same.

Check out our [NFO Resources site](#) for presentation handouts and links to help you get started on your Seneca Polytechnic journey.

Explore the [Teaching & Learning Centre's website](#) and contact us at teaching@senecacollege.ca. We're located at Newnham Campus in room A2508.

Thanks to Seneca Marketing for capturing the event images and the ITS AV Team for the keynote recording

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