Inside OISE @ Home Edition
April 23, 2020

We are hoping for warmer weather but... this week’s Inside OISE @ Home Edition takes a student focus and features photos of Christine Corso (Second year doctoral student, LHAE) and Michele Pon (Acting Director, Academic Operations) wearing winter toques. Christine knit her Raptors ware while sitting at home working on her comps, and Michele is wearing the all warm OISE toque. Let's hope we will soon be back together cheering on our OISE and Raptors teams!

Please continue to share your updates with us! We want to know what’s happening with you and the OISE community. Be well and stay well.

“The journey which takes you off the planned path, and challenges you, also brings opportunity”

Globally, there are 1.5 billion learners out of school and 192 countries are experiencing a significant education disruption. Executive Director, Continuing & Professional Learning (CPL), Elisabeth Rees-Johnstone reflects on this global context: “There is no question that around the world professionals who guide, teach and educate have ventured into unfamiliar territory in a matter of weeks. Education professionals are adopting new technologies that are informing their teaching practice, leading education teams through significant operational change and determining new areas of education research need. In all of this disruption, it is OISE’s commitment to education research excellence, and our compassion for teaching and learning, which is now called upon and greatly valued locally, nationally and globally.

“Personally, it’s been a great privilege to work closely with education leaders and teams at this time and support their approaches to facilitating, learning and teaming. Sometimes, the journey which takes you off the planned path, and challenges you, also brings opportunity for professional renewal and personal growth. This current journey is truly pulling upon our collective innovation, systems-thinking and problem-solving capabilities and I am appreciative to have the history, expertise, and scholarship or our community to draw upon.”

“The hallmark of this era will be some of our greatest innovations”

Sheldon Grabke, OISE’s Registrar and Senior Director, Student Services, is proud of our students, staff and faculty who have been incredibly resilient and flexible during this most challenging and uncertain time. Because of our concern for our students, the Office of the Registrar and Student Services (ORSS) moved from in-person assistance to virtual services literally overnight. Sheldon says that “our communications with students have exponentially increased and students have responded well” and he reminds us to regularly review the ORSS COVID-19 webpage for the most recent updates.

The OISE Student Success Centre (OSSC) quickly shifted all appointments into online help. Counselling and financial aid services continue to help students through confidential phone and online appointments. Registration and admissions staff similarly answer questions and resolve student issues. The ORSS together with the Education Commons are pressing forward with transforming all forms into a fully digital realm. Nearly every day this past month, Sheldon has remarked that “we have vastly changed our way of assisting students and a decade from now we will look back and remark that the hallmark of this era will be some of our greatest innovations.”
Welcome News & Info for OISE Students

Details still need to be ironed out, but yesterday the federal government announced $9 billion in support to post-secondary students amid COVID-19 crisis. And late yesterday, OISE Dean Jones received communication that the Ministry of Education has legislated a relaxing of the Math Proficiency Test and the Practicum requirements for Teacher Education candidates (more details will be shared through OISE departments and units in the coming days). Both of these are seen as good news for OISE students negatively impacted in their academic progress by COVID-19.

Tips from OISE Grads who just did their Virtual Final Oral Exams (FOE)

- Read FOE instructions & send presentation in advance
- Practice with Zoom & record your presentation in advance (check for timing, presentation, images & delivery)
- Do, do, do a mock defense on Zoom with the thesis group (schedule well in advance of FOE to be sure you have time to consider feedback)
- Find a good space for the Zoom meeting & give people at home a heads up to not use smart phones, internet or anything that might interfere with your virtual FOE
- Keep the notes, pens, cue cards, & glass of water handy
- Be sure to focus on your presentation (not on the technology as that is handled by ORSS)
- Dress professionally (no pyjama bottoms unless that is part of your thesis!)
- Leave the virtual meeting & keep the phone close by
- Take a screenshot with the committee afterward to remember the moment (or ask supervisor if they can)

Once you get the good news, be sure to find a way to celebrate and connect with your supervisor to mark the moment. These are physical distancing times and we are missing out on the usual opportunities to celebrate. Go to ORSS website for more tips.

Congrats and thanks to Melissa Kennedy (PhD LHAE), Dirk Rodricks (PhD CTL), and Dulani Suraweera (PhD LHAE) on their recent successful Virtual Final Oral Exam (FOE) for sharing some of their tips from their experiences.

Congrats to CTL student Denise Heppner on the successful virtual doctoral defence “Case Study of an Indigenous teacher’s Writing Instruction: Tensions Negotiations Among Western Discourses of Writing and 8 Ways Aboriginal Principles”

Congrats to CTL student Dirk Rodricks on the successful virtual defense of his doctoral thesis “This Body has Fought Hard to be Here – Unearthing Khush: Using Drama to Map the Multiple Minoritization of Queer Desis/South Asians in Toronto.”

Connecting with International Students Away from Home

While staying at home, many OISE International Students are thinking about home. Faced with unique challenges in Higher Education COVID-19 may present international students with additional pressures and concerns when thinking about loved ones back home.

To share their stories and stay connected, the OISE International Student Association meets every Friday at 5 p.m. If you are an international student and want to participate in these meetings, contact ISA: oiseisa@utoronto.ca. They can also be reached by Instagram @oiseisa, Twitter @oiseisa, and Facebook group OISE ISA Group.

Higher Education Identity Crisis

The OISE in-house podcast, Chasing Encounters connects stories about language, culture and identity. Phoebe Kang (Doctoral Student in ELP) talked about her own journey as an international graduate student, with an EAP (English for Academic Purposes) educator over the last 15 years in the university/college sector. Based on her educational and professional experiences, her talk addresses the disconnect in TESL education in Ontario, valuing multiple knowledges, and a shift in identity of higher education. Check out the podcast.
The Library is Online for Student Research Support

Are you a student looking for remote research support? Look no further, as the OISE Library has moved our reference services online. There are a variety of ways students can receive one-on-one help with developing search strategies, using databases, citation management, and more. Use the online request form or our contact information to set up a video or phone consultation with one of your OISE Librarians. If you need immediate help, U of T Libraries’ AskChat virtual service is always there to help troubleshoot quick search issues and track down sources. Our Research Guides also present curated lists of resources on a wide array of topics. Let us know what you’re working on, and we’ll figure out how we can help!

Be Well and Stay Well

Anishinaabemowin Language Bingo

Climaan/Kahwe'yA/Qajaq Indigenous Language Initiative, First Nations House and the Indigenous Education Network at OISE are co-hosting online Anishinaabemowin Language Bingo. The bingo will start with a tutorial on Anishinaabemowin sounds, vowels and consonants, and then look at numbers so you are familiar with the sounds. Do not worry about not being able to speak Anishinaabemowin, as we are in this together and can help each other no matter what your level of language learning or fluency. We are here to have fun during these difficult times and to laugh and learn together! RSVP below.

OISE Mindful Moments - Offered Online

Sessions extended to August 27, 2020 | From 12:10 – 12:50 p.m.
We will be meeting virtually through Zoom to practice secular mindful meditation techniques that will increase your relaxation, resiliency, and focus. Late arrivals and early departures welcome. You can request Zoom meeting details by emailing oise.wellness@utoronto.ca or RSVP below.

Have a story you would like featured

Inside OISE @ Home? Share it with us!

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