

CONVERGENCE

a ucc experience:
music amidst quiet hallways|

april 2021 issue

A UCC EXPERIENCE: MUSIC AMIDST QUIET HALLWAYS



PRINCETON ZHOU

CO-EDITOR IN CHIEF

It's 7:20 AM. Snow falls as I make my way up to the back entrance of the college and scan my student card at the door. As I open the door, I see a familiar face as Mr. Turner makes his way over from the on-campus teacher residences -- perhaps he'd like to get an early start to the school day. We share a smile and some pleasantries as we enter the building -- another day has started at UCC.

I traverse through the basement floor and come across some rowers doing push-ups and bodyweight exercises near the vending machines. It's a great feeling to know that there are others out there in the morning and it's encouraging to see these guys push themselves so hard. It's like the vibe you get by walking through New York City at 6 AM on a weekday morning. You step out the front door of your apartment and are greeted by a myriad of energetic early-risers: morning-shift workers, runners, and gym enthusiasts. We're all trying to improve ourselves and push one another to be better -- we're fighting together to win another day. Next stop is the Martland's locker room. The lights turn on after a couple of steps into this hallowed area. I punch in the locker code, grab the drumsticks, and off we go. The real reason why I'm here so early is to play music.

In these quiet hallways before school starts, music fills the halls. Every Tuesday and Thursday, we congregate as a band to rehearse our pieces. It's a wonderful

way to start your morning, in a sea of music and among your close friends. As a percussionist, it's an especially fun time when your primary role is hitting objects that make noise -- a straightforward process -- and you stand at the back of the band. It's a unique perspective: you have a full view of every section of the band, almost as if you're the captain of the ship and conducting the group. We joyfully make our way through the pieces and finish around 8:25 AM. I depart the music room and head through the packed hallways towards my first class. As I make my way through these hallways, I can feel the energy from each member of our community as I pass them, as if there's some happy tune playing in their heads. It could be the high of winning a soccer game the past day or having prepared a wonderful lesson for class or helping a stranger on your way to school. To me, I can still hear the music from the morning and it pushes me forward through the day. Everyone can find their kind of music here at UCC.

As a then Year 8 student, there wasn't too much on my plate outside of schoolwork. After you finish your sports practices and events, you're mostly left to your own devices to craft your journey. I enjoyed being at school and I wanted to stay there as long as I could each day. Sometimes it'd be a game of basketball on the courts beside Commons, other times it could be working on my painting for art class and getting to know the IB art guys, or shooting the breeze in the library. On one particular Tuesday, I found myself in the music room at 6 PM. As I rehearsed my

piece on the xylophone, I noticed some older students trickling into the room. I wasn't in too much of a rush to practice percussion so I decided to chat with some of the guys. It turns out that they were there for their weekly Senior Jazz Band rehearsals each Tuesday from 6:30 - 9:00 PM. It was cool to get to know these guys as they were huge role models for me and made profound impacts on our UCC community. After a little while, one older student decided that it'd be fun if I stick around for the rehearsal. As Mr. Smith, the conductor, walked into the room, this student pitched me as a Year 8 trombone extraordinaire and asked him if I could stay. Mr. Smith, my music teacher who was well aware that I was not a trombone player, played along with it and let me stay for the rehearsal. The subsequent music that the band made was beautiful and you could sense the passion these musicians and their conductor radiated as they jammed out. In particular, the band's rendition of the song "Make Me Smile" by Chicago was meaningful to me. I encourage all of you to give it a listen, it has one of the most soothing and vibrant choruses of any song out there. The instrumentals are fantastic and so are the lyrics:

"Time and time again I see your face smiling inside. I'm so happy."

As I exit the music room, I'm greeted once again by quiet hallways. I make my way to where the day started -- the Martland's locker room -- and get ready to pack up and head home. As I put my books in my backpack, I see that a custodian has

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entered the locker room. He sweeps the residue of a vibrant school day into a pile and cleans it up. It was my first time seeing him -- I greet him and ask how he's doing. He responds with a smile: "I'm doing good, my friend." We converse for a bit as I prepare to head out and begin my walk home. It's a dark winter night. As I cross the quad, it's a special moment to soak in the beauty of living in a city like Toronto and attending such an amazing school. The night sky is dark blue, the boarding houses lay immaculately among the natural landscape of our campus, and the clocktower's light radiates into the calm sky.

In the coming days, I made sure to make my way back to jazz band every Tuesday evening. Although I didn't play anything, I wanted to be around these people and learn from them, both as musicians and as individuals. Over the months, I gained the pseudo-title of "manager" where I would send emails to the group reminding them of their rehearsal each week. This experience was not only applicable to music but also to my overall life approach. These guys gave me a lot of valuable advice on how to manage your time in the upper school, how to find ways to meaningfully contribute to UCC both in the classroom and in co-curriculars, and miscellaneous advice such as course selection (helping me select Latin as my second language). This was a microcosm

of our UCC community: all of us make that effort to help one another and want to see each other thrive. One person's success is our success as a whole. I knew that I wanted to be like these guys when I'm older and it was invaluable to have those role models there as I progressed through the upper school.

Nonetheless, each school day eventually came to an end, and whether it was after band or other activities, I always had the same routine. Head to the empty locker room, pack up, and head home. I would come across the custodian quite often and he also had a routine of his own -- he would push his cart through the hallways and sweep the garbage in our locker room. Over the years, we talked about a lot of things. Although speaking in English was a bit of a challenge for him, you could sense the genuineness and warm-heartedness in his eyes. It's not easy to work a job that you don't want to do each day. During one of our conversations, he mentioned how he works here every day from 4:00 - 11:00 PM, likely after a whole day of working other part-time jobs. For most of those hours at UCC, he's in these quiet hallways -- sweeping, picking up items, and wiping boards. There's not much opportunity for interaction with anyone, just cleaning. It makes you appreciate what we have here. He has no complaints day in and day out, and we shouldn't either. We have it good.

It's 2020. As I pack my bags to head home, a familiar face passes by in the hallway. "Hello, my friend." His appearance is quite the same after 5 years, almost as if the rules of aging don't apply to him. We exchange greetings as he pushes his cleaning cart through the hallways as if he's pushing a cart of gold -- he's smiling, he's happy to be here. As I depart, I can hear the jazz music flowing from the music room into the hallways, what an amazing ambience.

In these hallways at the college, there is always music playing. You may not hear it at the moment but keep trying to find it, it's there somewhere. There is something for everyone to thrive at here and there are people and mentors for everyone, no matter what race, gender, sexuality, religion, or skin colour. For all the brothers out there younger or having a hard time adjusting to the upper school, your time will come. Everyone in this community is there for you, if one person struggles, we struggle together and we make it out stronger. What a journey it has been during the past 7 years, UCC is where I grew up, it's all I know, and it's tough to say goodbye to somewhere that's given you so much. This is the place to be.

Much love,
Princeton

EDITOR'S NOTE - THE FUTURE

After reading Princeton's article "A UCC Experience: Music Amidst Quiet Hallways", I couldn't help feeling both grateful and emotional. Over the past year, Princeton has been an incredible partner to work alongside with in running *Convergence*. Princeton started contributing to our paper in 2017 as an Editor, and his work and dedication to *Convergence* over the years have been instrumental in shaping *Convergence*'s success today. Working with and learning from such a great partner has been an extremely rewarding experience for me personally.

I also would like to express my gratitude to John Papanikolaou, Henry Wang, and Nathan Hannam, who will also be graduating this year. These three individuals have served *Convergence* as editors and reporters and have also contributed greatly to our publication.

On behalf of *Convergence*, I wish Princeton, John, Henry, and Nathan every success in their university life and future endeavors.

As these members of the *Convergence* team move on, I will start to assemble a team for the upcoming academic year. If you are interested in joining the *Convergence* executive team as an **Editor, Layout Editor, Manager, or Cover Designer**, please send an email to convergence@ucc.on.ca with a short PDF letter detailing which position(s) you are applying for, why you would be a great fit for these position(s), and what you would bring to the *Convergence* team. All existing executives will need to re-apply, but your contributions over the past year will be heavily and favorably considered.

Thanks everyone for your support for *Convergence*.

Kevin Liu

ARTS SPOTLIGHT

THEATRE WITH MS. MACDONELL

ERIC AN AND ALEX WANG
LAYOUT EDITORS

A Gentle Reminder: **Nuit Bleue**—A celebration of the arts both in and out of the classroom takes place **April 8 online**—please join us!

For those that may not be familiar with you, could you give us a brief introduction of yourself?

I'm finishing my 17th year at UCC; I teach theatre and coordinate the theatre program as well as direct plays as part of the co-curricular theatre team. I have the honour of representing the arts as the Arts faculty chair and we are fortunate to have such accomplished teachers in film, music, visual arts and theatre. I'm part of several teams of educators and it is a privilege to work with such dedicated professionals.

How did you join the school? What about UCC's theatre program appealed to you to come here?

Just before UCC, I was working in Shanghai at the Shanghai American School in the Puxi area. Over my time at that school, I assisted in developing the theatre program and International Baccalaureate diploma programs. When I was there, someone visited from Toronto who worked at Upper Canada College and was considering working overseas, so I set up an interview for her. But what happened is that she decided to take a job in Thailand instead of Shanghai, so I asked her what she was leaving at Upper Canada. She told me that year, they were looking for someone to teach only theatre and help with the program. I thought, "You know what? I'm going back to Canada so I might as well talk to them." The interviews were an incredible experience and I was very, very honoured to come to this school. I thought I was only going to stay for a few years, and now I'm going on my 18th year.

What was theatre like in the past?

The school has a big history because like sports, they didn't have a theatre program at the beginning around 1829-1830s, they would only do plays and musicals. I looked through the history and it's been a big history. The first person to do co-curricular theatre was Jay MacDonald. He was the first one to



really get theatre happening and then it moved into the classroom, particularly when the International Baccalaureate program started about 20 years ago with the help of a man named Colin Lowndes. I walked into a wonderful program: Dr. Churchwood, Mr. McDonald, Ms. Levene, Mr. Morris and Mrs. Crawford all added to the classroom experience and program development. Dr. Churchward, besides overseeing the theatre co-curricular program, continues to teach the DP drama program along with our newest theatre faculty member, Mrs. Blagona. The theatre program has grown as a result of some really good teachers to help build it. The same is true in all the arts. The teachers make teaching into an art.

What's been your favourite experience at the college as a whole? Of all the plays you have worked on, do you have a favourite?

I love them all, to be honest. I think one of my favourite experiences was a play called Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead because it has some Shakespeare, a little bit of Hamlet, and also improv structures within it. It's written by this really brilliant playwright by the name of Tom Stoppard. The two students who played the leads were outstanding and we all had so much fun with it. The play is funny and very serious at the same time and I like that combination. But I loved it all; I love Midsummer Night's

Dream as we had an amazing cast so it's hard to pick one, but I know we all had a lot of fun and many laughs with that one [Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead].

What do you think is an underrated aspect of the theatre department/production team?

Everything about theatre is about sharing a story with a larger community. Whether it's inviting other classes to come and see student work or more formal events like Nuit Bleue, it's all about having an audience to cultivate a community on a very different level. In particular, the performing arts is special because there's nothing like live music or live theatre because they allow a communal cathartic event to happen. Whether it's laughing together or crying together, you bond. Maybe it's simply the opportunity for parents to just watch their son play a different part. The biggest thing that we're missing is the audience right now. Maybe we took it all for granted, sharing with the community.

How have the students you've taught made an impact on you?

It's their courage. Even in the classroom, trying on a new character and revealing their vulnerable side. You feel closer to someone when they actually show themselves in an attempt to make genuine communication and I find that

very profound. I've learned a lot and have been willing to take risks, but I love the risks these students take. To add on, their brilliance; they ask wonderful questions that make you really want to reveal yourself as a teacher. I've learned much and that's why I've stayed so long.

I came here and thought I'll stay for a couple years and then maybe go teach somewhere else in another country because I love that experience too. But then, I remember thinking- why leave? The faculty seemed so committed and dedicated to giving voice to boys who seemed to be falling through the cracks. It wasn't just a job, being a teacher. . It wasn't only about the marks - it was about their well being. Because of this, I would see boys get transformed because people agreed on approaching education as a way to nurture all aspects of the boy. The faculty was going to bat for what they recognized in a boy, and I love that. It is rare to be part of such a community.

What's one development you would like to see in the theatre department in the next year?

I wish we could have the ability to feel together again. But with the pandemic, our students have made theatre very flexible here; we record productions, depending on whether we are in-school or outside. I'd love to see us use spaces like the Creativity Center to create moving

pieces of theatre, like a moving feast; it could be shorter pieces but powerful, whether it be comedy, tragedy, etc. These pieces would be more experimental, but experiential in a sense where people are part of it. Instead of separating the actors from the audience, we would have a framework so everybody is creating at some point in the production. I love stuff like this because you realize that everybody is talented - everyone has a perspective and a story to share; one just needs to be called forth.

What is the funniest or most powerful moment you've witnessed here at the College?

We established the UCC varsity improv club and at those meetings we had many moments of pure joy! So many surprises, as it is all spontaneous and thus it even surprises the actors. I think it is the unplanned moments even in Laidlaw, or where all of us gather on Remembrance Day or with guest speakers. We had an old boy that came to speak one year who actually is a professional comedy writer and he was very funny but also very respectful of the space and his experience at UCC. In regards to most moving, we used to do the "I believe" speeches and this one boy got up to the podium and he talked about, "I believe it's important to be honest," and he came out. This is at least 10 years ago and the whole school stood up and applauded. It was very difficult

for him and you felt his courage. That was the most powerful moment for me: a Year 12 boy maybe 10 years ago standing at the podium just saying, "I believe it's important to be honest," and then saying, "you probably all know this but I want to just declare it aloud." It was very hard for him to say and he told everyone that he was gay. After a long pause, another boy stood up and applauded for him and then everybody stood up and applauded. It's that part of the school that I love: that we can be ourselves and we give each other room.

Any final conclusions?

I do think theatre has the ability to find your authentic voice. It may seem like acting but to really create a character, you have to understand another human being. You take many risks, but the understanding has to come from a genuine place within so that you internalize an aspect of humanity. Theatre is a big laboratory where we can look at mankind. Through theatre, we see that we have so much in common. We may look different, but we all feel deeply, get intrigued by ideas, and see how we communicate. In theatre, we're allowed to look at ourselves with all our flaws and all our beauty. We invest all this time in creating a production, building sets, memorizing our work, and magnifying our story; then we take it all away. It shows you how ephemeral life is; you build it up and let it go.

ARTS SPOTLIGHT

VISUAL ARTS WITH MS. KAYE

DEVLIN MONIZ STAFF REPORTER

Could you please give a short introduction of yourself for those who are not already familiar with you?

For the past sixteen years, I've been teaching visual arts and design to students at UCC from Years 8 to 12. I've been the Senior House Advisor for the best house, Martland's, since 2012. I've also been the Faculty Advisor for The College Times yearbook, Canada's oldest student publication, since 2008.

In terms of my education, I have a bachelor of fine arts degree in visual arts and a master's degree in art education with a focus on the convergence of traditional media and technology.

And because students often ask me I'll say a bit about my own artwork.

In the past, my own art practice was primarily painting but with the busy schedule here at UCC, and after having my own kids, I usually work with one or two clients a year on graphic design projects.

What is an art piece that really stands out to you and why? What is your favourite style of art and why?

I always have trouble narrowing things down to favourites as it's not really in my nature. I don't have a favourite colour for example. So I would say that I get inspired by all kinds of artworks, all areas of design from fashion to industrial design, also film, and music.

Only once have I been truly moved by art and that was at the Marc Chagall museum in Nice (see photo on the next page) where the paintings and stained glass works had an emotional impact on me - it was quite surprising!

There are some complex paintings by Picasso that I really enjoy and love studying over and over. Otherwise, I like to change things up and explore exhibitions in Toronto, and on our annual YII art trip to New York City to see what artists are doing and, as importantly, what the artists are thinking about.

Throughout your years at UCC, what would you say is the most outstanding part of the art department?

There are a bunch of outstanding parts. One of the best parts of working in the art department here is working with great colleagues who have been such awesome collaborators. We all bring different experiences, skills and artistic backgrounds that make it really fun to come to work. We agree on most things social and political so we usually have daily conversations about what's going on in the world.



Another great thing about teaching art here is of course the students. I find it really rewarding to be able to teach some kids over many years and then see them go on to careers in the visual arts, graphic design, industrial design, animation, and architecture. A number of those students still keep in touch with me and give me updates on their careers. We usually meet up with the ones who live and work in New York when we visit.

The third thing is the facilities that we have here at the school are amazing. We have a great main space on the second floor with all the materials that a budding artist could dream of. It's especially awesome for the students who take Y11 and 12 art. The room becomes their studio and we have a lot of fun making art, chatting about life, and making sure that we cover those IB requirements!

What are the main challenges you face with this new learning model and are there any benefits?

The most challenging thing is not being able to see student work in person. So working with remote learners and the times when we've been on complete lockdown are tough because I like to show techniques while standing beside the students and their work.

For me, it's also very frustrating when students don't turn on their cameras. I need eye contact to feel as though I'm doing my job properly and I became a teacher because I think I'm a people person and I like the opportunity to get to know my students. This has been more difficult online and behind a mask.

What extracurricular art activities are happening this year and how has the way they are functioning changed due to Covid-19?

Well, not many co-curricular art activities are happening this year as we're trying to minimize contact and the sharing of materials. I believe the digital arts club is still quite active.

But I work on the yearbook with a group of students and it's been really difficult to get things moving as we normally would for a number of reasons. Figuring out what we can show about this year has required us to really think about reinventing what some of the content could look like. That's been pretty stressful.

What adaptations in classes and extracurricular activities have you made due to the pandemic?

Well, I guess coming into this year we already had the experience of the spring term to know what to expect. We designed our curriculum to be flexible in case we had to go into lockdown.

Mr. Holt organised the ordering of supplies for individual art kits that were designed for each grade level that students received at the beginning of the school year. Remote learners in the city picked up their kits through the sports shop, while international students got a list of supplies to order.

We always have at least one digital unit at each grade level so those have worked really well as we've tried to rearrange them to fall within lockdown periods.

So I would say things have been running pretty smoothly.

Is there anything outstanding the art students are doing in this pandemic and in what ways has this impacted you as their teacher?

The thing that's most impacted me are the ways students have addressed the pandemic in their artworks. I've seen this mostly in working with the Y12 class and some of the ways they've expressed themes of solitude, absence, and the idea of missing out on their favourite activities and school traditions. I've been both sad about the situation but also happy that they have an outlet to examine their thoughts and feelings about the pandemic.

Any final conclusions?

Yes, I would like to encourage all students to include the arts in their lives. Taking any of the arts, Theatre, Film, Music, or visual arts at the DP level is such a wonderful gift as many students won't have an opportunity to study these things at university. Plus, our facilities and access to materials and technology are pretty amazing!

An arts education truly enriches any other area of study. I've had DP art students go on to be very successful in the health sciences, business, and engineering, as examples.

Creative problem solving and being able to express things visually and interpret what's going on in the world are skills that we work on and that are so vital to being successful in all kinds of careers, not only the arts.

BOARDING LIFE DURING THE PANDEMIC - INTERVIEW WITH SUFIAN ALAWIYE

IAN YE
STAFF REPORTER

To begin, what are your general thoughts on how UCC's boarding system functioned during the fall of 2020? Was it a positive or negative experience for you?

Despite the restrictions and having to navigate through all different systems and procedures, boarding for me overall was a positive experience. I think that the weather being so mild and consistent late in the year played a huge role in this, and during the winter everyone's spirits sank, along with this being compounded by the rising case counts. Despite the fact that there were many tough restrictions in place, boarders in both Seaton's and Wedd's were successful in squeezing fun in any way that they could.

How were the safety procedures? Could you give us an overview of what restrictions were placed on the boarding students that were not present prior to the pandemic? Was there anything that you disagreed with?

I guess you could categorize the new restrictions two ways: scheduling changes and others. Because we are now in a separate cohort from Wedd's, the use of any shared spaces is now staggered, like the UDH, Lett Gym, SAS etc. Each mealtime is split, and the order in which each house eats alternates in the UDH during the week and stays the same during the weekend. In a normal year, we would have access to the entire school afterschool and during the weekend including the Design Lab and Art Studio in and, however this year we only have access to the athletic facilities such as the Tennis Bubble, Lett Gym, SAS, and Field Bubble. Within the boarding houses, masks and social distancing are necessary at all times, except when you are in your room alone. The number of people that can be in the common areas is limited, and so is the number of people per room. Normally, younger students would have roommates but this year everyone has a single room.

What were the primary conveniences and inconveniences of being a boarder during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Like in any other year, one of the best parts of being a boarder is the proximity to school during the day, however this is of lesser importance as we were learning

online half of the time. The thing that I found the most inconvenient was the way that mealtimes are structured. On weekdays, the two meal times are 7:00-7:35 and 7:50-8:25. However the house that is learning online has to go first, which means that we had to wake up around an hour earlier than the days we would have to go to school, despite the fact that we sometimes had asynchronous classes first we still had to wake up early.

Did the safety procedures in the boarding system affect your or your peers' learning and well being? What impact did they have on the sense of community within the borders? Do you think it could have been mitigated through improved procedures?

One of the components of the boarding experience that I found especially enriching was the ability to be able to use different areas of the school as study spaces such as the Design Lab. During study which is from 7 to 9, it was normally full of students from both Seaton's and Wedd's working hard. These days, because Seaton's and Wedd's are in separate cohorts, up until recently there was little to no interaction between the houses on a day to day basis. It was almost as if an imaginary line separated the two houses and safety precautions needed to be considered for any inter-house competitions, which eliminated the possibility of a lot of the sports that would normally take place. Also being able to burn off steam in the SAS was very important for a significant portion of boarding students, and adjusting to the new normal was very difficult for athletes in boarding at the beginning. But with continued audits from TPH, restrictions were gradually lifted. I do however think that COVID-19 has brought the boarding community closer together. When the weather permitted, the tennis and volleyball courts were almost always filled with boys passing time and enjoying the warmer temperatures; outdoors was the only place that we could gather without masks on, and it brought a lot of people together. I think having allowed the tennis courts to stay open would've helped as we often needed to call security to open them.

How was food and dining experience during the fall? Could you describe and comment on the quality of the food and the procedure for eating?

As mentioned, the meal times were staggered, and the physical setup of the



UDH was different. Instead of the benches that we all knew and loved, we know had foldable tables with three people to a table. In addition, everything is served for you or pre packed so the only time you touch anything is when you receive your tray at the very end: snacks and drinks are prepackaged. I would say that the food has increased in quality slightly since last year, but not by a lot.

Do you have any suggestions for how UCC could improve the boarding students' experiences if we return in the spring?

I think creating a more intuitive schedule for outdoor facilities like the tennis courts would make it easier to spend more time outdoors. In addition, I think that creating as well more opportunities for socialization outdoors in general would help with the socio-emotional strain of covid that hit boarders particularly hard, as the only time that we can actually socialize without masks on is outside. Another thing, would be more freedom to leave campus, as the current restrictions make spontaneity in terms of location and time difficult. Currently, we need to let our SHA's in advance. If the case counts decline, this is something that can hopefully be loosened. Finally, I think creating a more direct line of communication between both the administration and boarding students will make it easier for changes that are mutually beneficial to be made, as currently it is something like a game of broken telephone.



*Photo Credit: Nation Wong and Jeff Wojtaszek

Mrs. Evans

Convergence: What has been the biggest challenge in adapting your teaching schedule to the pandemic and virtual learning?

Mrs. Evans: The biggest challenge was the lack of warning or time to learn best practices for delivering programs virtually. Thankfully teachers and students came together with patience and understanding and helped one another to adjust to some new norms.

In addition, it was hard keeping students adequately challenged and engaged while also balancing workload and expectations during these exceptionally unusual times.

The forced lockdown in the spring of last school year taught us that consistency and clarity are most important in teaching virtually. Also, adjusting timelines and expectations for absorption of concepts and content was extremely important, as I learned students felt that the pace was difficult to keep up with as the virtual learning continued to be extended to the end of the school year. Teaching virtually online made teaching in the virtually after the winter break less of a challenge.

C: Does virtual teaching feel more or less stressful than traditional teaching? Which method do you find best for you as a teacher?

Mrs. Evans: Teaching virtually does not allow for the same level of interaction with students, which is the biggest stressor. However, I believe that the technology utilized has allowed for classes to run fairly smoothly, without

much difference from regular lessons. The best lesson learned from teaching virtually is that there is no replacement for human interaction. I find that a good balance between guided lessons, inquiry and group work suit best both in traditional and virtual teaching.

C: What is a positive for your teaching that has resulted from the pandemic? How have these unique circumstances pushed you to make your classroom more creative, collaborative, or unique?

Mrs. Evans: The silver lining to adapting to teaching through a pandemic is the resources that have been discovered and the various websites and software utilized, which has pushed teaching methods further into the 21st century

The websites that have been discovered, as well as the tablet and use of presentations will all become part of my

teaching practice once we can return to the classroom in person full-time.

The pandemic has reinforced that teaching must be adaptable, and flexibility is the key to maintaining teaching and learning. This period of teaching has had a steep learning curve, one that is most similar to what was experienced when starting my career as a teacher.

Mr. Jeffrey

C: Many teachers are feeling stressed due to the pandemic and overall workload. Have you found our new pandemic routines to be more stressful and if so what's one way you destress?

Mr. Jeffrey: It certainly has been challenging for all of us. The adults are perhaps better equipped to deal with the added stresses. For students, it's important that you can talk through the challenges and stressors – with friends for sure ... but it is key to have an adult that you can turn to for help and guidance. For me, the puppy has been a big help with keeping things in perspective – she is a good listener!

C: Do you think the pandemic has affected the general dynamic within UCC's houses especially during house meeting? How have the new routines affected students in positions of leadership within Scadding's (e.g. prefects)?

Mr. Jeffrey: It is the Head of House and Prefects who do the planning for House meetings, activities, and events. The trick to an effective House meeting and a successful event is getting all involved. That level of interactivity is difficult at the best of times, let alone over video conference. I'm impressed with how the student leaders in the House have taken the initiative and adjusted to the new order. Of course it's not the same, but The House still lives ... and once we can "rub elbows again", it will return with the great effect it has always had.

C: As a Y8 house advisor, you play an integral part in students' transitions from the Prep to the Upper School. How do you think the pandemic has impacted the mentorship program and the transition experience in general for Y8s?

Mr. Jeffrey: The Form7/Y10 Norval trip has been the launch point for the mentor-mentee programme. Of course, it was a loss not being able to run it in May 2020 and 2021. Again being able to connect face-to-face is far more powerful than via masked video conference. On the positive side, mentor and mentee are working through the challenges of a pandemic together. A common adversary has a way of bringing people together.

C: What has been a positive for you as a teacher and an advisor that has resulted from the pandemic? Is there anything you especially miss?

Mr. Jeffrey: It's difficult to think of a positive here. I suppose, working together against this common foe has brought us together. Walking down the halls, I especially miss the impromptu meetings and chats with students.

C: For those who are worried about missing out on the house experience and getting to socialize with other years, what would tell them in a few sentences?

Mr. Jeffrey: As the saying goes ... what doesn't kill us makes us stronger. When things turn around, the connectedness we feel with our House will be back stronger than ever.

Mr. McCubbin

C: As a member of the French department, can you tell us about the general tasks that you have to complete each day (planning for lessons, meetings, classes, etc.) during this time?

Mr. McCubbin: I consider myself an extremely organized person in my professional life - though my friends and family may tell you that this does extend to my personal life. I am easily the worst in the world at getting back to messages! It is easy to be organised, however, when one lives where one works and does not have kids....

I wake up every morning at 5:45, have my coffee and start work right away. I plan all of my lessons generally during assessment days before each rotation, but I need to revisit those plans the morning they are to be delivered. I spend the first hour of the morning responding to emails and giving feedback on

asynchronous work. Then I have a snack and create Google Slides for each lesson. That takes me until 8:05. I spend 15 minutes frantically uploading all the necessary documents to BrightSpace and rush off to class for 8:30.

When classes are done, I come home, try to get in 10 minutes of Marvel Strike Force (so that Mr. Brown doesn't kick me out of our alliance), answer emails for about an hour and try to reflect on what worked and did not work on the day. Often, I also use this time to connect with students who are struggling. I try to finish work by 6:00-ish and take a walk, to get off-campus.

One night a week - usually on Monday - I take an extended work day. I plan, give feedback and create resources until around 8:00. My wife is extremely understanding!

C: What is a positive for your teaching that has resulted from the pandemic? How have these unique circumstances pushed you to make your classroom more creative, collaborative, or unique?

Mr. McCubbin: I have found that I have become a lot more tech-savvy during the pandemic. I am also a lot better at modelling the use of technology. If you remember from Y8, I was THAT teacher who would confiscate your phone upon sight or ask you to shut your computer whenever you glanced in its direction. In the pandemic, however, our technology has become a necessity from which it is not easy to disconnect.

C: How do you view the impact of this period on your teaching career? Has it made you more adaptable and flexible?

Mr. McCubbin: It is easy to be adaptable and flexible when you have no choice! Humans are weak, skinny things... The only reason that we are still around is our ability to adapt.

I will say that this period has made me more compassionate... As you will know if you have had me as a teacher, I am generally relatively strict on certain things. I have become a lot less so. I suppose that is a good thing. We all have to go soft at some point!

C: What has been the greatest challenge faced by the boarding students and teachers as a result of the pandemic and virtual learning on campus?

Mr. McCubbin: For students, there are a number of challenges involved with living on campus in a pandemic. The biggest two are the lack of freedom to leave campus and the wearing of masks. Boarding students must wear their masks in all areas of the house, with the exception of their own rooms. Imagine if that were the case in your house. Need the toilet? Put on your mask. Want to get a snack from the kitchen? Make sure that you're wearing your mask. Quick game of FIFA in the basement? Mask! In addition to this, students have been confined to campus while the province is in 'stay-at-home orders'. I imagine that you can see how difficult that would be! Especially when they see their friends and classmates bending the rules.

As a member of staff, the biggest challenges have been the personal pressure I feel to maintain safety regulations and the extra time that has been expected of me this year.

I love working in boarding.... but I also love Christmas Break, March Break and long-weekends where the students ship out and I get to unwind with the house to myself. This year, students haven't gone home or left campus during those times. That means that I was on duty from Noon on December 29 to 8 pm on December 30 this year. All-in-all, I will have put in 400 extra hours of supervision this year as an Associate House Advisor. Luckily, this year's Weddites are pretty awesome. But this can be draining. In addition to this, there is an increased amount of pressure not to socialise. I know that we all feel this, but if I were to come in close contact with anyone who tests positive, 33 students would also have to quarantine. I would be that guy who caused everyone to have to stay in their rooms for 14 days.... As a result, I have seen family twice since September and my best friends less than that.

C: What is one experience that you personally miss the most with regards to the boarding environment/experience that you were unable to do because of the pandemic?

Mr. McCubbin: I miss Weekend Programming. Usually I get to take

the guys to Medieval Times or a Wolfpack game over the course of the year. it is a lot of fun.

C: Obviously, teaching during the pandemic was shifted to the depths of our computer screens. As a result, it has taken a large toll on our mental health. What strategies have you been using to help preserve your mental health and relieve yourself of anxiety, stress, etc. that many of us have been feeling?

Mr. McCubbin: At first? None.... I am a bit of a perfectionist. I reject the idea that the pandemic can be used as an excuse to be less than stellar. I also hate asking for help. I had a bit of a breakdown just before Christmas as a result.

I have had to both accept being less than perfect and asking for help this year. The first time for both is hard. It is still not something that I am used to.

I try to unplug at the weekend. The difficulty with this is that I come to Monday morning and see 75 emails in my inbox. Unplugging sometimes causes more stress. I am still learning to navigate this by setting boundaries for communication.

C: While the pandemic starved teachers and students of human interaction, it certainly has made our education system extremely convenient with the ability to do practically everything online. In general, what model of teaching do you prefer? Is it the hybrid, the CLP from last spring, a fully synchronous/online model, or the conventional?

Mr. McCubbin: Hybrid teaching is the worst! It is like teaching two classes at the same time. It is extremely draining and I never feel like I am getting it right. Teaching to online learners requires vastly different pedagogical approaches than teaching in-person. Trying to marry the two pedagogies is almost impossible. Students in language courses need to be active participants. Learning online in the passive model causes them to be passive at best. At worst, students turn off their camera and play video games.

I don't mind all students being online. In fact, I wouldn't mind teaching an online course in the future - something similar

to the CLP model. There are a lot of cool things that we can do while everyone is virtual. But I would prefer to have everyone in the same room.

C: As a coach heavily invested in the school's Athletic program, what have you missed the most about coaching at UCC? And how have you adapted to the new schedule this year, without the ability to hold conventional practices, games, etc with your players? Have you substituted your time away from athletics for another activity?

Mr. McCubbin: Coaching has always been the best part of this job. Being without it has been very hard. I miss it immensely.

Closing Remarks

There are positives to all of this as well. I have been forced to grow as a person, to learn a little more empathy and compassion, to accept many of my faults. I appreciate that growth. I also like to be challenged. Challenges can be funny at times - while we are being challenged we are uncomfortable, but it is that discomfort that we look back upon and remember fondly. Looking back at the pandemic thus far, I am happy with my growth.

I also realise that many other people have it much worse than I do. I am privileged and I have never not felt privileged. My sister lost her job to the pandemic. She has had to postpone her wedding twice.

At least we are healthy.
At least we can do what we love.
At least we have one another - as a brotherhood and a community.

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