

# **Adapting to COVID-19: Innovative Approaches to Supporting the International Student Experience**

Part 2 of a 3-part series

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## Opening

Duane Seibel:

Anne, you're muted.

Anne Harris:

Oh, rookie mistake. I've done enough of these to know better than that. Sorry. Good afternoon everyone. My name is Anne Harris, I'm the Operations Manager for International Education at the College of New Caledonia, up in Prince George. And I'm very happy to welcome you all to the second of this 3rd part series, Adapting to COVID-19: Innovative Approaches to Supporting the International Student Experience. I'm joined today by my co-facilitators, we have Rohene Bouajram from the University of British Columbia. We have Teresa Brooks from Langara College and we have Kate Jennings from Vancouver Island University. Thanks so much for collaborating with us today, I really look forward to working with you all. Now, the next slide please. Before we begin our presentation, I would like to make sure that we have a territorial acknowledgement and we gratefully acknowledge and honor the territory and lands on which we are gathered.

## Territorial Acknowledgement

Anne Harris:

We recognize that we have participants here from right across British Columbia, in fact, right across Canada, and so rather than listing all of the traditional territories, I'd like you maybe to just reflect on the traditional territory on which you yourself live, work and play. And if you'd like to share that in the chat, then please do so. Thank you.

## Agenda

Anne Harris:

So just to review the agenda for this afternoon, we will go over the learning outcomes in just a little while, and then we have examples from our four institutions to some different innovative approaches that we have taken to the four topics that we were discussing yesterday. And that is regarding student finances, student wellness, the issues around racism and also around immigration, and those kind of questions. And what we're hoping to do, for each of these sessions, we will have a short little introduction and then we will encourage you to share your experience as well, using the Padlet. We will make sure we explain that a little bit further on.

Anne Harris:

At the end, we will have a short period of time for questions and answers. We encourage you to share your experiences with us using Padlets, but also with the Q&A at the end. And just a reminder, that we do have another session coming up next week, which is where we're going to be more interactive. There's going to be an awful lot more time for discussion as well, again, looking at these themes and really wanting to share experiences with everybody. So I encourage you all to sign up for that as well. And again, we'll have more information on that later on too. Okay. So, I'm going to hand things over to Rohene now. And Rohene, I believe we have another poll for participants this afternoon?

## Poll 1

Rohene Bouajram:

Thank you so much Anne. [inaudible 00:02:54] everyone, good afternoon. I think it would be helpful for us to see who has joined. This session has been wonderful, seen familiar names of individuals who have joined us. But we do have a polls, so I'll ask at this time, Kelsey, if you're able to launch the poll. Thank you. And you should see in front of your a window that's popped up. And if you can please take some time, a very short window, unfortunately, to be able to answer the questions that you see in front of you. And if you were here yesterday, you will probably know that I do have a bit of a competitive spirit, and I have been trying as much as I can to see if we can get close to 80% of a voting rate, and so I do hope that in a short minute, that you will help me achieve this goal. Just give it another 40 seconds.

Rohene Bouajram:

Excellent. And we'll do a bit of a countdown of a 10, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one. Thank you Kelsey. We can launch the results of the poll. So it seems like we have folks who have joined us for a second time around, which is always a pleasure to see. As we thought, before the 3-part series of what this might look like in terms of having back to back days. So welcome to those who are joining us for a second time, but also welcome to those who are joining us for the first time. We hope that we will get you up to speed on the themes around the content of the presentation, but also I look forward to your engaging throughout the session.

Rohene Bouajram:

When we asked as far as what your top concerns are, and I imagine that there is no surprise, immigration has popped up as almost 30%. And in fact, that might be due, this might be my inclination to the immigration announcement that we saw yesterday, and I think with the updates that we continue to wait for. But certainly, financial matters, isolation and exclusion, amongst many other topics are certainly on the hearts and minds of everyone. Thank you so much for letting us know your answers to these two questions. But as we mentioned earlier, there will be an opportunity to engage further about the content of today's presentation. Over to you Kate, for us to go a little bit of a framing around the session. Thank you.

## Series Overview

Kate Jennings:

Thank you so much Rohene. And thank you everyone for filling out the poll. We got close to, what was that? 94%. So good job on the competitive streak, Rohene. So quickly I just want to share for those that may not be aware, this is the 2nd in a 3-part series. So obviously the one highlighted where we are today. The one we did yesterday was focusing more on the broad topics that Anne mentioned, with an overview of the concerns that we're starting to see and have been seeing for months now, with COVID in our international students and learners. That webinar will be posted online, so you'll be able to access the recording, but if you weren't able to join us yesterday or if you're just dying to hear it again, you'll be able to go back online to see it one more time. And then our final third session, which really we're hoping will have a lot more interactive discussion time versus us presenting, we'll do a bit more today, but even more next week is a break-out session around specifically onboarding and support as we look towards next intake in the fall.

Kate Jennings:

Next slide please. And so just a couple of quick hopes. We have four learning outcomes for today's webinar. You're going to hear about four specific examples. And in fact, many of us have shared more than the one we're going to highlight today, just because you will have access to the slides. And so you'll see some other things we're doing. You'll learn about some initiatives at other institutions. So as we said, we're really hoping that you will share your own experiences after we share ours, in the form of a Padlet. So on that note, I would ask you if you can open up a second window beside your Zoom window so that you can get onto the Padlet quickly when we get to that point. So we'll be posting a link in the chat that you'll copy and paste into the browser for the second screen.

Kate Jennings:

And then also opportunities. So we would like everyone to be able to start thinking about maybe some ideas that you've heard today and how you might be able to engage those in your own institutions, and/or on BC wide approach. So we hope next week to talk a little bit more about how do we do more sharing of resources and program models, et cetera, across BC, given all of us are facing similar, not always the same, but similar concerns and considerations, in particular as we head towards the fall. So thank you. I'm going to wrap things up there and hand it over to Anne, for our first topic and examples.

## Addressing Financial Challenges

Anne Harris:

Oh, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. Okay. So I wanted to talk about financial challenges and this was something that we discussed a lot when we first started planning this. And yesterday [inaudible 00:08:24] you in terms of the major challenges that both our current and our future students are facing in terms of financial stresses as we go through this pandemic. Can I have the next slide please? And really, as we discussed yesterday, this pandemic has had a devastating effect on financial situation across the world. And when we reflect on the challenges that our current students are facing in terms of possibly losing employment or reduced hours of the part time work, or the inability of their families to be able to help support them because they themselves are under financial stress back home, we can just imagine some of the real challenges that our students are facing at the moment.

Anne Harris:

And also when we reflect on our incoming students and their ability or even their willingness at the moment to be able to spend that money on study abroad when there are so many other stresses that they are facing back home. So, if I may have the next slide please. I just want to share a little bit about some of the things that we've been doing at the College of New Caledonia, both directly and indirectly to assist our international students with the financial situation. So at the beginning of May we actually held a phone survey of all of our international students who are currently registered in our intercession semester. And that was our summer semester. We had over a thousand students that we tried to contact by phone, and we had a pretty good response rate from that. And the reason for that phone survey was to gauge a variety of different topics, but one of them was around financial wellness. And we really wanted to understand from our students exactly what their financial situation was, so that we get a better handle on just exactly how serious this situation is for our international students.

Anne Harris:

And so in some cases we found that students had actually been successful in getting access to things like the CERB funding through the federal government, if they had lost their job due to COVID. And in other cases we learned there're some students who really in actually quite difficult financial circumstances, having lost their jobs or had their hours reduced or not being eligible for the CERB funding just simply because they had not been in the country long enough or working enough hours and all of these kind of things. And many of them were in a lot of financial stress. And so this actually then was able to inform the college on exactly what the situation was with our international students. The college itself, having been in a situation at the end of our fiscal 2019/20, with some surplus funds available from both international education and other parts of the college, was able to partner with the CNC Students' Union to administer an emergency fund for international students.

Anne Harris:

So this is one time emergency funding that was provided to eligible international students who required some short-term, one time funding to help with things like rent, groceries, other bills, these kind of things. I understand that most of the money handed out was between 250 and \$700 for each student that applied. It may have been slightly more in some cases, but that was the range of what we had. Can I get the next slide please? Thank you. In addition to the direct assistance that we provided, we also looked at our processes within the college and try to figure out ways that we would be able to support our students as well. So one thing that we do at CNC is we do allow our students to pay their tuition in installments, and we've had this payment plan system set up for several years now. It used to be a manual system and it was sometimes a bit clunky and sometimes difficult for students to access. And over the years, we have worked to really make it more of a streamlined process.

Anne Harris:

Recognizing that our students were unable to come on campus to apply for payment plans for the intercession semester, we worked between international education and our finance department and our IT department, to create a fully automated streamlined application process for our international students. And making it far more applicable too so that students would be able to access and [inaudible 00:12:46] the ability to pay. Basically, their tuition spread out over three months instead of having to pay all in one go. And we had a very good uptake on the payment plan for intercession semester, and we've extended this into the full semester, and we fully expect to see a good uptake for that as well.

Anne Harris:

At the same time, our fee payment deadline for the fall 2020 semester has been now extended to the end of August. It's not a huge extension, admittedly, it's about an extra two weeks that we're providing to students, but hopefully that extra small little window of time will give them just a small opportunity to [inaudible 00:13:25] to have full funds available to pay their tuition for the fall, or if they are on a payment plan, then they are able to pay, they'll be able to have just that little bit of extra time to save up the deposit that they need. At the same time, we're also reflecting on how we can support our future students. Again, previously, we had a tuition deposit refund policy that would only allow a refund of the tuition deposit for those students who had a visa refusal. And we recognize that in this particular case, we may have plenty of students who for a variety of different reasons suddenly realized that actually coming to school in Canada was not their first priority after all. And they really needed that money that they had paid to the college and have it refunded to them due to the situation of COVID-19 in their home country.

Anne Harris:

And so we were able to adjust our refund policy to allow refunds of tuition deposits to students who express their concerns around COVID-19. If they are needing to have that money back and so on, then we are able to cancel their letter of acceptance and refund their money accordingly. In the same time as that, we have also adjusted our deferral processes as well, so that if a student wishes to defer a semester or two semesters, or maybe even three semesters, we're allowing them to extend that now, so that, again, if they are wanting to just let things stabilize in their home country and defer their tuition and their plans to come to Canada or to start their programs online, then we are allowing them to do so. And so we're trying to be as flexible as we can with that.

Anne Harris:

So, those are just some examples of some things that we're doing at my institution to help support international students. I would be really interested to hear from you as to what is happening at your institutions. If I may have the next slide please. Thank you. So that is the question that I'm asking in my Padlet. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to share in the chat, I'm just going to post the link to the Padlet here. And if you want to come join us, just click on this link here and that will take you to the Padlet, and you'll see the question posted there. And I would encourage you to add your comments under the question and then we can start having a look at that. Okay. So please go ahead and start posting your comments.

Anne Harris:

Okay. So people talking about refunds. Wonderful. I'm just going to pull this over so I can read it. So please, yes, go ahead and share your comments. And if there's a particular comment that you like, and you can just use the hop icon to almost vote, if you like, on your comments there. And we'll just keep this open for a few more minutes before we turn over to Rohene and her presentation. I see we've got a temporary emergency fund. Okay. Bursaries, that's great. Other folks also partnering with student associations. Yeah. Oh, lending laptops. I like that. That's a great idea. That's a great idea. Yeah. We've done something similar. We also, through our media services department we have been able to loan out laptops to students if they require them. I think that's really beneficial for those who can't access them otherwise. Okay. And I see people are presenting on the modifying the refund and the federal policies.

Anne Harris:

And I recognize it is very difficult. When we consider this, because a lot of the students, obviously, were really needing some very short-term, often real emergency funding at the beginning of all of this. And we really needed to think quickly and act quickly to be able to support them. Okay. And I'm seeing some comments on textbooks. Yes. And that's another one, of course, textbooks are super expensive, as we know, and open textbooks are going to reduce costs for students. That's fantastic. Yeah. Okay. Okay. Oh, this is lovely. Someone's looking at a back to school hamper program. That's a [inaudible 00:18:24] around how we can support our students if they need to go into quarantine when they first arrive in Prince George and what kind of care packages and so on that we can put together for them. So I'm glad to see that that service coming up for people here too. Okay.

Anne Harris:

We'll just keep this open just a couple more minutes. And then I know time is of the essence and we have to get other people, to let other people present theirs as well. So this Padlet will stay open too, so if you want to continue adding your comments throughout the presentation, and then each of us,

Rohene and Teresa and Kate, we'll also have their own separate ones where we can share all of our information. Great. Fantastic. Okay. I'm going to let that keep ticking, but I think, Rohene, I'm going to pass things over to you now, so you talk about immigration and border considerations. Thank you very much.

## Addressing Immigration and Border Considerations

Rohene Bouajram:

Thank you so much Anne. And thank you very much, Kelsey, for moving us to the next slide. If you can go over to the next slide too. So I just wanted to start off with acknowledging that I think a running theme that we discussed yesterday was around the multiple policy changes that we've been seeing over the course of the last few months, as well as border restrictions. And ultimately, I'd like to start off with saying one thing that I have sincerely appreciated from the international student advising team at the Vancouver Campus and also the international support and services and programs team at the Okanagan Campus and coming together at the University of British Columbia has been this web page, which we've dedicated to being able to centralize information for anyone coming to that page to be able to better understand how to address specific questions and frequently ask questions has been the framework for this particular page.

Rohene Bouajram:

And really the goal behind it has not only been information provision, and certainly accuracy and updates, but also immigration literacy with regard to students and staff and faculty members feeling comfortable with being able to understand how the various questions are actually inactive in terms of policies and also decision making. So, a huge shout out to the teams at Vancouver Campus, but also for me to acknowledge that when you have something that is robust and communicated, it really does allow for everyone involved to have a better understanding of the impacts of immigration on international students. I do provide a link if you are interested in taking a look at that particular page. If we can go to the next slide. Thank you. So, I'd like to highlight, I think, as we look at examples that would like to share with you in terms of how we've approached specific areas within these ultimate four themes, I would like to highlight the UBC Mastercard Scholars Program for which I oversee within my role at the University of British Columbia.

Rohene Bouajram:

I do want to specifically highlight what we've done for our incoming scholars as a way to share how we've approached a very small group of individuals within the larger group of international students and the body of international students at UBC. Every year, we do have an incoming class and this certain year was no different. Specifically, we had 19 scholars who were embarking on a graduate program at UBC and coming in, ideally for September of 2020. In March, we were able to have a dedicated advisor who would support them with immigration support, so really getting them ready to submit an application for their study permit. And of course, all of that got exacerbated as we saw what happened with COVID. What then happened was, in about April, we had to pivot with looking at ways in which we could support students to be able to submit a study permit application, ideally by May 15th, which meant being able to support them as much as possible with submitting comprehensive applications, being able to understand all of the requirements that are related to that, and then being able to successfully submit.

Rohene Bouajram:

What we saw with some students as various countries within Africa, because the Scholars Program is specific to Sub-Saharan Africa, was that there were different experiences around the opening up of, not only visa, sorry, not visa offices, but may call, panel positions and then also ability to provide biometrics. Whereas the [bossman 00:23:05] drive, you would not able to either do a medical exam or even biometrics. So we had to develop strategies of how we could support scholars to be able to submit their application, but also at the same time, do so in a way that was safe, but also a way that we would be able to support and to submit an application that could be eventually processed once they were able to submit biometrics and medical exams. However, the bulk of our time over the course of June was really supporting scholars to think realistically about their ability to stop their studies at no fault of their own.

Rohene Bouajram:

And I will say that this was a month in which it felt really heavy, not only for the scholars involved, but also for myself and the team and being able to say, what we could say concretely and with certainty, and then a lot that was not very clear and certainly not very certain. And I give you examples of travel restriction and the post graduation, work permit eligibility and [Len 00:24:00], being one of them. How we approached that was through having group Zoom meetings with our scholars, one-on-one conversations, and to really move scholars from a sense of feeling helplessness. And again, this is within reason and a bit of emotional paralysis to making really good decisions and biding by some deadlines that we made with regard to decisions. We were very fortunate in the system or to, I think what Anne has shared in that we have faculty members who were able to support deferrals that were really flexible and to build out pre-arrival contingency plans.

Rohene Bouajram:

I don't want to go too much in that because I'm certainly happy to go in more detail, but I will say the underlying framework that we used and we'll continue to use is pivot, re-visit, communicate and plan. And I hope that that's something that might resonate with you as you think about the extrapolation of the impact of immigration and your approaches to international students. So it's [inaudible 00:24:54], I am going to share the path on the immigration front. So if you can please take a look at that. And I am going to ask, there are two questions that you see in front of you, and if you can please add to either one or both of the questions by just hitting on the plus sign, how are you addressing your international student's immigration concerns? And would also love to hear, what strategies have you found helpful in assisting students with a level of uncertainty? Because I think that that is certainly an area that we are finding challenging, but also balancing that with the opportunities that are presented.

Rohene Bouajram:

So I'm seeing on the Padlet, that social media has been a great way of reaching out to students. And I can imagine, also the utilization of Facebook has helped connect with students in different ways. When it comes to strategies, I'm seeing email. And I imagine that with email, there's tons of communication that is being created with care, with thought. And then also thinking about frequency, in many ways connecting to what Kate had mentioned yesterday, which was about how do we as institutions provide transparent communication about what we know, but even one corny about what we don't know. I'm seeing that there is also lots of drop-in advising and live webinars which is always helpful with international students being able to connect with the team to know how best to make some significant decisions that are impacting their lives.

Rohene Bouajram:

Fantastic. And if there are challenges that you're finding as well with any of these questions and your approaches, please feel free to add them too. I think often we would like to share all our successes and everything that's going well. And sometimes it's a little bit vulnerable to share what might not be going well. And so if you feel comfortable with sharing that in the form of a post, please do so, because I think we can all learn from each other that these are certainly unprecedented times and I think we're all piloting many things and certainly learning and pivoting when we can. Okay. I'm not seeing ... I'm seeing also some, a need to adjust as a strategy, which I imagine it might mean one idea and one approach, one week, might be completely different the next week or the next day. And so thank for sharing that, also sending messages to groups based on their specific situation and that customization of what this means for them is not only personal, but also becomes quite clear and also relatable.

Rohene Bouajram:

And I am sure students appreciate that in knowing that from an institution with respect to that, they truly understand where those students might be in their program and also in their decision. So similar to what I think has been already mentioned by Anne is that we'll continue to keep the Padlets. And when we do have time, we'll see a very short window, but we'll certainly come back and do, back to the Padlet to see if you have any further questions. But thank you for sharing your strategies and also for how you've been approaching your support for international students. At this time I'll ask Teresa to take over and to walk us through increases in exclusion and racism. Thank you.

## Addressing Increased Exclusion and Racism

Teresa Brooks:

Thank you very much Rohene. So, just as a recap, yesterday, for those of you who weren't there, we talked a little bit about how one of the challenges for international students and international learners is that there is a greater sense of isolation and exclusion. And we have seen within our communities, increased incidences of racism, in particular, anti-Asian racism in Canada, as well as with the recent BLM Movement and protests with regards to the George Floyd incident, we have seen an overall increase in those, in racism and concerns for our international students. So, today we'll be, I'll touch upon some of the things that we're doing at Sneweyet Lelem Langara College, on how we address these two areas of concern. Next slide please, Kelsey. Thank you. So, first of all, I just wanted to touch upon a few things that we've been doing at Langara to help increase international students' sense of belonging and engagement. And really, I think Rohene said it really well.

Teresa Brooks:

But the key word here is pivot. And I'm sure you all can relate to that or many of you can relate to that, is really just when colleges or the campuses were closing and we've had to switch to work from home or work remotely, we've really had to relook at very, very quickly all of the services and supports that we were offering and how we can continue to deliver those services and maintain those service levels for our students. So in a very short time, we've had to switch it up and pivot. So most, I'm not going to go with, and this is certainly not an exhaustive list, but I'll highlight a few of these things that are listed here. But we've had to ... Prior to the pandemic, everything was face-to-face, in person, as I'm sure for many of you as well. So we've had to offer, we've created Zoom, daily drop-in advising via Zoom by our international student advisors, with regards to immigration and any other general matters that international students have questions about.

Teresa Brooks:

We also offer those drop-in sessions in a variety of different languages and they are offered every day, Monday to Friday. We've also, the workshops that we have offered face-to-face traditionally, we've also switched those to online. So a variety of different topics such as immigration matters or financial management, we've been able to offer those online for students. We also have a very strong student volunteer program here at Langara. It's been running for quite a while. And the student volunteers have always been very active in providing social and recreational opportunities for our students. And although we've had to decrease those offerings, our students have still continued to offer weekly iChat sessions, and these are very informal Zoom rooms that students can drop-in and just have a conversation with our student volunteers about things that are going on for them or have any questions.

Teresa Brooks:

Academic side of things, we do have a new virtual learning support. It's an interdepartmental, very collaborative support group that offers one-on-one Zoom sessions as well as community cafes. And this is run by our teaching and learning curriculum development center, as well as our learning commons and other faculty members, and counseling is also part of that group that offers these daily drop-in sessions and community cafes. And with our student orientation, we had student orientation in the summer semester. And again, we've always traditionally offered full day sessions. But with COVID, we've had to again go online. So as many of you know, online we weren't able to offer full day session, so we've had to figure out a way to put that information somewhere so that students have access to it, even if they can't attend the synchronous live session.

Teresa Brooks:

So what we've done, and again, very, very quickly, and I have to give credit to our international education engagement team who very, very quickly put together international student orientation resource page on our website, that is an asynchronous compliment to the synchronous session, which was really a great resource and continues to be the resources available on our website, so students can refer to it often. The social media has also been a very key part of our engagement strategy. We've always used Instagram, but since we've had to close, we've used Instagram posts and stories to really promote engagement, interaction between students and the college and our department through polls or surveys, comments, and we've even offered incentive prizes for students, for commenting on things. So those are a few things that we do offer and have had to change to help students to feel that increase sense of belonging.

Teresa Brooks:

Next slide please. And looking forward to the fall semester, along the same lines, we are really focused now on a college wide orientation experience. At Langara College, we do have a variety of different orientations. We have a college-wide orientation and international student orientation, and orientations for other specific groups. So what we've done is rather than having students receive several different emails about an orientation which often can cause confusion about which one do I go to, we've collaborated with our student engagement office, our athletics and an intramurals, our Indigenous Education Institute and services department to really develop a, almost a rebranding of the orientation experience that will provide more comprehensive information and cohesive information that the student would get. So from the student's perspective, it's one email that off that says, "Here's your orientation experience package. Here are the offerings that you can sign up for." And we're hoping that

that will make it easier for students and will encourage them to join. And these are all going to be offered online via Zoom.

Teresa Brooks:

We're also offering our orientations at non-traditional times to accommodate for different time zones. So such as 7:00 to 8:30 in the morning or 6:00 to 7:30, which traditionally we haven't done in the past. We also have, and I think many of your institutions do as well, an asynchronous student success course, it's almost like a Langara one-on-one type course, that will help students to prepare for studies here at Langara, not here, but to start their courses. And we're really going to make a point of promoting that as part of the orientation experience. We also are looking into possibly potential opportunities for in-person advising sessions. Our college will continue to be closed, our campus will continue to be closed for most of our services with exception of some essential. So we're looking at providing those drop-in sessions in person. So we're looking at that as well. And finally, we are fortunate enough to be able to have three representatives from the international education department on the EOC Recovery teams, which will help us to really influence the reopening and the how we provide service to students.

Teresa Brooks:

The next slide please, Kelsey. Thank you. With regard to racism, we really have just started, and I've put in all caps here, more needs to be done, and that's really true. Here at Langara, we have put out a college public statement. We have issued an anti-black racism statement and resource internally, within Langara employee community. We do have a newly form, it's about a year old, the Center for Intercultural Engagement. And we really try to focus a lot of our attention on providing intercultural supports and intercultural learnings for our employees. So you'll see here, there's a variety of different things that we're doing, but again, the stress point here is really we do need to do more. And I know that my co-presenters here also feel the same way.

Teresa Brooks:

So those are, again, just touching upon some of the things that we're doing here, I'm going to invite you now to go through the Padlet on this topic here. There's the link for it. And you'll see three different questions, all pertaining to supporting students and their sense of belonging, and rather than sort of departmental, but considering what are some of your institutional plans to address systemic and structural racism, as well as your institution's support. How does your institution support intercultural learning for employees and students? So, if you can take a moment to add some of your things that you're doing at your institutions, that would be great.

## Supporting Wellness and Wellbeing

Kate Jennings:

And Theresa, while that's happening, I'm just getting a sense of time. I've been to do a bit of an overview of what was talked about yesterday. So if we can go to the next slide please, Kelsey. And the next slide, Kelsey, thank you. If you joined us yesterday, apologies for the quick summary. But yesterday's topic when we were looking at wellness and wellbeing for international students, I was stressing two things. One was connections with stakeholders across campus. So as we all know wellbeing and wellness of students and international students in this case is not only one office or one person's role. And so really the importance of connecting with colleagues across your institutions. And then the second piece was around communication. This includes consistent messaging and transparent messaging as we've

mentioned in some of the other topic areas, and more so I think also is making sure the students understand who to go to and who to reach out to to get support for themselves.

Kate Jennings:

Next slide please, Kelsey. And so I'm definitely not going to go into detail on all of these, but I thought I would share a number of different points that my institution, VIU, across the institution, working on to support the wellbeing and wellness of international students up to this point during the COVID crisis and then certainly as we're planning into the fall. One that I will highlight, and Teresa touched on this a little bit, is around time zones. And so a big focus for us is making sure that we're not forcing our students to adjust to our time in BC, if they're located around the world. And so if we can imagine a student who's trying to either access services or courses, and it's 3:00 AM their time, that is going to impact even more so on their wellness and wellbeing. So not only will they be struggling potentially with staying awake, but if they're also in a space where they're sharing their home, when may potentially have to share a computer in somebody's bedroom, just being aware of all of these impacts on students' overall experience.

Kate Jennings:

And so I know we had a couple of faculty members with us yesterday who may still be with us today, and certainly anyone watching the video in it, but future, is to really, if you can think about, can we adjust our schedule so that students who may not physically be located in Canada at this point are able to access our services and their courses, and that we can support them in their wellness and wellbeing. And as I said, I've listed a number of other things which I'm happy to connect with people after the fact, but for time sake, we'll just jump to the next slide, please Kelsey. And then the other big thing for us at VIU, and indeed I'm sure all of us, other institutions is that stakeholder engagement piece. And so as an example for us at VIU, and this is still the case, we have a dedicated person from the university's communication team working with us and a number of other units on campus, but specifically with international on our messaging.

Kate Jennings:

And it really helped us to make sure that not only the institutional messages are sent out to our constituents, but also that it's aligned with our messaging and that we know time-wise when to be reaching out to students and how. One of those pieces that we did early on was something called VIU Cares. And this was for all students, but understanding that the majority of students that were still on campus, in residences, in our homestay programs, which were still open and running, needed to have a daily check-in point. And so we were able to quite quickly organize a daily drop-in that was hosted by various people across the institution. This included our ADP students, our manager of homestay, our frontline staff. It rotated. And so this was done for the first, I want to say almost six weeks of the COVID crisis.

Kate Jennings:

So we're also then thinking about how do we continue those open access pieces for students to be able to engage in different ways, when we're aware that there may be biases or concerns about accessing something that's labeled as counseling or something that's labeled as advising. So we're trying to work on that as much as we can to make sure that multiple points of access and communication are working with the students. I'm happy for any of the other points that are noted here for people to contact me. And the easiest is through LinkedIn, which we'll mention for all of us later. But at this point, why don't

we go to the next Padlet and hope they will have time to come back to Teresa's during the Q&A section. And so the next Padlet link, I'm just pasting into our chat is about the wellness and wellbeing for students. So you'll see here, I've done three things. One is about how you're supporting your students. So if you're doing any innovative initiatives to reach out and support the students.

Kate Jennings:

The other is around which stakeholders, and the last one, which I mentioned yesterday as an important piece and again a reminder today, is how we're looking after ourselves. So for those that weren't with us yesterday, I use the analogy of an oxygen mask. We all know when we travel, I think that you're asked to put your oxygen mask on first so you can help the person next to you after. And that's really a good analogy for us as we're thinking about looking after ourselves and our own self care, so that we're best able to support our students and our colleagues during all of these times. So I'm just looking over my shoulder to my other screen, as we're seeing people starting to populate on the Padlet. So please do add your ideas and suggestions. Let's do a bit of a refresh. So there's one person mentioning about virtual nutritional coaching, and that students can meet one-on-one for personalized coaching over the phone or online. What great idea around the nutrition. We know that student wellness and nutrition are so intertwined.

Kate Jennings:

I had shared as examples there that for my own oxygen mask, I do try to reflect a little bit on how I'm feeling when I wake up in the morning. Some days as we all know we're grumpier than others. And if I can try and introduce something that's going to bring a little bit of joy to my morning, so that I'm in a better frame of mind when I'm engaging with, not only my team members, but also our students. It's paused a little bit, so we'll see whether or not it's just my computer not refreshing quickly or if people are maybe a little fatigued with the Padlet, which is quite possible as well. Again, we'll leave this up so that if you want to add any other suggestions, these become part of our resources for all of you with the recording of today's session.

Kate Jennings:

And so we'll keep the Padlets open, I would say at least until tomorrow. So if you wanted to come back and add anything else or share any other links or resources for your colleagues, this is a great way for all of us to share with each other. And we'll bring this information to our session next week as well. Teresa, did you want to jump back to your Padlet, just in case you wanted to do a quick summary? I think I've saved us two minutes, so you're welcome to take some-

Teresa Brooks:

Great. Thank you. So yeah, just looking at the Padlet now, somebody mentioned an international mentorship program, which helps with increasing sense of belonging, which is great. That sounds great. I also had on my slide, we also have an I guide, what we call, I guide mentorship program, which is very similar connecting new students with returning students and it's done virtually. The institutional addressing racism, EDI policy, which is a great start, I think, definitely. And how is your institution supporting intercultural learning, asynchronous courses on intercultural learning for our staff and faculty. That's great. That's really great. So again, as Kate mentioned, these will be up, so feel free to continue adding other ideas and other things that you're doing at your colleges or at your institutions as well. Thank you.

## Q&A

Rohene Bouajram:

Thank you so much Teresa. So as we get close to wrapping up, I do want to acknowledge on behalf of my co-presenters that do try to fit as many conversations, which I think we would love to sit down and have coffee chats with each other on, can certainly take hour, and so to condense that in an hour is certainly not only a tall order, but certainly can be challenging. So without further ado, I will maybe just check and see, are there any burning questions that folks would like to add in the chat section that you'd like us to address as we wrap up the second part of our series?

Kate Jennings:

[crosstalk 00:48:05]-

Teresa Brooks:

There's a question ... Oh, sorry.

Kate Jennings:

Sorry.

Teresa Brooks:

Sorry.

Kate Jennings:

I was going to say, we could probably allow the hands up as well because we've got a little bit of time.

Teresa Brooks:

Just a question here from somebody about the I guide mentorship program. I apologize I didn't had to rush through it, but I will, what I can do is share the link to the program for my website in the chat and you can definitely go there for more information. And then, again, if you're interested in more information, feel free to contact me via LinkedIn. So there's the link to the I guide program. So normally it's a face-to-face program, but certainly right now it's all completely done virtually.

Rohene Bouajram:

Thank you Teresa. Thank you for sharing that and for letting me know that question is on the chat. I'll just do another check-in to see in the chat if there are any questions. Okay. I believe there is a question that's come to me privately and so maybe I'll share this with folks. One question is how are your teams balancing day-to-day operational services that you provide along with new initiatives, some of which were not in place before COVID. That's a fantastic question. And thank you so much for posing that question. I'll certainly speak to it and then I'll also invite my co-presenters to see if there's also additions.

Rohene Bouajram:

I think that the balance between existing programming and what we would have certainly envisioned, and then also innovation and novelty is certainly something that we, and certainly within my team, were struggling to find a balance, but I think we're getting there. In part because what we have done, and this

is something that I'm seeing even across our student engagement portfolio at the University of British Columbia, is that within our [vice 00:50:05] presidents for students portfolio, it was clearly identified that we needed to come together and have working groups that would define what the guidelines would be within specific areas.

Rohene Bouajram:

So, for example, within students that we have a students working group that is supported by number of individuals, close to about 25 individuals across different areas within students engagement. So from recreation and athletics, all the way to counseling and health and wellbeing, being in the room together over the last two months was developing guidelines that we can certainly take to our teams as we operationalize the balance between novelty and then existing programming. Within the guidelines, there has ready been a call for what is the value proposition for what we do. So really becoming clear with the objectives behind what it is that we're trying to achieve both with existing and also with new programming. And I think having that very clear framework to then think about delivery is allowing us to really think about why are we doing, what we're doing, how we're delivering it, and for whom this will be of value.

Rohene Bouajram:

And that for me is an opportunity to say, do we really need to do this? Do we really need to offer something new or do we simply not do it at all? And not because we don't want to do it, but because there is no value proposition. I think that that's always helpful in the back of our mind to think about what are the value propositions. At this time I'll check in to see if any of my co-presenters would like to add. And maybe we'll just add one more comment to what I've shared.

Anne Harris:

Well, I'll jump in if I may, just to really share, ironically, one thing that we perhaps didn't do as much at CNC before was actually really have strong dialogue between departments. And I've found actually since we've been all forced to be working remotely, it's also actually freed us all up to be meeting and talking and working with people in a far more cohesive and collaborative manner. And again, that's not to really criticize what we did before, it just, I think, it just made it so much easier now to really connect. And that has of course been a necessity, as you say Rohene, with the many challenges that all of our students, our staff, our faculty, everybody is facing in this particular current climate, there is a need for us to be very flexible and nimble in how we communicate and work together. And I've really found huge value in these collaborations that I've had. And to interact also perhaps with folks that I perhaps hadn't really had a chance to work with so closely before, and begin to form those very valuable working relationships. I look forward to continuing when we're all allowed back face-to-face.

Rohene Bouajram:

Thank you so much Anne.

Duane Seibel :

Okay.

## Conclusion

Rohene Bouajram:

Oh, sorry. I know Dwayne, you would like to take over the ranks. And can I just finish the last minute with saying thank you so much to my co-presenters and certainly to everyone who was able to join us today. I hope that we were able to not only share with you specific examples as we walked you through different perspectives of how we approach not only orientation programming and wellness programming, but also how do we support specific groups and also policy decisions when we consider finances. As Kate mentioned, please feel free to connect with all of us on LinkedIn, would love to hear from you. And I do hope that you are able to join us at our next session on July 23rd. Over to you Dwayne. Thank you.

## Ending

Duane Seibel :

Okay. Thank you. So, on behalf of BCcampus, I'd like to acknowledge our appreciation to Teresa and Kate and Rohene, for again sharing, facilitating this second of a 3-part series. Each of our episode [inaudible 00:54:06] has been mentioned, is encouraging you to connect through LinkedIn. I'd also like to thank you for participating. This session and all of our sessions are recorded and available at the first link that you'll see on this slide. As well, if you'd like to get updates on upcoming events and webinars, you can also subscribe to the BCcampus newsletter. And that link is also provided on the slide. Finally, I'd like to thank Kelsey and Declan who provided technical support in the background. And I truly hope everybody returns on July 23rd for the third final session. Thank you.