

# AN ANALYSIS OF TRENDS AND THEMES IN RESEARCH ARTICLES ON CANADIAN STUDENT SERVICES

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## Abstract

Student services professionals have emerged as significant supportive collaborators in the construction of environments that encourage student success within Canadian post-secondary education (Hardy-Cox & Strange, 2010). In Canada, literature pertaining to student services is evolving and research from other contexts is therefore often used to inform student affairs practices in this context. Yet, without a comprehensive understanding of research that is focused on Canadian student services specifically, those working in post-secondary education are left with a scope of understanding that may not always apply to the unique contexts in which they work. The purpose of this research study is to begin mapping the landscape of research on Canadian student services. We review articles pertaining to student success, the student experience, and student services, that have been published in national (*Canadian Journal of Higher Education*) and international (*Journal of College Student Development*; *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice*; *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*; *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*; and *Student Success*) student services and post-secondary education journals. This scoping review documents Canadian academic research published within the student services field and describes contributing authors and their affiliations, graduate student and post-doctoral fellow involvement, provincial and territorial research clusters, research movements over the decades, institutional research contexts, and research participants' level of education and communities/populations, as well as contextual trends and themes.

**Keywords:** student services, research, scoping review, content analysis

## Résumé

Les professionnels des services aux étudiants sont devenus d'importants collaborateurs dans la construction d'environnements qui encouragent la réussite étudiante dans le système postsecondaire canadien (Hardy-Cox et Strange, 2010). Au Canada, la littérature sur les services aux étudiants évolue, et la recherche issue d'autres contextes est souvent utilisée pour façonner les pratiques relatives aux affaires étudiantes. L'absence d'une compréhension exhaustive des recherches portant spécifiquement sur le contexte unique des services aux étudiants au Canada affecte les personnes qui travaillent dans ce domaine. Le but de cette étude de recherche est de commencer à faire l'inventaire de la recherche sur les services aux étudiants au Canada. Nous passons en revue les articles portant sur la réussite étudiante, l'expérience étudiante et les services aux étudiants ayant été publiés dans des revues portant sur les services aux étudiants et l'enseignement postsecondaire à l'échelle nationale (*Revue canadienne d'enseignement supérieur*) et internationale (*Journal of College Student Development*; *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice*; *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*; *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*; et *Student Success*). Cette revue de portée résume la recherche universitaire canadienne publiée dans le domaine des services aux étudiants et décrit les auteurs et leur affiliation, la participation des étudiants aux cycles supérieurs et des chercheurs postdoctoraux, les pôles de recherche provinciaux et territoriaux, les mouvements au fil des décennies, les contextes institutionnels, le niveau de scolarité et les communautés et populations d'appartenance des participants, ainsi que d'autres tendances et thèmes contextuels.

**Mots-clés :** services aux étudiants, recherche, revue de portée, analyse de contenu

## Introduction

Academic journals are often studied to provide an understanding of the landscape of existing research in a field. In this work, researchers often examine journal characteristics and contributions (Tight, 2018), theoretical frameworks (Tight, 2004, 2014, 2015), and methodologies (Hutchinson & Lovell, 2004; Tight, 2019a). In North America, few studies have been completed employing journals that are specifically focused on student affairs and services (Banning et al., 2000; Davis & Liddell, 1997). In Canada, a journal focused primarily on student services does not exist—making the *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* (CJHE) a critical outlet for faculty and student services professionals. Students and student services have been a focus of the journal since it was founded. Students and student services<sup>1</sup> was one of the seven areas of focus in the bibliography of post-secondary education in Canada located in the 1971 inaugural issue. However, an examination of the research specific to student services within CJHE has not been undertaken, nor has there been a synthesis of research on Canadian student services published internationally.

We acknowledge the complexity of language in the naming of the term *student affairs and services*. There is some question about whether *student affairs* and *student services* can be used interchangeably, or if they are separate concepts. Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) (2012) describes how those working in *student affairs* provide services, programs, and resources that assist students outside of the classroom. Seifert (2011) states that *student affairs* may be viewed as the initiatives in which there is a focus on student learning and development, while *student services* are focused on providing services to students. An alternative to this approach is that *student affairs* can be the umbrella term for other subtopics such as *student services* and *student development*. For the purposes of this work, we have selected the term *student services* in framing our research question and strategy due to its application in instrumental Canadian resources (i.e., Hardy-Cox & Strange, 2010; Strange & Hardy-Cox, 2016).

In this research study, we review scholarly articles pertaining to student success, the student experience, and student services that have been published in nationally and internationally recognized student services and post-secondary education journals. This scoping review

documents Canadian academic research published within the student services field and describes contributing authors and their affiliations, graduate student and post-doctoral fellow involvement, provincial and territorial research clusters, institutional research contexts, research participants' level of education and communities/populations, as well as contextual trends and themes. We analyzed scholarly articles featured within national and international journals according to three parameters: (1) articles published by scholars with Canadian affiliations, (2) articles published examining primary and secondary data collected within Canadian institutions, and (3) literature reviews examining relevant issues on Canadian campuses. Overall, student services research is evolving within the Canadian context and this analysis provides a foundational review of the scholars, institutions, programs and initiatives, and movements guiding practicing professionals.

## Positionality

Strange and Hardy-Cox, (2016) in the publication *Serving Diverse Students in Canadian Higher Education*, comment that the student communities/populations overviews contained within their publication are authored primarily by current student services professionals. Research on various student communities/populations is limited in the Canadian literature and “guided too much perhaps by the work already being done in the United States on such topics, but nonetheless finding a voice of its own as new Canadian scholars have taken up the effort” (Strange & Hardy-Cox, 2016, p. xii).

This distinction regarding authorship is important, as an increased number of graduate programs pertaining to student services have begun to materialize. In turn, these “new Canadian scholars” which Strange and Hardy-Cox (2016) reference have become active contributors in the research on student services in Canada (p. xii).

As active contributors ourselves, we recognize the importance of acknowledging our roles and responsibilities as Canadian faculty members with student services research agendas. We are situated within Faculties of Education at Wilfrid Laurier University and Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador, and instruct and supervise graduate students studying adult education, post-secondary education, and student services. More specifically, our research agendas focus on supporting student success in post-secondary education, student

mobility, institutional organization and communication structures, and underrepresented student communities/populations. We also serve as members of the Research Committee for the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS). Combined, our professional experience in student services and our current positions as faculty members make us aware of the importance of this scoping review within the Canadian student services landscape. We view this research study as the foundation for a larger research project that will complete a full systematic review of Canadian student services-related literature and construct a resource for those working within and researching the field.

## Student Services in the Canadian Context

The Mission of Student Services (1989) published by CACUSS states that “the primary purpose of student services is to develop programs and provide services which support and promote student-centered education” (p. 2). Student services professionals have expertise in assessing and identifying the factors that can enhance the development of students. These professionals are informed partners in the shared tasks of shaping and maintaining a campus community where students can learn inside and outside the classroom. In addition, they are educators that shape learning environments, although research has revealed that this component of the work is more rarely considered (Seifert & Burrow, 2013). There is a considerable history of student services “woven into the tapestry” of Canadian post-secondary education (Hardy-Cox & Strange, 2010, p. 7). Respected and recognized for their contributions, these professionals work tirelessly and “enthusiastically support the goals of student success in the academy.... These individuals inform, orient, advise, challenge, support, and guide students through a myriad of decisions during the post-secondary years” (Hardy-Cox & Strange, 2010, p. 7).

Hardy-Cox and Strange (2010), in the publication *Achieving Student Success*, describe four phases in the evolution of student services in Canada. The roots of student services in Canada originated in the last two decades of the nineteenth century as administrative personnel working in residential campus living, student wellness, co-curricular involvement, and specialized appointments for students became a growing part of student

life (Hardy-Cox & Strange, 2010). Student services in this first phase involved fundamental services that were embodied by the philosophy of *in loco parentis*. In the second phase, the 1950s to 1970s, there was a period of developing professional identities, roles, and responsibilities. Professional student services organizations began to represent the gathering of like-minded individuals discussing and debating more systematic processes, standards, principles, and values that would govern professionals’ communications and collaborations (Hardy-Cox & Strange, 2010). At the same time that this period of developing a professional identity was occurring, so too was the third phase, which had a focus on developing specializations, such as groups tailored to specific regions, roles, and/or responsibilities (e.g., the Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers and the Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-Secondary Education) (Hardy-Cox & Strange, 2010). Hardy-Cox and Strange describe the fourth phase as the development of professional preparation and skills, such as new professional networks, assessment initiatives, and the emergence of graduate-level programs.

Since this time, there have been further developments in Canadian student services, which are worthy of consideration moving forward. CACUSS commenced offering professional institutes designed to examine significant topics (e.g., student services assessment) and address specific groups of professionals (e.g., new professionals). Additional graduate-level programs in post-secondary education and student services across Canada have also continued to surface. However, the most dramatic development impacting the field has been the recent COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, Canadian institutions were forced to shift programs and services online, which entailed modifying programs, services, and support delivery models.

With these pronounced shifts over time, it is informative to examine how Canadian student services research has matured over the years and the ways in which it will continue advancing from this moment forward.

## Methods

### Scoping Review Research Design

Scoping reviews typically address broader topics and in comparison to systematic reviews, they are less likely

to focus on narrowly defined research questions (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Arksey and O'Malley (2005) identify four reasons for conducting a scoping study: (1) examine the extent, range, and nature of research activity; (2) determine the value of undertaking a full systematic review; (3) summarize and disseminate research findings; and (4) categorize research gaps in the existing literature.

For the purposes of this research, we focus on the first reason identified, examining the extent, range, and nature of research activity, which "is a useful way of mapping fields of study where it is difficult to visualize the range of material that might be available" (p. 21). This is in line with the purpose of this research, as we aim to provide an initial mapping of existing researchers, research, and the associated limitations within the literature on Canadian student services. While the majority of this research study pertains to the first reason for conducting a scoping review, we also address the fourth reason when categorizing research gaps in the existing literature. We present research gaps in the latter sections, as we engage in discussion regarding the overarching trends and themes addressed within the SCOPUS and CJHE datasets via Hanson and Denzine's (2000) four student services meta-research questions.

Arksey and O'Malley (2005) present a five-stage framework for conducting scoping reviews. These stages are as follows: Stage 1 - Identifying the research question; Stage 2 - Identifying relevant studies; Stage 3 - Study selection; Stage 4 - Charting the data; and Stage 5 - Collating, summarizing, and reporting the results.

## Identifying the Research Question (Stage 1)

With regard to the first stage, the following overall research question guides this study: What is the current landscape for Canadian student services-related literature in a sample of nationally (*Canadian Journal of Higher Education*) and internationally (*Journal of College Student Development*; *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice*; *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*; *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*; and *Student Success*) recognized student services and post-secondary education journals? We focus on articles published with Canadian affiliations (Who are the authors? Where are they from?) and also, the characteristics of this empirical research

as well as descriptive, theoretical, conceptual, and literature review research (What institutional context do they focus on? Who are the participants?).

## Identifying Relevant Studies and Study Selection (Stages 2 and 3)

SCOPUS is an abstract and citation database that features peer-reviewed journals, books, and conference proceedings (SCOPUS, 2020a). For peer-reviewed journals, SCOPUS indexes 39,743 journals (SCOPUS, 2020b). SCOPUS is commonly used for studies in which authors aim to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the literature in various subject areas. Tight (2019a, 2019b), Kwiek (2020a, 2020b), and Kwiek and Roszka (2020) have published extensively with a focus on post-secondary education and they have typically employed SCOPUS for their work.

For this reason, we used the SCOPUS database to identify scholarly journals featuring student services-related literature and subsequently identify articles within the Canadian context. In addition, we used the *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* (CJHE) database to identify student services-related literature within the Canadian context. The aim of this analysis was to supplement the initial scan that was completed through SCOPUS to obtain a fuller understanding of the landscape of Canadian student services-related literature.

## Scholarly Journals, Articles, and Associated Number of Results

We identified a variety of search terms to assist with locating relevant scholarly journals and articles within the SCOPUS database and scholarly articles within the CJHE database. The search terms that were employed commonly across both databases include: campus life, student life, campus services, student affairs, student services, college student, student support, campus culture, student development, student experience, and student success.

Within the SCOPUS database, these search terms retrieved a total of 14 unique scholarly journals. Seven of these journals were excluded from analysis because after further review we determined that the content was not related to Canadian student services in the post-secondary education context.<sup>2</sup> The remaining seven journals included: *Journal of College Student Development*; *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice*;



*Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*; *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*; *Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association*; *New Directions for Student Leadership*; and *Student Success*.

We then applied a location filter to restrict the number of results for articles to only those that identified as "Canada." After applying this filter, no results were returned for the *Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association* and this was therefore excluded from analysis. Additionally, only one result was found for *New Directions for Student Leadership* and we determined that the article was an editor's note and should be excluded from analysis. Table 1 presents the SCOPUS scholarly journals and associated number of results that were retrieved as an outcome of these searches. In total, 76 SCOPUS scholarly articles were identified across five scholarly journals for inclusion in the analysis.

Within the CJHE database, the search function on the CJHE website was used to identify scholarly articles for inclusion. Our search included the same terms that we employed in the SCOPUS database as a means of ensuring that we captured all potentially relevant articles.

Table 2 presents the CJHE search terms and associated number of results that were retrieved as an outcome of these searches. In total, 119 CJHE scholarly articles were identified for inclusion in the analysis.

### Charting the Data (Stage 4)

The same data charting approach was employed for both the SCOPUS (76 articles) and CJHE (119 articles) databases. We recorded the following overview information: article title and abstract; journal title; year of publication, volume, and issue; name of author(s); authors' Canadian institutional affiliations; and authors' Canadian faculties/schools. We also recorded additional variable information that was worthwhile for consideration. Table 3 presents these variables with instructive descriptions that were reviewed and analyzed. However, as Arksey and O'Malley (2005) note, in practice it can sometimes be impossible to extract all the information required due to lack of relevant material in the scholarly articles. Once these data were charted for all the scholarly articles, we moved forward with Stage 5 of the framework.

**Table 1**

*Journals and Number of Results (SCOPUS)*

Journals	<i>n</i> SCOPUS
<i>Journal of College Student Development</i>	30
<i>Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, and Practice</i>	13
<i>Journal of College Student Psychotherapy</i>	21
<i>Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice</i>	8
<i>Student Success</i>	4

**Table 2**

*Search Terms and Number of Results (CJHE)*

Search Terms	<i>n</i> CJHE
Campus life	18
Student life	37
Campus services	11

Search Terms	<i>n</i> CJHE
Student affairs	42
Student services	76
College student	122
Student support	39
Campus culture	6
Student development	95
Student experience	59
Student success	70

*Note:* In total, 119 CJHE scholarly articles were identified for inclusion in the analysis, but several articles were located across multiple search terms, which is presented here for information purposes.

**Table 3**

*Variables and Descriptions*

Variables	Descriptions
<i>Author Information</i>	
Canadian Authors	Exclusive Canadian; minority have Canadian affiliations; majority have Canadian affiliations
Canadian Graduate Student and Post-Doctoral Fellow Involvement	No or yes. If yes, number of graduate students and post-doctoral fellows involved
<i>Sample Information</i>	
Research Participants' Level of Education	College; college and university; undergraduate; graduate, undergraduate and graduate
Communities/Populations	Specific subgroups of students (e.g., students with disabilities, credit transfer students, Indigenous students, students with low socio-economic status, rural/urban students)
Institutional Context of Data	College; college and university; university
Geographical Context of Data	Exclusive Canadian; American; both Canadian and American; other

**Collating, Summarizing, and Reporting the Results (Stage 5)**

Within scoping reviews, the objective is to present an overview of the material that was surveyed (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). When reporting the results for the SCOPUS and CJHE analyses, we primarily focused

on descriptive frequencies of various characteristics to obtain an understanding of the Canadian student services-related literature. While the majority of the results are reported for each set of analyses separately in order to showcase variations, we also provide a combined holistic summary of the trends and themes that were identified in the scholarly articles.

## Looking Back: SCOPUS and CJHE Results

In this section, the results of the student services-related literature analyses located within the SCOPUS and CJHE databases are presented. Specifically, we focus on the timeline of the scholarly articles, authorship and affiliation, and characteristics of the articles pertaining to the Canadian context (authorship involvement, graduate student and post-doctoral fellow involvement, institutional affiliations, faculties/schools, institutional context and content, and research participants' level of education and communities/populations).

### Historical Development and Canadian Content Identification

We categorized the years of publication and established a timeline for the student services-related literature retrieved from the SCOPUS and CJHE databases. The following figures present these results according to five-year increments from 1989–2020 for SCOPUS and 1980–2020 for CJHE, respectively for comparison

purposes. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate that there was a relatively steady increase in the number of student services-related articles published, with stark increases in the SCOPUS database between 2010–2014 and the CJHE database between 2015–2019. While student services-related literature has taken some time to position itself within mainstream literature, the student services field has received increasing recognition over the years.

We then proceeded to review the 195 scholarly articles (76 listed in SCOPUS and 119 published in CJHE) related to student services in order to make an informed decision regarding whether the content of the individual articles was Canadian. We examined the data sources for empirical research as well as descriptive, theoretical, conceptual, and literature review research. The SCOPUS database analysis revealed that of the 76 scholarly articles, 48 (63.2%) possessed exclusively Canadian content, while 18 (23.7%) had exclusively American content and three had both Canadian and American content. The remaining articles were coded as “Other,” as the content concerned various other countries. The CJHE database analysis revealed that all 119 scholarly articles possessed exclusively Canadian content, which is not surprising given the scope and aims of this particular publication.

Figure 1

Timeline of Retrieved Publications (SCOPUS)

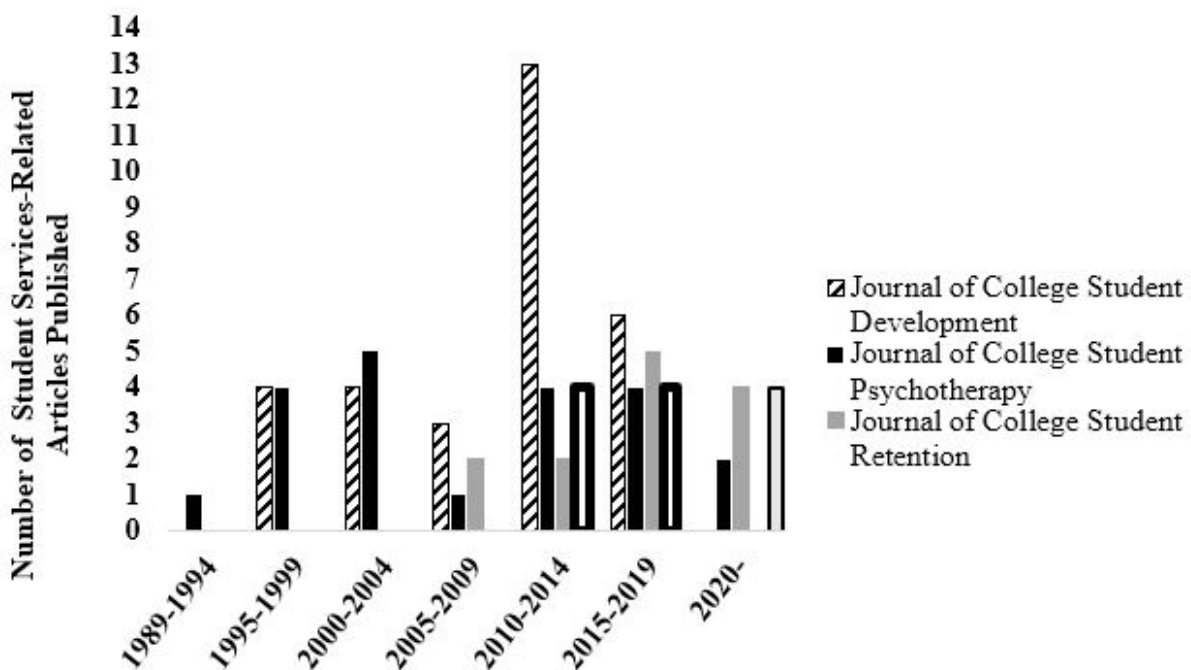
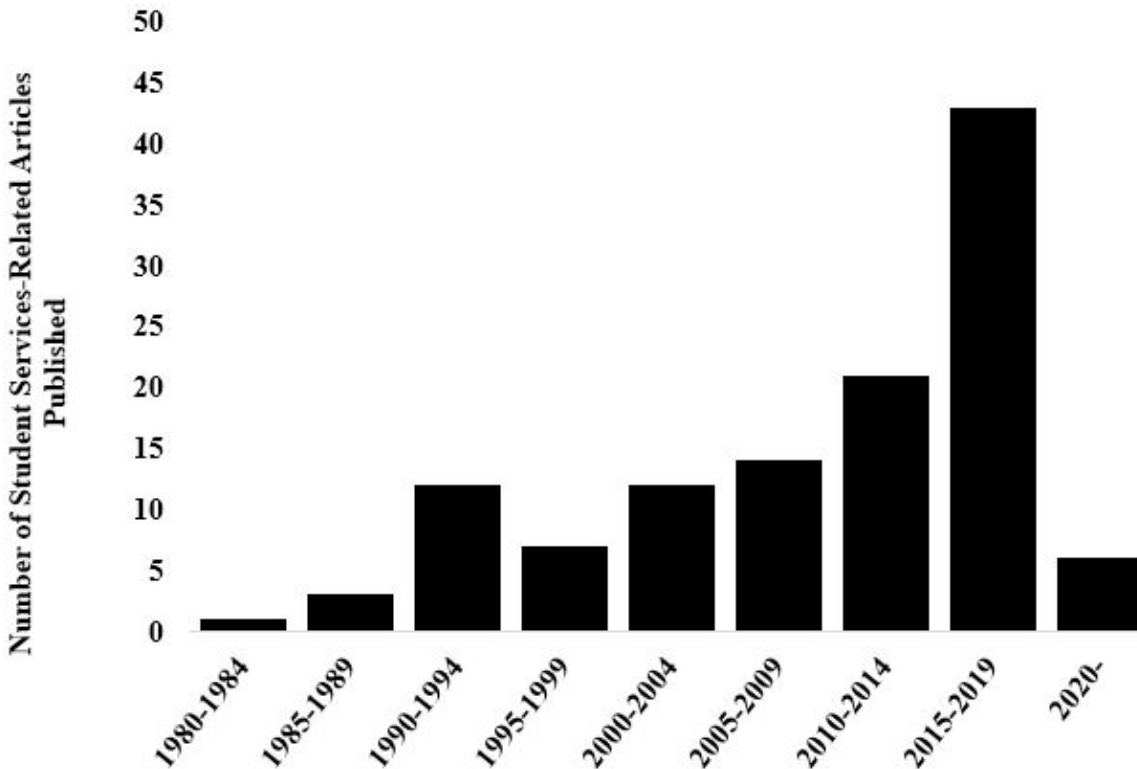


Figure 2

Timeline of Retrieved Publications (CJHE)



### Authorship Involvement

Authorship involvement within the identified student services-related literature was analyzed as a means of assessing the number of Canadian authors involved in producing this research and their overarching institutional affiliations. We reviewed the 76 SCOPUS scholarly articles for author involvement and determined that there were a total of 202 unique authors. Duplicates were removed in this analysis for authors who had published more than one manuscript for accuracy purposes. There were several authors that had published multiple manuscripts, with three authors having published three articles and another 12 authors having published two articles. After examining the 76 scholarly articles, we determined that 53 (69.8%) were written by authors with exclusively Canadian institutional affiliations and 23 (30.3%) were written by international teams with authors divided between Canadian institutional affiliations and authors from other countries.

Amongst the 119 CJHE scholarly articles, we determined that there were a total of 303 unique authors. There were several authors that had published multiple manuscripts, with seven authors having published two articles and one author having published five articles. Furthermore, after examining the 119 scholarly articles, we determined that 112 (94.1%) were written by authors with exclusively Canadian institutional affiliations and six (5.1%) were written by international teams with authors divided between Canadian institutional affiliations and authors from other countries. The remaining article was written by an author with an exclusively American institutional affiliation.

### Graduate Student and Post-Doctoral Fellow Involvement

In this subsection of authorship involvement, the contributions of Canadian graduate students and post-doctoral fellows are analyzed. We investigate whether



Canadian graduate students and post-doctoral fellows were involved in the authorship of these manuscripts. After examining the 48 SCOPUS scholarly articles with exclusively Canadian content, we determined that 16 (33.3%) had one or more Canadian graduate students or post-doctoral fellows as authors. The majority of articles with Canadian graduate student and post-doctoral fellow involvement contained one member, while one article had two graduate students and post-doctoral fellows and three articles had three graduate students and post-doctoral fellows.

Amongst the 119 CJHE scholarly articles with exclusively Canadian content, we determined that 34 (28.6%) had one or more Canadian graduate students or post-doctoral fellows as authors. The majority of articles with Canadian graduate student and post-doctoral fellow involvement contained one member, while a quarter of the articles contained two or more graduate students and post-doctoral fellows.

### Institutional Affiliations

Institutional affiliations within the identified student services-related literature were additionally analyzed as a

means of expanding our overarching assessment above and specifying more detailed Canadian provincial and territorial allocations. We started with a list of 220 author affiliations across the 76 SCOPUS scholarly articles<sup>3</sup> and 314 author affiliations across the 119 CJHE scholarly articles.<sup>4</sup> Duplicates were not removed in this analysis for authors who had published more than one manuscript with the same institutional affiliation for accuracy purposes. Within the SCOPUS database, authors with international institutional affiliations ( $n = 57$ ) and authors working within the community ( $n = 6$ ) were excluded. This results in a total of 157 Canadian institutional affiliations. Within the CJHE database, authors with international institutional affiliations ( $n = 9$ ) and authors working within the community ( $n = 24$ ) were excluded. This results in a total of 281 Canadian institutional affiliations. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the frequency of author affiliations, those possessing Canadian institutional affiliations, within each region of Canada.

The SCOPUS database indicates that Ontario and Québec were the primary sources of the authors involved in the publication of student services-related literature, representing 47.8% and 19.1%, respectively. The CJHE database indicates that Ontario was the

Figure 3

Geographic Representation of Authors with Canadian Institutional Affiliations (SCOPUS)

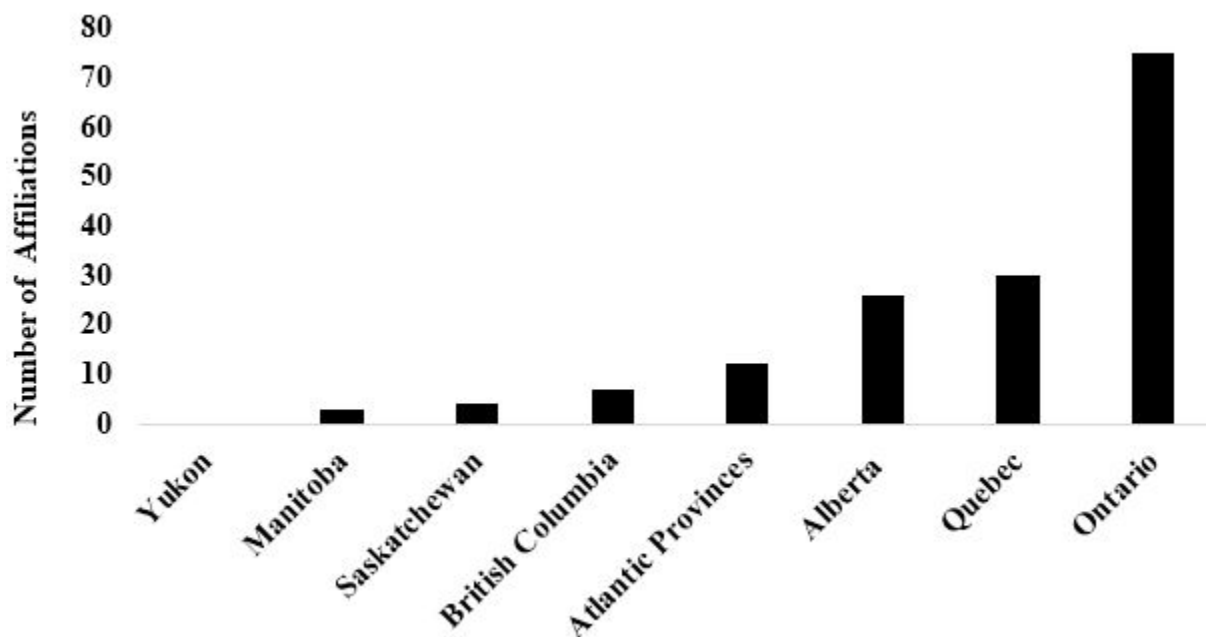
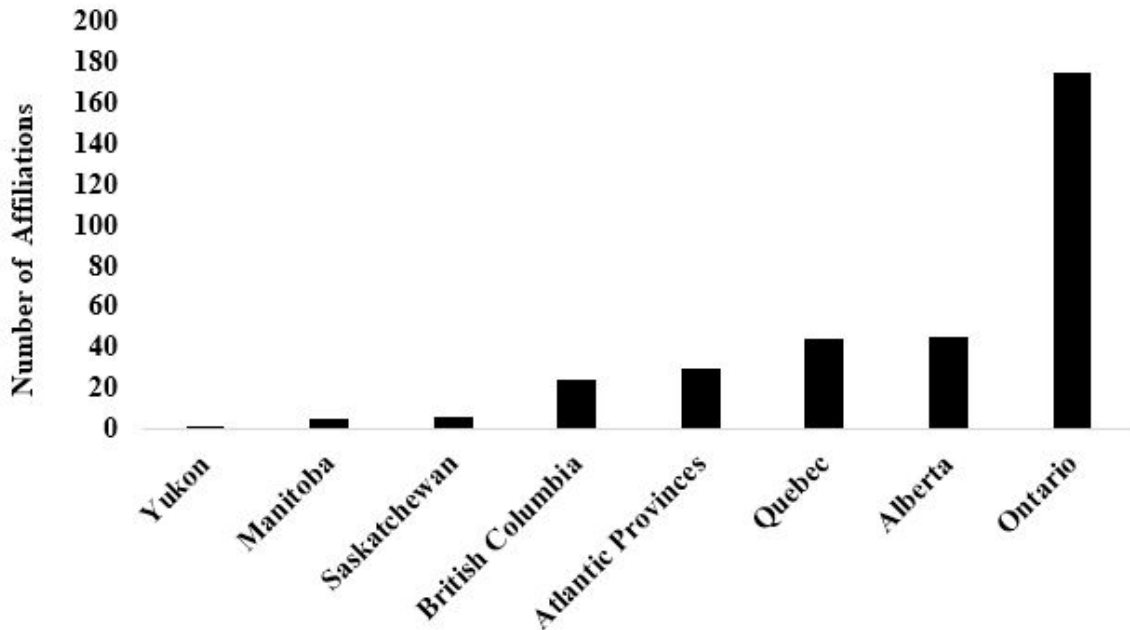


Figure 4

Geographic Representation of Authors with Canadian Institutional Affiliations (CJHE)



primary source of authors involved in the publication of student services-related literature, representing 62.3%. Moreover, the institutional affiliations located within the SCOPUS and CJHE databases were representative of 32 and 53 unique post-secondary institutions across Canada, respectively. Across the sample of institutions within the SCOPUS database, 13 are categorized by Statistics Canada's *Classification of Postsecondary and Adult Education Providers in Canada* as medical/doctoral institutions, 12 as comprehensive, two as primarily undergraduate, and the remaining five institutions are not currently ranked. Within the CJHE database, 13 are categorized as medical/doctoral institutions, 14 as comprehensive, 11 as primarily undergraduate, and the remaining 15 institutions are not currently ranked.

Most of the authors with international institutional affiliations across both databases were located within the United States, alongside a smattering from the European Union (Romania, France, and Switzerland), Australia (New South Wales), and Asia (South Korea).

### Faculties/Schools

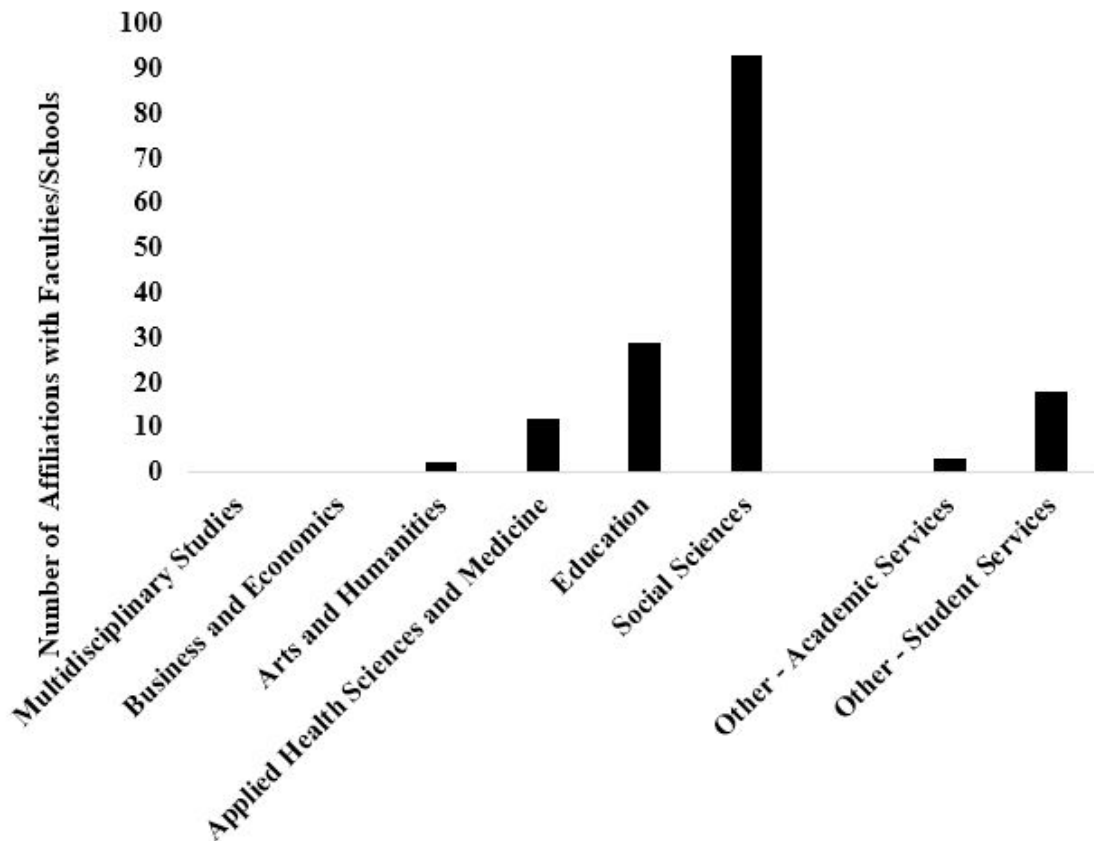
Fields of faculties/schools within the identified student services-related literature were likewise analyzed. Within the SCOPUS and CJHE databases, from the 157 and 281 Canadian institutional affiliations above, we investigated which fields were represented most frequently. Figures 5 and 6 illustrate the fields of faculties/schools categorizations and frequencies.

The authors of the SCOPUS scholarly articles were primarily from faculties/schools of Social Sciences ( $n = 93$ ) and Education ( $n = 29$ ). A total of 18 institutional affiliations were categorized as "Other - Student Services," which included authors working in various student services-related roles and areas of the institution (e.g., Student Life, Student Development Centre, Intercultural Affairs, Accessibility Services, Counselling Services).<sup>5</sup> Finally, three institutional affiliations were categorized as "Other - Academic Services," which included authors working in a research capacity for their institution.

The authors of the CJHE scholarly articles were primarily from the faculties/schools of Social Sciences ( $n = 95$ ) and Applied Health Sciences and Medicine ( $n = 53$ ). A total of 18 institutional affiliations were categorized as

Figure 5

Faculties/Schools Representation of Authors with Canadian Institutional Affiliations (SCOPUS)



“Other - Student Services,” which included authors working in various student services-related roles and areas of the institution (e.g., Peer Mentorship Program, Faith and Spirituality Centre, Counselling Services). Finally, 40 institutional affiliations were categorized as “Other - Academic Services,” which included authors working in Centres for Teaching and Learning, faculty development, curriculum development, and continuing education.

### Research Participants’ Level of Education and Communities/Populations

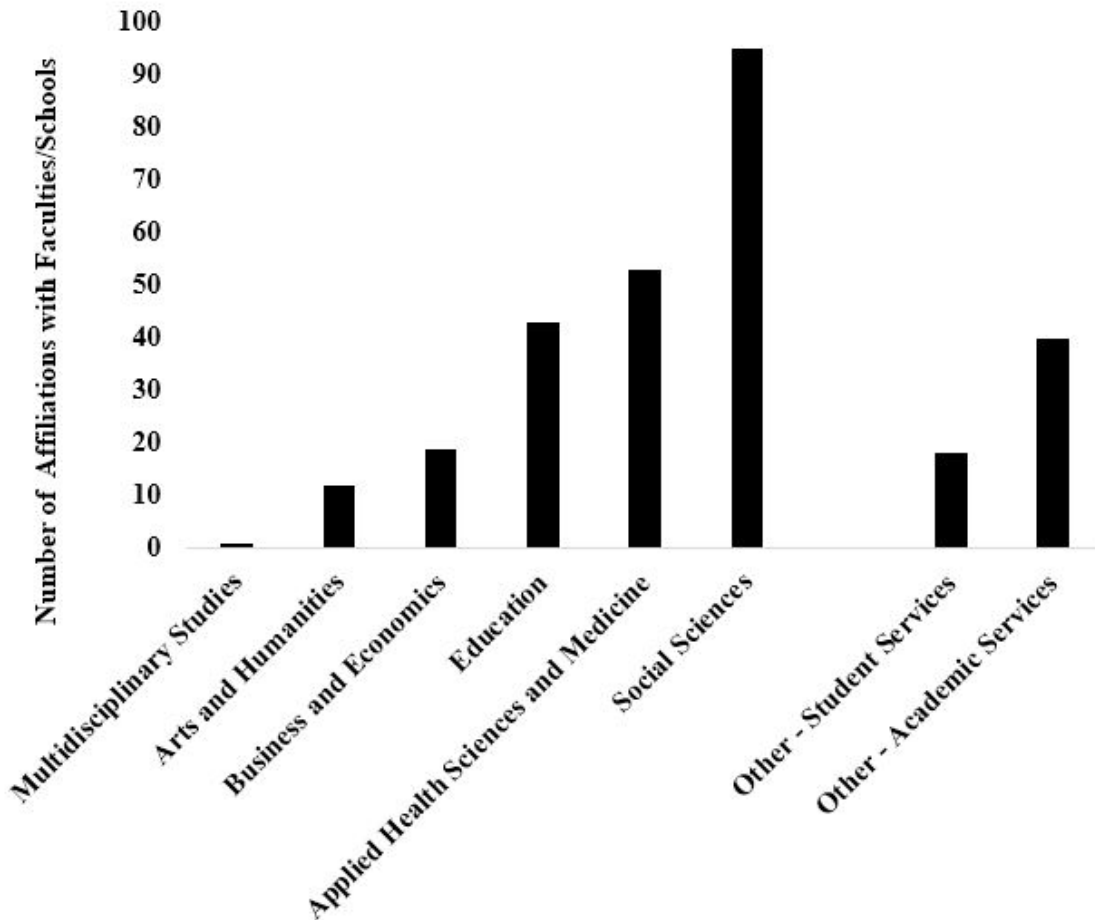
Finally, the primary and secondary research participants from the studies documented within the identified student services-related literature were analyzed. In particular, we noted the level of education and the nature of the student communities/populations (e.g., college and/or

university, undergraduate and/or graduate). After examining the 48 SCOPUS scholarly articles with exclusively Canadian content, we determined that two (4.1%) had samples consisting of college students, one (2.1%) had a sample consisting of college and university students, 24 (50%) had samples consisting of undergraduate students, two (4.2%) had samples consisting of graduate students, and seven (14.6%) had samples consisting of a combination of both undergraduate and graduate students. The remaining articles were coded as “Other,” as these included student services professionals, unique combinations of levels of education (e.g., high school and undergraduate students, undergraduate students and preparatory programs), and students that recently graduated.

Amongst the 119 CJHE scholarly articles with exclusively Canadian content, we determined that five (4.2%)

**Figure 6**

*Faculties/Schools Representation of Authors with Canadian Institutional Affiliations (CJHE)*



had samples consisting of college students, nine (7.6%) had samples consisting of college and university students, 58 (48.7%) had samples consisting of undergraduate students, 11 (9.2%) had samples consisting of graduate students, and 21 (17.6%) had samples consisting of a combination of both undergraduate and graduate students. The remaining articles were coded as “Other,” as these included student services professionals, unique combinations of levels of education (e.g., college and polytechnic students) and faculty members.

Moreover, from the SCOPUS scholarly articles that focused on college students, students with disabilities and first-year students were studied. The articles that focused on undergraduate students examined a range of communities/populations, including students with learning difficulties, students seeking mental health support,

residence students, international students, Indigenous students, low socio-economic status students, rural/urban students, and students from intact and divorced families. The articles that focused on graduate students examined male international students and graduate students more broadly. Lastly, from the articles that focused on undergraduate and graduate students, communities/populations included international students, Indigenous students, students with learning challenges, students accessing counselling and health services, and peer mentors.

Amongst the CJHE scholarly articles that focused on college students, first-year students, credit transfer students, and low socio-economic status students were studied. The articles that focused on undergraduate students examined a range of communities/populations, in-

cluding first-year students, credit transfer students, international students, students with disabilities, Indigenous students, adult/mature learners, low socio-economic status students, sexual assault survivors, religious students, gifted students, sexual minority students, rural/urban students, and student athletes. First-year students and credit transfer students were examined in the majority of the articles. The articles that focused on graduate students examined international students, married/partnered students, and graduate students more broadly. Lastly, from the articles that focused on undergraduate and graduate students, communities/populations included international students, Indigenous students, rural/urban students, and student athletes.

## SCOPUS and CJHE Connections to Student Services Meta-Research Questions

Student services researchers organize their work conceptually into four broad, meta-research questions: (1) Who are today's college and university students? (2) How do they experience college and university? (3) What do students learn in college and university, and who did they become? (4) How does college and university affect what students learn and who they become? (Hanson & Denzine, 2000). As demonstrated in the analyses detailed above, unique programs and initiatives, institutional catchment areas, student communities/populations, and campus cultures guide the questions that are examined. Student services professionals often fulfill research functions within their work, while undertaking many additional transactional and transformation functions on campus (Hanson & Denzine, 2000; Moxley, 1988). We reviewed the overarching trends and themes documented within the SCOPUS and CJHE articles and have organized the results according to these meta-research questions as a means of situating the Canadian literature reviewed within the North American landscape.

### Who Are Today's College and University Students?

Research investigating the student communities/populations was located throughout the scholarly articles and their post-secondary education journeys were pre-

sented for consideration. These student communities/populations include international, Indigenous, graduate, disabled, adult/mature, rural/urban, credit transfer, first-year, low socio-economic status, and food insecure students. While we are unable to review all the trends and themes that arose with regard to studying today's college and university students, within this section we will discuss international students, students with disabilities and mental health concerns, first-year transitions, and student mobility. These topics were well-represented within the scholarly articles.

When reviewing the scholarly articles that studied international student communities/populations on campus, cultural diversity was an increasingly important consideration as immigration and increasing international enrolment have prompted more multicultural campuses (Calder et al., 2016; Chen, 2006; Guo & Jamal, 2007; Holdaway et al., 1988; Kenyon et al., 2012; Montsion, 2018; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013; Samuel & Burney, 2003). The research in these articles demonstrated that minority and international students arrive on campus with their values, language, culture, and educational backgrounds, which can provide a rich learning experience for everyone (Guo & Jamal, 2007). Some authors noted that while there has been an increase in recruitment and enrolment for international students across Canadian campuses, there has been limited research regarding their cross-cultural transitions, student experiences, social and emotional interactions, and academic success (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Lowinger et al., 2016; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011; Samuel, 2004). Within the articles examined, there were several topics that were presented including considering international students' enrolment decisions, acknowledging affordable housing and financing struggles, nurturing cultural diversity, encountering systemic racism, and tailoring counselling and support services, among others (Calder et al., 2016; Chen, 2006; Guo & Jamal, 2007; Holdaway et al., 1988; Montsion, 2018; Robertson et al., 2015).

The topic of students with disabilities and mental health concerns also accounted for a considerable number of the scholarly articles reviewed. Academic success strategies, persistence factors, academic engagement patterns, involvement in academic activities, and standards for academic programs were raised as concerns when supporting and empowering students (Duquette,



2000; Leigh, 1992; McEwan & Downie, 2019; Nielsen, 2001; Reed & Kennett, 2017; Reed et al., 2003). Across the articles examined, the data indicated that the number of students with disabilities and mental health concerns is growing, and access alongside academic and social integration are necessary concerns when structuring and delivering services (Duquette, 2000; McEwan & Downie 2019; Van Slingerland et al., 2018). Many colleges and universities have implemented initiatives focused on comprehending mental health culture and improving mental health coping strategies and well-being, including innovations in counselling and wellness services (Beks et al., 2018; Giamos et al., 2017; Tremblay et al., 2008; Van Slingerland et al., 2018; Wasylkiw et al., 2020).

Similarly, there were frequent discussions of transitions from secondary to post-secondary and between post-secondary institutions. The first-year experience was examined according to the fundamental skills, learning approaches, academic performances, available learning resources, subjective course experiences, and career goals (Brady & Allingham, 2005; Dietsche, 1990; Grayson, 1994, 1995, 1997; Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987; Ramey et al., 2018; Seifert et al., 2010). In addition, the well-being of first-year students and depressive symptoms were researched as a result of personal, family-related, social, and academic correlates (Marcotte & Lévesque, 2018; Villatte et al., 2017). Regarding student mobility between post-secondary institutions, student experiences navigating the credit transfer process were documented, including the policies and procedures governing grade point averages, course repeats, required documentation and assessments, and advising practices (Acai & Newton, 2015; Andres, 2001; Carter et al., 2011; Gerhardt & Masakure, 2016; Martinello & Stewart, 2015; Percival et al., 2015; Stewart & Martinello, 2012).

## How Do They Experience College and University?

Research investigating the components that impact students' overarching experiences and encounters on campuses was instructive. These structural, organizational, cultural, and political components include access and accessibility policies and procedures, student engagement and social and academic involvement, sexual assault, suicide prevention, academic misconduct,

retention and attrition, time to graduation, withdrawal, rising tuition fees and finances, and post-secondary education and labour market transitions. There were several scholarly articles that examined traditional concerns of access and accessibility within post-secondary education by analyzing family background, family income and parental education, cultural and religious factors, tuition fees, post-secondary education enrolment, and labour market decisions (DeClou, 2016; Finnie et al., 2015; Letkiewicz et al., 2014; Madgett & Bélanger, 2008; Peng & Yang, 2010). Several survey instruments were used for this research: the Labour Force Survey (LFS), Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID), National College Health Assessment, National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), North American Academic Study Survey (NAASS), Youth in Transition Survey (YITS), and several standardized American surveys that were adapted for data collection purposes within Canadian institutions. Moreover, there were several articles that examined student self-reported academic misconduct practices, reviewed academic integrity policies and student codes of conduct, and assessed implications and social justice movements (Christensen Hughes & McCabe, 2006a, 2006b; Jurdi et al., 2011).

## What Do Students Learn in College and University, and Who Did They Become? And, How Does College and University Affect What Students Learn and Who They Become?

Research investigating student learning and development and the strategies employed by student services in supporting student success was informative. These instructional strategies include peer mentorship, service learning, community learning, cooperative education, internships, residence life activities, student governance, and first-year seminars and courses.

Peer mentorship programs and initiatives included several variations for international, Indigenous, first-year, graduate, and STEM students, among others (Donaldson & Dixon, 1995; Gallop & Bastien, 2016; Keast, 2000; Pidgeon et al., 2014; Preston et al., 2014). An innovative example of peer mentoring was shared in an overview of the culturally-relevant peer mentoring initiative SAGE (Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement),

which centres on supporting institutional change for Indigenous graduate student success in British Columbia (Pidgeon et al., 2014). This program is responding to the lack of Indigeneity within universities and facilitates students and faculty connecting with one another and engaging with theories, research processes, and their lived experiences as Indigenous scholars within mainstream institutions (Pidgeon et al., 2014). The peer mentoring program extends beyond institutional and disciplinary boundaries, as members from regional areas in Vancouver, Kelowna, Prince George, and Victoria provide mentorship throughout the province.

Similarly, service learning was commonly discussed within the literature and the various pedagogies employed were constructively considered (Levkoe et al., 2014; Raddon & Harrison, 2015). Service learning was addressed through research studies examining this instructional strategy as a transformative learning experience that promotes socially responsible citizens, alongside those exploring its corporatization (Levkoe et al., 2014; Raddon & Harrison, 2015).

## Looking Ahead: Discussion and Implications

The analyses featured in this scoping review involved an examination of authors and their affiliations, graduate students and post-doctoral fellows, provincial and territorial research clusters, research movements over the decades, institutional research contexts, research participants' level of education and communities/populations, as well as contextual trends and themes. The research study revealed several notable findings and in this conclusion we consider the implications and provide recommendations for future work.

First, a prominent finding from this analysis was that the majority of the research reviewed was produced and published by faculty members, and these contributors were primarily positioned at comprehensive and medical/doctoral universities. This resulted in a relatively central focus within existing literature on the university student experience. The college, polytechnic, and institute student experience were largely underrepresented and must be intentionally integrated in research on Canadian student services. Moving forward, faculty members should be encouraged to engage in research as a means of contributing to this limited literature, studying the stu-

dent experience and services and supports within these institutions and across them for increased representation. Moreover, collaborations between faculty members and student services professionals across colleges, polytechnics, institutes, and universities would be progressive. Collaborations between faculty members and student services professionals provide a more nuanced examination of the student experience from concurrent academic service and student service perspectives and combine the expertise of the varied contributors (advanced methods, theoretical frameworks, and data interpretations and applications).

Second, the research reviewed intermittently examined student services professionals' identities, experiences, and the associated requirements for work. Within Hanson and Denzine's (2000) student services meta-research questions, embedded throughout this research study, there is a distinctive fifth meta-research question that examines literature conducted on organization and communication structures, as well as the professional competencies and qualifications of the individuals working within the field. The analyses conducted reveal a lack of research on these topics, with limited focus on student services members, professional standards, ethics, values, and the associated approaches. Fricker (2017) states that Canadian student services professionals are excellent consumers of American research but must engage in shepherding these studies within our own context, produce evidence-based research, and interrogate what it means to be student services professionals in this climate. Alongside faculty members' educative contributions, it is important that student services professionals contribute their "on the ground" experiences and expertise to the very research that is informing their livelihood. Cooperative research endeavours would allow for a knowledgeable consideration of student services competencies and qualifications and the connected relationships and partnerships between academic services and student services.

Third, research experience is worthwhile for graduate students' socialization into the academy as faculty members (Gopaul, 2012) and those working in student services administration (Tull et al., 2009). Approximately one third of the research reviewed in this study included a graduate student or post-doctoral fellow as primary and secondary authors. Graduate programs are ground-breaking sites for those working inside and

outside student services to contribute scholarly insights and developments. These influential emerging scholars provide a platform on which to continue constructing a productive and innovative Canadian student services research agenda. Nonetheless, formulating a research agenda and culture that includes contributions from all post-secondary education stakeholders requires appropriate administrative supports, training and mentoring sessions, and networks and collaborations. As a result, there have been several calls to action for institutional leaders to support working student services professionals with their graduate studies and require more rigorous attention to assessment, evaluation, and research activities when working in the field (Fricker, 2017; Henning & Roberts, 2016; Wise & Davenport, 2019). Student services professionals are embracing assessment, evaluation, and research as a necessary component of the profession, which includes “a broad theoretical base, extended graduate level preparation, a strong commitment to service rather than to personal gain, and a community of practitioners with high standards for ethical practice and conduct” (Komives et al., 2003, p. xv). It is evident that assessment, evaluation, and particularly research must become routine practice and inform services, programs, and initiatives (Barr et al., 2014; Henning & Roberts, 2016; Keeling, 2004; Manning et al., 2014).

Lastly, Strange and Hardy-Cox (2016) state that as “primarily a field of applied practice, student services has long struggled to generate an evidence-based framework of principles, theories, and programmatic outcomes of its own, relying perhaps too much on anecdotal exchanges and interactions instead” (p. xii). There is an increasing collection of research on student services in Canada that illustrates the field has moved beyond anecdotal exchanges and interactions. However, this is not to state that existing research cannot be further advanced. Research in this field primarily results from researchers and case studies affiliated with Ontario institutions located in central Canada, followed by Alberta, British Columbia, and Québec within both the SCOPUS and CJHE databases, which encompass several research clusters. As a means of further enhancing the landscape of research in this field, a greater understanding of student communities/populations across Canada and the similarities and differences in their experiences are required. This can be achieved by having more generalizable and transferable research that concentrates on multi-insti-

tution or system- and nationwide research in student services, rather than service, program, and initiative case studies. Cross-pollination among institutions and researchers could be formally and informally enhanced to allow for such opportunities.

As a final statement, it would be worthwhile within future research to conduct an examination of the research designs, theoretical approaches, and methods that are employed within existing research on Canadian student services. This information could inform how faculty, student services professionals, and graduate students and post-doctoral fellows continue developing the quantity and quality of research in this context.

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## Notes

- 1 The additional six areas of focus were history and organization, current trends and problems, curriculum and teaching, research and scholarship, the professor and condition of work, and non-degree granting institutions.
- 2 The excluded journals were: *AIAA Student Journal*; *American Student Dental Association (ASDA) News*; *Dentistry (ASDA)*; *Mathematics Student*; *Mouth (ASDA)*; *Student Medicine*; and *The New Dentist*.
- 3 One author published two articles with different Canadian affiliations. These affiliations were each counted as one for the respective institutions they were affiliated with at the time of publication.
- 4 One author published two articles with different Canadian affiliations. These affiliations were each counted as one for the respective institutions they were affiliated with at the time of the publication.
- 5 While there are graduate students that are studying and working full- or part-time within student services, academic services, and the community, author categorizations for all analyses were based on the primary affiliation identified by the authors themselves.