



**HUMBER**

Faculty of Liberal Arts & Sciences

**SUMMER 2024 ISSUE**

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# FLAS

# CONNECT



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# Message from the Senior Dean

John Stilla, MA, OCELT

I'm excited to share with the Humber community and our partners the Summer 2024 issue of FLAS Connect. This issue features phenomenal writing from our students, stories of faculty and staff supporting our students in crucially important and innovative ways, and celebratory stories of student success both inside and outside the classroom. We also once again provide the opportunity to learn more about the people on the FLAS team, as well as the creative and intellectually stimulating curricula delivered by our exceptional faculty.

We have so much to celebrate and share in FLAS. I want to say a huge thank you to our FLAS newsletter team for providing us with the opportunity to do so: Mariel Alano, Barbara Cam, Kimmy Do, Frances Sparano, Tumpe Trotter, Mike Wells, and Kate Zhang. I also want to thank our student contributors from our TESL program—Lalita Chetram and Claudia Chavez—as well as our faculty contributors for this issue: Irene Kosmas, Maria Lucia Di Placito, Amir Tavangar, Alyson Renaldo, David Miller, Michelle Jordan, Candace Iron, and Suzanne Senay.

Happy reading, and please reach out to our team if you would like to collaborate on any ideas or initiatives that may be sparked as you read through this issue of FLAS Connect!



# I AM FROM

**PC Irene Kosmas provides the context for the I am From poems**

The "I AM FROM" poem is a creative exercise that finds its roots in George Ella Lyon's (1999) poem "Where I'm From." Lyon's work is a vivid reflection of her childhood in Kentucky, capturing the essence of her upbringing through rich, sensory language. This poem has transcended its original context to become a valuable tool in various educational settings, particularly in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) classrooms.

The adaptability of the "I AM FROM" poem makes it an effective means for students and teachers alike to delve into their personal histories and identities. In TESL education, this exercise allows learners to express their cultural backgrounds and individual experiences in a deeply personal and meaningful way. This not only aids in language acquisition but also fosters a supportive and inclusive classroom environment by highlighting the diverse cultural narratives of each student.

In a recent language teacher education article, Valencia et al. (2020) discussed the critical role of identity work in language teaching and learning. Dr. Marlon Valencia's insight that he doesn't have certainty about who he is but has a sense of who he's becoming resonates deeply with this exercise. It underscores the idea that understanding one's evolving identity is crucial in shaping effective language educators.

Inspired by my colleagues and students, who shared their "I AM FROM" poems, I realized how these poetic reflections reveal the multidimensional aspects of one's identity and how these aspects intersect with their teaching practice. My own experience with this exercise highlighted the strong presence of my Greek heritage in my identity and teaching. This connection between my cultural roots and my professional identity has deepened my appreciation for my heritage and reinforced the importance of encouraging students to share their cultural backgrounds.

Understanding the intricate link between identity, beliefs, and emotions can profoundly impact how we guide new language teachers. Incorporating identity projects like the "I AM FROM" poem into the TESL program can help future educators embark on a journey of self-discovery. This process will not only aid them in understanding who they are but also in shaping who they are becoming as language teachers. By fostering this reflective practice, we can better support new teachers in integrating their personal and cultural identities into their professional lives, ultimately enriching their teaching and the learning experiences of their students.

*Poems on the next page >*

## I AM FROM

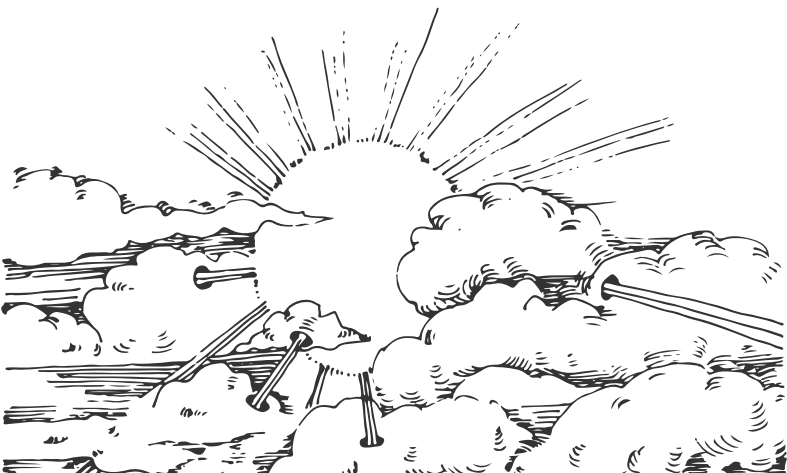
### TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (TESL) STUDENT CONTRIBUTIONS

#### **I am From Poem** by Lalita Chetram

I am from coconut water  
From sugar cane, bauxite, goal and rice  
I am from the land of many waters  
Virgin beaches, majestic forests, the  
highest one drop water fall in the world  
I am from the giant water lily, and silk  
cotton trees, the country's pride  
I'm from family gatherings at Phagwah,  
Easter and Christmas time and brown  
skin people  
From Betty and William  
I'm from loud laughs and broken English  
From "don't swallow that cherry seed  
cause if you do it will grow in your belly"  
to "one one dutty build dam"  
I'm from dig dutty to shave head  
I'm from 59 Village to Good Hope  
Chicken curry and bigan choka  
From brothers taken by a drunk driver  
The other taken by cancer  
Albums, cabinets and the walls of my  
parents' house  
Memories to share with those we wish  
had a chance to be introduced

#### **I am From Poem** by Claudia Chavez

I am from beautiful family celebrations  
From pots full of food and folk and  
traditional music  
I am from the land of the Incas,  
Powerful, copper colored skin, the smell  
of sweat of hardworking people  
I am from the Kukuli gray dove  
Singing very early in the morning.  
I'm from the nights of lively karaoke  
and endless hugs  
From Manuel known as "Yeyo" and  
Rosario known as "Charito"  
I'm from the Chavez family from  
Chiclayo and the Cruz family from  
Huacho  
From "You can do it!" and "You're strong  
enough!"  
I'm from a strong and vivid faith on  
God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit  
I'm from Lima, the capital of Peru, the  
City of Kings, Pork, beans and Inka Cola  
From the moment my father left his  
hometown and migrated to the USA for  
a better future  
I'm from the constant and powerful  
prayers of my mother that connects us  
more to God  
I'm from those moments, where tears  
of joy are our only way of expression



## STUDENT APPRECIATION MONTH

BY MARIA LUCIA DI PLACITO

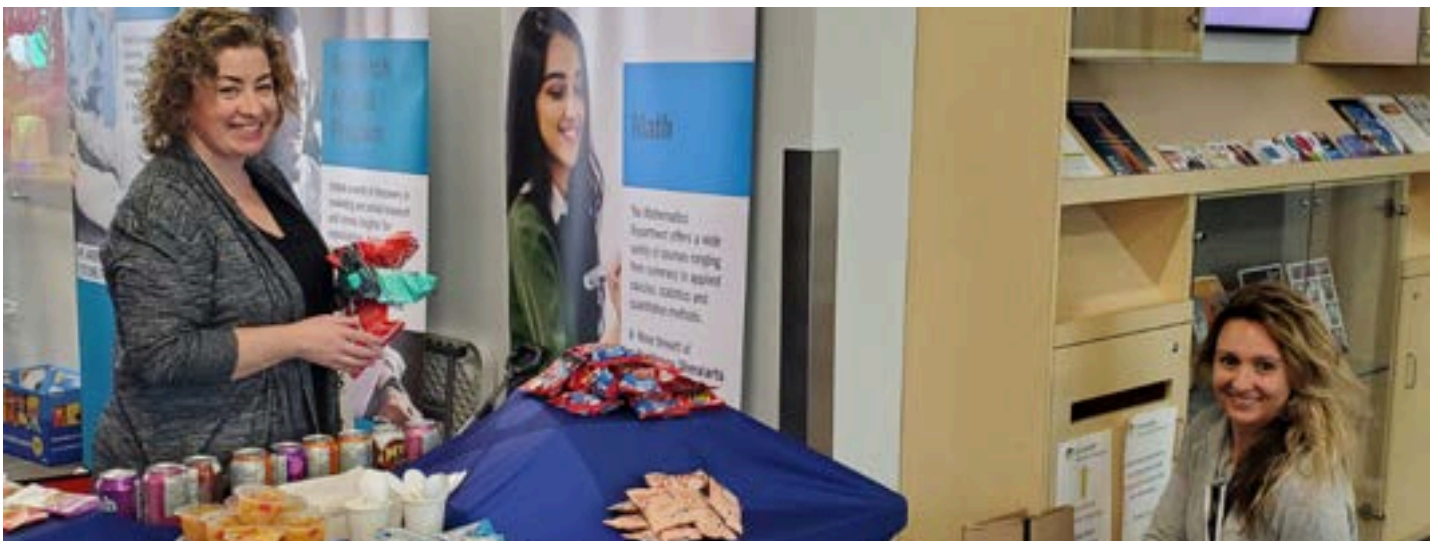
What began as an earnest aspiration to enhance student engagement with the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences (FLAS) swiftly evolved into an unexpected merger of FREE FOOD and GIVEAWAYS! Enter Student Appreciation Month – abbreviated as SAM – which launched February 2024! Let's back up for a second...

In the Fall of 2023, FLAS Senior Dean John Stilla asked for recommendations on how we can show our appreciation of and gratitude toward our students. The enterprising minds of Candace Iron and Marylou Di Placito were immediately set into motion – a prospect tinged with a hint of peril, given their colorful history of

endeavors! With a rapidity matched only by their boundless enthusiasm, the duo presented a proposal to Dean Stilla: "What if we were to fashion a communal space outside the FLAS department, adorned with a mural crafted by students, and, naturally, food upon its unveiling?" Thus birthed the SAM committee, with additional members Patrice Esson, Jessica Freitag, Nora Esperanza, Melanie Chaparian, and Anne Lyden.

SAM's raison d'être: nourishing students, giving away prizes and gift cards, amplifying awareness of our Faculty, and fostering an environment for student congregation. Originally slated for February alone, FLAS Food Days and the accompanying giveaways and activities underwent an extension, spanning the entirety of the Winter 2024 semester! The committee used signage and social media to promote the events.

As April 2024 ended, SAM bid adieu, yet the committee remained aware of student needs. Candace Iron's brainchild emerged:



*Photo: FLAS faculty members Aileen Herman and Maria Lucia Di Placito are setting up the SAM booth on the 5th floor of the LRC*

"What if we were to prolong SAM's spirit by establishing a 'Grab 'N Go' food bank outside our department?" The FLAS Grab 'N Go food bank launched in May 2024, with plans to continue in the coming Fall 2024 term!



Photo: Student Appreciation Month poster

The committee wishes to express heartfelt gratitude to those instrumental in facilitating SAM's ventures. Special commendations are owed to Anthony Riga, Aileen Herman, and Christeen Dyer for their invaluable contributions to the Food Days and Giveaways. Additionally, sincere appreciation is extended to the faculty members at Lakeshore Campus who graciously volunteered to provide food to students in their classes. ♥



Photos: FLAS faculty/staff, Candace Iron, Jessica Freitag, Aileen Herman, Anthony Riga, and Maria Lucia Di Placito with students who dropped by at the SAM booth





*Photo: Guest speaker Mackenzie Ketchell presenting Developing Expert Learners: An Introduction to UDL*

## **FLAS FORWARD TOGETHER SYMPOSIUM 2024: INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS - BRIDGING IDEAS AND PEOPLE**

**BY KIMMY DO**

On Monday, June 3, 2024, the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences (FLAS) hosted the Forward Together Symposium, a day-long event that brought together faculty and staff to explore innovative ideas, foster collaboration, and advance equity and inclusion within the Faculty. The Symposium featured a rich program of collaborative breakout sessions, addressing pressing topics relevant to contemporary teaching and learning with a forward-thinking and inclusive approach.

The day began with a plenary session on the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) hosted by Mackenzie Ketchell, professor in the Faculty of Social & Community Services and a project secondee with Humber's Centre for Innovative Learning (CIL), emphasizing its critical role in creating inclusive curricula that support student success. Attendees then participated in a series of engaging breakout sessions throughout the day.

The morning sessions covered the application of UDL principles to enhance student engagement and adaptability across different learning environments; the practical strategies for increasing access and designing more inclusive experiences; and the "middle space" between course expectations and student output, with strategies to make this space more predictable and productive.

The afternoon sessions continued to provide valuable knowledge and fostered engaging discussions. The engaging presentations focused on the power of collaborative learning by involving students in the design process; the importance of numeracy, analytical skills, and communication for data professionals to meet evolving industry demands; the development and future plans for HeadStart English, a self-directed communications tool designed to



*Photo: FLAS faculty and staff at the FLAS Forward Together Symposium 2024*

help students enhance their academic English skills; and the significance of a justice-focused approach to equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB) work. Attendees also participated in the interactive campfire conversation to share experience and brainstorm on how to integrate systems thinking in polytechnic education; collaborate with the ACER Community Hub, partner with Industry partners and other faculties/departments at Humber to apply for research grants; and recognize the global opportunities in the classroom and explore the learning opportunities beyond the traditional classrooms. The symposium was also the opportunity for us to celebrate our students' achievements, honoring their outstanding engagement in both in-person and online learning environments, as well as on a global scale. Additionally, we acknowledged the exceptional efforts of the team behind the successful Student Appreciation Month series of events.

The FLAS Forward Together annual Symposium served as an invaluable forum for faculty and staff to collaborate, exchange knowledge, and support each other's endeavors.

Through this collective advancement, the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences is aiming to deliver a comprehensive liberal arts and sciences education to all students while nurturing a strong sense of belonging and unity within the FLAS community.



*Photo: Students awarded the FLAS Senior Dean's Certificate of Recognition*



*Photo: The SAM committee received the Heart Leadership Award from our Senior Dean, John Stilla*





Be sure to have a look at the amazing work that Amir and Kate did by visiting:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/financemath/>

## ECAMPUS PROJECT: REVOLUTIONIZING SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS OF MATH OF FINANCE WITH AN INNOVATIVE OER BY AMIR TAVANGAR, KATE ZHANG & MIKE WELLS

Department of Mathematics professors Amir Tavangar and Kate Zhang have created an amazing, interactive, and engaging online resource book for students in courses on the mathematics of finance. Because this is an open educational resource, students can use it at no cost.

Every year, the Department of Mathematics offers over 70 sections of its Math of Finance course (BMTH 120). Students in this course currently do use an open educational resource book as their primary text, but Amir and Kate saw an opportunity to provide a better, more user-friendly resource for these students, and for students at other post-secondary institutions. They have created materials that are accessible and comprehensive enough that any individual who is interested in learning about the mathematics of finance can benefit from them.

Drawing inspiration from the self-grading and dynamic usability of Humber's IDEAS platform, which Humber students have been benefiting from since 2021, Amir and Kate have built a lot of interactivity into their open educational resource in order to make the learning active, engaging and effective.

Here are some of the embedded learning supports that Amir and Kate created to enhance the learner experience:

- **Interactive Questions:** These allow students to practice different versions of questions and receive instant feedback.
- **Custom Applications:** Developed by Amir, these applications serve as alternatives to traditional financial calculators, improving accessibility and usability.
- **Videos:** Leveraging the digital nature of the e-book, Amir and Kate embedded numerous videos throughout the textbook. These videos help students grasp complex concepts, provide step-by-step solutions, and demonstrate the use of financial calculators effectively.
- **Interactive Graphs:** The textbook features a wealth of graphs to support visual learning. Some graphs serve to illustrate key concepts, while others are interactive, allowing students to manipulate data and gain a better understanding through hands-on engagement.

Amir and Kate received funding from eCampusOntario for this project. Amir authored the book and coded the interactive questions and applications, while Kate took on the role of project lead and editor. The amazing results of their work are even more impressive given the tight four-month deadline that they were given to complete the project – all while they were continuing their regular work at Humber!

**A big congratulations to Amir and Kate for creating this impressive and innovative resource which will benefit many, many students.**

## **AUDRENE KERR-BROWN, HONoured BY THE LEAGUE FOR INNOVATION**

**BY ALYSON RENALDO**

From March 17 to 20, 2024, FLAS' own Audrene Kerr-Brown, professor of Psychology and program coordinator for GAS, was flown to Anaheim, California for the 2024 annual League of Innovations Conference. This conference assembles community college leaders to exchange their innovative expertise and to honour trailblazers of community college learning. The Innovations Conference seeks to promote innovation and efforts at institutional transformation. The nine-member Humber delegation included faculty and administrators from across the college who were both awardees and presenters at this year's conference.

Audrene was recognised for her leadership and stratagem in the realm of equitable and inclusive practice, which have been repeatedly demonstrated both in and outside of the classroom. With support from this author, Melanie Chaparian, a nomination from her A.D. Chris Irwin, and the enthusiastic endorsement of Senior Dean, John Stilla, Audrene was ultimately chosen as an Innovation Award Recipient, and, as an example of Humber's finest.

When asked of her experience of the trip and being selected, Audrene explains, "I was a bit taken aback when I received the news [of the nomination]. I am fortunate to be a faculty member in a department and college that has made EDIB a priority. I am always happy to represent Humber. [During my time at the conference] I met faculty from colleges across North America who were actively seeking ways to improve the student experience. It was inspiring. It was a memorable experience."

Beyond teaching and working as a program coordinator, Audrene serves as the FLAS EDIB committee chair. She is also a founding member of the Black African Employee Resource Group (BAERG); Audrene was one of BAERG's first two facilitators.

Audrene was also the recipient of the 2023 President's Award for the Distinguished Faculty here at Humber.

Congratulations Audrene! We are all very proud that the wider college community has seen fit to acknowledge your contribution.

## DID YOU KNOW?

# HUMBER@TIFA MARKS 10-YEAR PARTNERSHIP WITH CONFERENCE ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

BY DAVID D. MILLER, *HUMBER@TIFA*  
CO-CHAIR

While awareness and acceptance of issues surrounding mental health appear to be at an all-time high, the struggles faced by individuals aren't diminishing. Here at Humber, we are on the frontline of the issue, working daily in various capacities with many young adults who are leaving home for the first time and facing challenges and stresses that are new to many of them. So when Liberal Studies professors Audrene Kerr-Brown and Masood Zangeneh approached me and Jennifer Marotta with an idea to focus on mental health, well-being, belonging and mattering in post-secondary student populations at this year's Humber@TIFA interdisciplinary academic conference, we thought it was a great idea. Then we got to work looking at the social context of the issue and for a way in which to broaden the focus to appeal to our partners at an international literary festival.

While we knew the COVID-19 pandemic affected mental health, the results of early research into those effects have been staggering. According to the World Health Organization, during the earliest moments



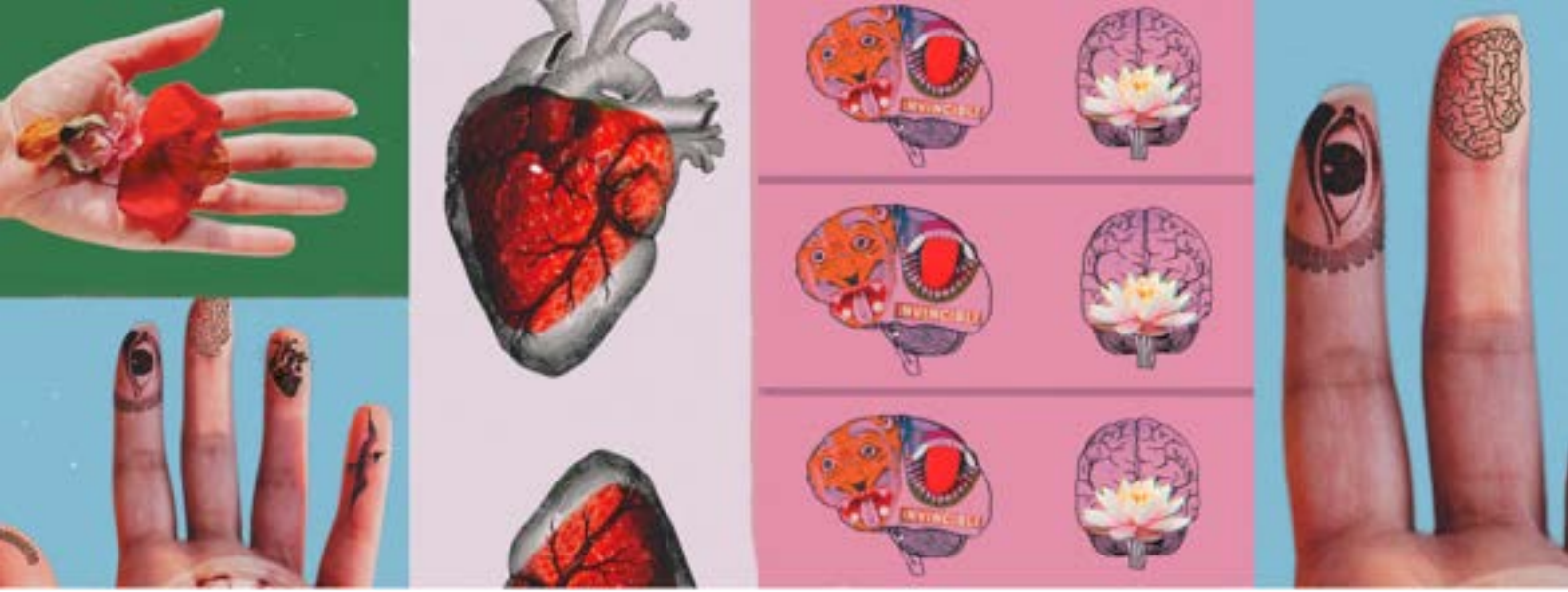
*Artwork by Angela Aujla*

of the COVID-19 pandemic, rates of anxiety and depression increased a remarkable 25% globally. A survey by PEW Research revealed that 41% of US adults experienced high levels of psychological stress during the height of the pandemic, including 37% of students who said that they struggled with their mental health “most or all of the time.”

Numbers in Canada were similar, with the National Institutes of Health noting that over 37% of all Canadians experienced worsened mental health due to the pandemic, while 70% claimed that their mental health was “negatively impacted” in some way.

The ultimate goal of the conference came to be to bring together scholars, educators, creators, practitioners, and researchers dedicated to advancing the understanding of mental health, specifically in the context of resilience, mattering, and belonging.

The conference will still have a sub-focus on the promotion of post-secondary student psychological well-being, but more



*Artwork by Angela Auja*

generally, the conference seeks to explore how people are coping, recovering but also still struggling following a globally experienced traumatic event. While we're expecting panels and presentations to focus on issues found all along the mental health spectrum, specific themes of interest are belonging, intergenerational trauma, addiction and recovery, psychopathology, and mental health in the arts, literature and popular culture. The concept of mattering is also a particular theme of interest, specifically recognizing its pivotal role in shaping the psychological landscapes of post-secondary learners.

To help kick off the discussion, we're very excited to welcome Suzanne Methot as our keynote speaker. Suzanne, who is Asinewachi Nehiyaw (Rocky Mountain Cree), is the author of, among other works, *Legacy: Trauma, Story, and Indigenous Healing*. She will be speaking about mattering and how it differs from belonging, relating to relationships and the collective responsibility we have to create reciprocity within society and between the human world and the natural world.

This year also marks the 10-year anniversary of FLAS's partnership with the Toronto International Festival of Authors (TIFA). The partnership has led to some fascinating conference subjects, including World War 1, anti-intellectualism, climate change, and a reimagining of the 60s counter-culture movement. We've also been delighted to welcome an impressive range of keynote speakers over the years, including Christopher Hedges, Angela Davis, Pankaj Mishra, and Billy-Ray Belcourt.

This year's conference will once again take place over the festival's final weekend, from September 27-29, at the Harbourfront Centre downtown. While we are still in the process of collecting proposals and building what will undoubtedly be invigorating panels, our expectations for this year's conference are high. By bridging the domains of psychology, education, literature, and other disciplines, we want to forge a path toward a better understanding of modern mental health challenges.

# DID YOU KNOW?

## FLAS Grab 'n Go Food Bank

BY CANDACE IRON

### Introducing the FLAS Grab 'n Go Food Bank!

The Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences is excited to introduce the FLAS Grab 'n Go Food Bank located at the North Campus on the 5th floor of the LRC outside of the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

#### Why a Food Bank?

As many of you know, February 2024 was the inaugural FLAS Student Appreciation Month (SAM), which saw the implementation of a series of food giveaways. During those events, members of the SAM Committee met a number of Humber learners experiencing food insecurity – members of our Humber community who are hungry, who can't afford food, and who are not able to eat on a regular basis.

In response to this, the FLAS Grab 'n Go Food Bank was proposed. After receiving support and approval from FLAS Senior Dean, John Stilla, the FLAS Grab 'n Go Food Bank was launched on 6 May 2024.

#### How does it work?

1. Members of the Humber community who are experiencing food insecurity or hardship are encouraged to stop by the FLAS Office during business hours (M-F between 8:30am and 4:30pm).
2. There they will encounter a cart with a selection of non-perishable food items.
3. They can take what they need. It's that easy!

#### Who manages the Food Bank, and can I help?

This is a faculty-driven initiative, which is overseen by several members of the SAM committee from Liberal Studies and English. The food comes from donations made by these SAM committee members, so you can help by donating any extra non-perishable goods that you can spare for this worthy initiative. With the help of FLAS faculty, staff, and administration, we hope the FLAS Grab 'n Go Food Bank will help ensure that no member of the Humber community goes without food.



## STUDENT SUCCESS STORIES



### STUDENT SUCCESS STORY: CRIS CORBITO BY MICHELLE JORDAN

Cris Corbitto recently completed the General Arts and Science University Transfer Diploma Program. He is the recipient of this year's President's Medal, presented to a graduating student in each of Humber's six Faculties who has made a significant contribution to their faculty and to Humber College by demonstrating leadership and participation in both the academic and student life of the College while maintaining a strong overall academic record. Cris will be continuing his education at Glendon in the fall, where he was the recipient of the prestigious Tentanda Via Award.

#### **What was your previous education background and why did you take the program?**

After graduating from high school amid the global health crisis, I felt lost and pessimistic about my future; I did not know what to do in life, and what to pursue in further academic studies. Because of the variety of courses and small classes, I was drawn to take the General Arts and Science as a stepping-stone toward a better future. It was my belief that enrolling in this program would allow me to improve my skills before moving to the program I really want to pursue. After all, it was a foundational program where I could start from scratch that enabled me to explore my purpose, discover a new set of skills and interests, and challenge the way I think. I saw this program as an opportunity to learn, re-learn, and unlearn things in life—and to discover more about myself and the world.

#### **What did you like most about being in the program?**

This program allowed me to take different courses, such as philosophy, literature, sociology, history, political science, and psychology, in order to explore where my interests lie and explore new career and academic paths. This diversity of courses also gave me the courage to gain new knowledge and perspectives that I can employ in analyzing society, which has made me a well-rounded lifelong learner and intellectually curious person. I also liked how the size of the classes were so small that I made a lifelong connection with my professors. I received a level of attention that was usually not easy to find in a university or college setting. I had the opportunity to get to know my professors better, and I received tremendous support and personalized instruction as a result of the small classes.





# FROM UNDERDOG TO ADVOCATE: CHANDRA LIMIJARJA'S RESILIENT JOURNEY TO CHAMPIONING LGBT RIGHTS IN INDONESIA

BY KIMMY DO



*Photo: Chandra (Nat) Limiarja winning 1st Place at Map the System Canada*

Chandra Limiarja (Nat) is a graduate student in the Research Analyst Graduate Program at Humber College who has just been placed first out of 183 teams across Canada that competed in this year's Map the System Competition. As the winner, he will receive a grant towards designing an intervention to address the challenge of anti-LGBT sentiment in Indonesia. Nat's journey is a remarkable testament to his resilience, perseverance, talent and determination.

### From the Underdog...

Growing up in Indonesia, Nat was often reclusive and considered an outsider in school. His positionality as a member of the Indonesian LGBT community exposed him to severe societal ostracism, harsh judgment, exclusion from his peers, strained relationships with his family and harrowing experiences such as conversion therapy and exorcism. These early-life challenges had lasting emotional scars but also played a crucial role in shaping Nat's strength and understanding of the LGBT community's struggles.

During his college years, Nat participated in an exchange program at the University of Lyon 2, in France under the framework of the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship. This was a life-changing opportunity for him. In France, Nat found himself in an environment that embraced him and supported his true self. This nurturing environment helped him gain confidence and find his voice, which had been suppressed for so long. Returning to Indonesia and living there as an adult for another five years, Nat began to develop new appreciation for his homeland, recognizing the work of Indonesian activists in different sectors, and seeing not just the flaws of his country, but also its potential for change.

### To finding his voice through Map the System...

Nat's journey took a pivotal turn when he

discovered the Map the System competition at Humber – an invaluable platform to catalyze his project and amplify his voice in breaking what he calls “the cycle of hate”. Nat conducted a systems analysis of anti-LGBT sentiment in Indonesia and why it has been on the rise in the last decade. “It was really eye-opening. I lived in Indonesia for 25 years, and I never knew half the things I wrote in my project”, Nat reflected on the process. By zooming out and examining the bigger picture, he was able to highlight the complex interconnection between powerful stakeholders and how their actions influence and amplify each other. “Anti-LGBT sentiment in Indonesia is driven by complex interconnections between religious, political, and social actors which creates a feedback loop that reinforces and legitimizes the marginalization of the LGBT community, strengthens conservative ideology and cultural norms, and helps powerful stakeholders maintain authority.” Nat revealed the key insight in his project was how the actions of these seemingly unconnected stakeholders reinforce each other in the escalation of anti-LGBTQ sentiment in recent years.

Josh Harold, Nat's mentor, expressed his pride and admiration for Nat's achievements, saying, "It is incredibly gratifying to see his skill and efforts receiving this well-deserved recognition. It is a testament to Nat's hard work, dedication, and talent as a systems thinker and researcher."



*Photo: Nat presenting at the Map the System national finals. Source: Map the System Canada's YouTube channel*

## **And becoming an Advocate for change...**

Despite many moments of doubt and uncertainty, Nat perseveres in his path to advocacy. His partner, who accompanied him to Canada from Indonesia, has been a crucial support, offering encouragement and practical help at home. His mentor, Josh Harold and Elinor Bray-Collins, his professor, also provided invaluable feedback and guidance. Additionally, his mother's unwavering belief in him, despite the physical distance, has been a source of strength and happiness.

Looking ahead, Nat is determined to further develop his project and continue his advocacy work. He plans to publish his research in an academic journal, starting with the Journal of Innovation in Polytechnic Education (JIPE). He envisions becoming part of the Indonesian LGBT activist diaspora, joining others who have published their research from outside Indonesia.

Dr. Gina Antonacci, Senior Vice President, Academic, reflected on Nat's journey, stating, "The combination of Chandra's lived experience and his application of a systems thinking approach provided us all with an opportunity to understand both the scope of the problem and ways it can be addressed. I was moved by both his sensitivity and his strength – and I am so grateful that he chose to study at Humber." Indeed, an educator or educational institution could not be prouder than when they have students like Nat, who excel academically while also demonstrating a deep commitment to global justice and social change. Winning the Map the System Canadian Final 2024 serves as a springboard for Nat's future advocacy efforts, and his professional career, offering him opportunities and resources to expand his work, and strive for positive change in Indonesia and beyond.

# MEET THE FLAS TEAM

BY FRANCES SPARANO

In this issue, we interview David Miller from FLAS as we dive into his world and take immense pride in his crucial role and accomplishments.



David Miller

**Program Coordinator,  
Professional Writing and Communications**

### **What motivated you to pursue a career within the educational sector?**

My first experience with “teaching” was as a tutor in high school, where I tutored junior high students. I also tutored some children from a Korean family that had immigrated to Canada. That experience inspired me to live and teach English in Korea for a few years. When I moved back to Canada, I taught English classes to adult professionals in Montreal. Eventually, teaching just became the thing that I felt most comfortable doing.

### **What motivated you to join FLAS, and how long have you been part of it?**

I joined FLAS in 2008 while I was a Master of Fine Arts student at the University of Guelph, when I got a job in the Writing Centre as a tutor. From there, the English Associate Dean at the time, Joe Aversa, offered me some classes. Eventually, I became partial-load and then started my full-time faculty role in 2016.

### **What are the primary responsibilities and challenges you encounter in your current role?**

This is hard to answer because I’ve got multiple roles in the Faculty, and the responsibilities and challenges differ with each! First, I am the program coordinator of and a professor in the Professional Writing and Communications graduate certificate, but I also co-edit (with Eufemia Fantetti) the Humber Literary Review (HLR) and am the co-chair (with Jennifer Marotta) of the Humber@TIFA interdisciplinary academic conference.

**Can you share an accomplishment or project in your role that you take particular pride in?**

I've always been very proud of what we've accomplished with the HLR. Over the past ten years, the HLR has established itself as a significant journal in the Canadian literary scene. We've provided space for such a diverse array of writers and artists, and a number of writers who had one of their first publication credits with us have gone on to publish great books and win awards.

**In what ways do you envision your contributions fostering the overall success and growth of the Faculty?**

A lot of what I do is at least partially public facing: the HLR and Humber@TIFA both highlight the Faculty's and Humber's contributions to and engagement with the broader community. Within the Faculty, I strive to empower and support those that I work with. My first instinct has come to be to elevate the voices of my coworkers over my own in as many situations as possible.

**WE ARE  
HUMBER**

**Could you elaborate on your interests and hobbies?**

As I get older, I find that my interests have moved toward solitary and meditative pursuits. I love to run, for example; I also love to read and constantly have a book (or few) on the go. I've also continued to write as much as I can, even if the sometimes-overwhelming full-time workload has increased the length between publications! I tend to write shorter things now: short stories and author profiles, academic articles and conference presentations.

**We would like to get to know more about the person behind the professional role. Could you share something personal about yourself, perhaps a dream, a goal or something people might not know about you?**

I love sports. While I am a fan of basketball and baseball, I have a particular interest in more niche sports like box lacrosse, ultra running and women's flat track roller derby. My academic interest in sports is in their early evolution and how they braid themselves into a culture's or community's stories and mythologies. I wrote a book about the history of roller derby called *Eight-Wheeled Freedom* that focused on the modern feminist revival and how it fit within the broader history of the sport and of roller skating.



# HUMA 3200 MEDITATION: STILLNESS IN A BUSY WORLD

BY SUZANNE SENAY

HUMA 3200 Meditation: Stillness in a Busy World is a new degree course offered by the Liberal Studies Department. The course introduces students to meditation using both academic and experiential learning.

The course begins with the experience of breath meditation. Students learn to practice both concentration and mindfulness techniques. They then use these techniques to open each class period with a five-minute meditation, transforming the tone of the classroom from busy distraction to calm focus. Lecture/discussions introduce spiritual and cultural sources of traditional meditation practices including the Bhagavad Gita, Buddhist suttas, the writings of Catholic mystic Saint Teresa of Avila, and Black Elk's account of the Lakota Vision Quest. This cross-cultural perspective encourages critical thinking about how cultural context shapes the theory and practice of meditation.

Students also explore how these traditions have directly influenced contemporary medicine and wellness. Readings include

primary sources ranging from the Bhagavad Gita and Black Elk's Sacred Pipe to medical research articles on the health effects of meditation practices.

Lecture/discussion is followed by a second, longer meditation period and an in-class directed reflection writing assignment. Students learn practices derived from the traditions studied. The combination of practice and written reflection helps students apply technical concepts learned in the academic material, develop self-awareness of both body and mind, and cultivate a variety of skills for focusing attention and calming the body/mind.

For me as an instructor, the most gratifying features of the course are the student reports of greater calm, relaxation, mental focus, and self-awareness, and the sight of their smiling faces at the end of each class period.

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*Thank you to all contributors and interviewees for participating in the creation of our summer issue*



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