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The Springboard for Success: How Social and Emotional Learning Helps Students in Getting To, Through and Beyond College seminar was part of an ongoing partnership between ETS and Salzburg Global Seminar (SGS). This seminar is part of the Education for Tomorrow's World program strand at SGS and the fourth in a series of seminars focused on social and emotional learning (SEL). Catherine Millett (ETS) and Dominic Regester (SGS) welcomed colleagues to the seminar.

Historically, education — especially educational assessment — has focused on students' academic skills. But in the 21st century, students must also develop the social and emotional skills needed to effectively navigate and compete in this rapidly shifting landscape.

In June 2018, K–12 and postsecondary education leaders, researchers and policymakers came together to examine the role of SEL research and assessment in postsecondary education. Participants primarily from Canada, Mexico and the United States, along with colleagues from Chile and Austria, shared successes,

explored opportunities, identified challenges and developed recommendations for ways in which SEL programs and measures can expand educational access, inform admissions and teaching practice, and improve student outcomes.

What is Social and Emotional Learning?

At the onset of the seminar, participants acknowledged that there is no universally accepted definition of SEL. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) in the United States defines SEL as “the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions.”

CASEL's list of core SEL competencies includes:

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness
- Responsible Decision-Making
- Self-Management
- Relationship Skills

For more information on CASEL's core social and emotional learning competencies, please visit <https://casel.org/core-competencies/>.

Seminar participants described teaching and assessing many variations of this list. For example, CASEL uses the terms “impulse control” and “self-discipline,” whereas **Sofia Frech**, Chief of Staff for the Ministry of Education in Mexico, refers to such competencies as “self-regulation.” This lack of consensus around which SEL skills to include and

what to call them complicates efforts to develop and share curriculum and assessments across countries; however, participants agreed this should not be a deterrent. They stressed that an inclusive process of skills identification and careful attention to context and the purpose for which SEL data are collected matters more than semantics. They encouraged looking beyond what a skill is called and focusing instead on “what you actually need to know” or want to accomplish.

Why is SEL Important?

Participants identified many benefits to developing and assessing social and emotional competence. They include:

Increasing Learning and Academic Achievement

Noncognitive skills such as self-regulation, resilience, curiosity and perseverance *complement* cognitive learning in the classroom and workplace; they help the learner maximize focus and content understanding, learn from others and communicate ideas more effectively. These affective skills may also play a role in bridging the opportunity and achievement gaps between students who have access to high-quality education and those who do not. Interventions that build SEL competencies can't substitute for academic quality, but can help students to extract *more* from their environment and cultivate their inter- and intrapersonal capacity to succeed.

Tailoring Potential Employees to Employers' Needs and the Labor Market

As technology performs an increasing number of tasks in the workplace, employers report to educators and policymakers that they need more

than knowledge and technical competence from their workforce: they also need agile problem-solvers who can think critically and act ethically, collaborate, manage stress, and communicate effectively and respectfully with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. These and other social and emotional competencies are key to hiring and retaining employees and important to gaining and maintaining competitiveness in the local, national and global economy. As **Guillermo Hernandez**, General Director of Strategic Partnerships at the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES) in Mexico, explained, education policymakers view social and emotional learning as a necessity to increasing and maintaining the competitiveness of Mexico and the North American labor force overall. He said, “We know what the professional and technical competencies are . . . but there's a gap in our understanding of social and emotional learning.” By equipping underserved and underrepresented populations with the competencies to participate and compete in the global economy, SEL not only benefits those individuals and communities, but strengthens the national labor force. **Suzanne Ortega**, President of the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), noted: “The typical graduate student leaving graduate study will have at least 11 to 13 jobs and four major career changes over their working life. So, understanding those attributes that underlie adaptability, the ability to change cultural contexts and get up to speed are hugely important.”

Improving Mental Health

SEL skills, such as self-awareness, perspective taking, stress management, perseverance, empathy and resilience, are among the key elements of good mental health. Education — particularly higher education — is pressurized, competitive and stressful.



Monte Randall, College of the Muscogee Nation; Cimenna Chao Rebolledo, Universidad Iberoamericana; Jennifer Adams, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, Canada; Rosalinda Ballesteros, Universidad Tecmilenio

According to a [2017 National College Health Association survey](#) of over 26,000 undergraduates at 52 U.S. schools, nearly 40% of undergrads felt “so depressed it was difficult to function” and nearly 61% felt “overwhelming anxiety.”

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— Suzanne Ortega, President of the Council of Graduate Schools

At graduate schools, Ortega reported, “The biggest concern among deans and administrators is growing levels of psychological distress among students . . . most deans believe it’s manifesting at much higher levels than it did six to 10 years ago, probably because of hyper-competition in funding arenas and elsewhere.” [A study](#) of over 2,200 graduate students, representing 26 countries and 234 institutions, found

that graduate students are six times more likely to experience depression and anxiety as compared with the general population. The culture of graduate school, where competition for funding is extreme and the dissertation process is often isolating, can limit opportunities to develop skills like cultural competency and collaboration.

SEL is clearly not enough to address what experts describe as a mental health crisis among children and young adults worldwide, but it can complement more targeted intervention efforts. Understanding themselves, others and their environment will better equip students at all levels to navigate the challenges they encounter. Educational institutions may support the mental health and success of their communities by modelling, incentivizing and rewarding development of SEL in students, faculty and administration.

Improving Civic and Citizenship Education

Schools — particularly K–12 — play a role in teaching students to be thoughtful, respectful and productive citizens. Increasingly, this refers to both national and global citizenship, where compassion, cultural awareness and responsible decision making contribute to citizens’ understanding of humanitarian, geopolitical and environmental concerns. Some participants in the seminar reported seeing a decline in competencies like self-regulation, empathy, appreciation of diversity and perspective taking in students on their campuses. **Carola Suarez-Orozco**, a professor of human development and psychology at UCLA, talked about the connection between what she described as a growing “empathy gap” on campuses and the contradictory messages and modelling to which children and youth are exposed by increased anti-immigration sentiment, nationalism and hate speech reported in daily media. Social and

emotional learning in K–12 and higher education may complement equity, diversity and mental health initiatives and reduce incidents of LGBTQ, racial or ethnic bias and hate speech on campus. In a volatile political environment, a curriculum teaching collaboration and global competencies focused on inter- and intrapersonal skills offers tools and a platform for dialogue.

A Closer Look at Social and Emotional Learning in Higher Education

Over the course of this three-day seminar, which included panel presentations, collaborative work sessions, and many informal opportunities for sharing and discussion, several themes emerged. They included: Measurement, Equity, Teaching and Learning, Technology, and the Institutional Lens.

Measurement

Among the big questions related to SEL measurement were “What skills are most important to measure?” and “What is the most efficient and reliable method to measure those skills?”

For both questions, participants agreed the answer was, “It depends.” For example, when asked how the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) chooses constructs to assess, **Amy Kaufman**, Director of Special Projects, explained, “It depends on who wants to know, and why.” In addition to taking cues from business leaders, her group develops assessments with educators interested in evaluating specific skills or collecting evidence to test colleges’ marketing claims about skills they develop in their graduates, like collaboration. **Benilde Garcia Cabrero**, a professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), explained that Mexico’s mandatory



Jonathan Martin, ACT®; Rosalinda Ballesteros, Universidad Tecmilenio

standards for social and emotional learning and assessment in high schools were selected through a combination of collecting data at the school and community level about student needs and consulting experts in the field about how to prioritize those skills. **Jim Soland**, a research scientist with Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), explained that NWEA assessments are designed to follow students from when they enter school through high school, which means the skills they measure are linked to achievement and expected to change over time. Regarding *how* to measure SEL, **Patrick Kyllonen**, Presidential Appointee in the Research & Development division of ETS, explained, “For low-stakes purposes, self-report style assessments are fine. But for higher-stakes purposes, forced response [in which one must choose from several desirable options] is more reliable.” Whatever the format, participants agreed that measures and interpretation of data must be contextually and culturally sensitive to ensure validity and maximize usefulness and fairness in policy and practice.

Measuring SEL skills can potentially improve pedagogy, target and design interventions, prioritize



Noel Baldwin, Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC); Carola Suarez-Orozco, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA); Suzanne Ortega, Council of Graduate Schools (CGS); Guillermo Hernandez, National Association of Universities (ANUIES)

professional development and inform policy. For example, **Jonas Bertling**, Director of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Survey Questionnaires at ETS, shared 2017 NAEP data on SEL that showed perseverance is especially important for low socioeconomic status (SES) fourth-grade students. Cabrero noted that SEL measures show that empathy and sense of agency are good predictors of civic engagement. In addition, Soland reported that an NWEA study revealed that predictive factors for college enrollment were academic achievement, goal setting for college, the gap between goals and expectations (confidence), and teacher perceptions of the student, particularly when the teacher is the same sex or race as the student. This is just a small sample of the insights reliable SEL data can provide to inform pedagogy, curriculum development, intervention, professional development and funding efforts.

At colleges and universities, measures of SEL can provide a more complete picture of applicants than academic grades, recommendations and standardized tests alone. They can help to predict persistence, GPA, volunteerism, graduation and

attainment of career goals. For underrepresented and underserved populations, whose high school transcripts may not speak to their strengths and capacity to succeed in higher education, SEL measures can provide important information for improving access, students' recognition of their own competencies and understanding of how to apply those competencies to the college/university context.

With stress and mental health concerns on the rise in all levels of education, SEL measures also can be a valuable tool for assessing individual needs for support and for examining programmatic and departmental trends. As Ortega pointed out, student (and faculty) experience can vary greatly from one discipline to another, in terms of expectations, mentoring and overall impact on well-being. Departmental climate surveys can find differences in stress levels and resilience between departments and prompt reflection on culture, practices and policies that may contribute to those differences. As Suarez-Orozco noted, it's important to know, for example, "What kind of mentoring is going on? Are they mentors or tormentors?"

Opportunities, Challenges and Recommendations

Opportunities:

- For adults and students at all levels, SEL data can be used to inform policy, improve pedagogy, target existing interventions and help design new ones, and prioritize professional development.
- In college and university admissions, measures of SEL provide a more complete picture of applicants than academic grades, recommendations and standardized tests alone, and can help predict persistence, GPA, volunteerism, graduation and attainment of career goals.
- SEL measurement can provide student applicants, particularly those who are from underserved backgrounds or first-generation college goers, with alternative indicators of the strengths and capacity they bring to higher education.
- SEL measures can be helpful in identifying individuals, programs or departments in need of support or attention. They can also be the signal that prompts an individual to seek mental health support.

Challenges:

- Prioritizing and selecting from among the many possible SEL constructs.
- Convincing stakeholders, including funders, that measuring SEL is important, and that time must be allocated to administer, score and report on assessments that have SEL constructs.
- Ensuring SEL measures are used to inform and improve, rather than being subsumed into the already pressurized, competitive world of higher education.
- Designing measures that are sensitive to context and are at the “right” level of aggregation.



Amy Kaufman, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO); Benilde García Cabrero, National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM); Patrick Kyllonen, ETS; Jim Soland, Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA)

Recommendations:

- Design measures, interpret data and disseminate national and international data to develop the “same measurement language” while also recognizing that context and culture matter.
- Create a unifying framework for measures. Choosing terminology is less important than intentionally and inclusively selecting SEL constructs. A framework is essential for planning and communication with stakeholders at all levels.
- Be thoughtful about the purpose and necessity of assessments. What is it you need to know, and why? Use those desired outcomes to inform the framework of measures.
- Question whether assessment is the best or only way to gather the information needed. Can existing academic assessments or teacher observation provide the same information?
- Where appropriate, assess skills over time for consistency and to measure growth.



Diana García Coli3n, Secretariat of Public Education (SEP);
Carolina Flores, Universidad Alberto Hurtado

- Distinguish between developmental constructs, appropriateness of the skills for the developmental level of the students and contextual constructs (targeted to conditions, interventions and policies identified by the researcher).
- Build and contribute to a diverse community of measurement researchers and scholars.

Equity

Social and emotional learning can open doors to success by cultivating essential inter- and intrapersonal assets available to *all* human beings, not just those born to privilege. Frech explained that of the five million high school students in Mexico's public schools, half are very poor and half achieve at the lowest academic level. She characterized high school as "a time of crucial life decisions" and, for many, "a last window of opportunity" to make good life choices and revise their own view of what is possible. Seminar participants from all sectors expressed optimism and urgency about social and emotional learning as an indispensable component of education and a powerful tool for change.

A key construct of social and emotional learning is engaging respectfully and compassionately with others, to live well and work well together — "*convivir*," as the seminar's Spanish speakers described it. In K–12 and higher education, this means ensuring equitable access; developing SEL skills in students, faculty and administration to support their success; and ensuring that the campus climate and culture is ready to embrace and sustain SEL.

Expanding Access

Jennifer Baszile, Dean of Student Success and Career Development at Trinity College, and Ortega both noted that first-generation, low-income and underrepresented students often have strong SEL skills, but said skills are often underappreciated by both admissions offices and students themselves. As the national and international research communities work to develop and improve measures of social and emotional competence, admissions offices and faculty search committees will be better equipped to take noncognitive skills into consideration, and applicants will be better able to recognize and cultivate those skills in themselves.

Supporting Success for all Students

Social and emotional learning presents an opportunity for all students, and an important opportunity for policymakers to "get it right" for those who historically have been marginalized. As Noel Baldwin, Coordinator of Postsecondary Education and Adult Learning for the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), noted, "Education in North America has historically been a mechanism of exclusion and control of indigenous people." Context-sensitive SEL program and assessment design can avoid "imposing another cycle of exclusion."

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— Noel Baldwin, Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)

Describing the Trinity College program, which has expanded from first-generation students to include all freshman, Baszile explained, “It encourages students to apply a design-thinking, human-centered approach to college, their major selection, and career and postsecondary outcomes . . . it helps students see the SEL skills they have and translate those skills into the culture at Trinity and [challenges or barriers in] higher education generally.” She added, the goal is to teach students that “Success is a skill set, not a secret.”

Improving Campus Climate and Culture

Context matters not only in the design of SEL programs and measures, but in the teaching and learning of social and emotional skills as well. Throughout the seminar, many participants noted that students are assessed for academic readiness to succeed in college, but are colleges ready for their students? According to the [American Institutes for Research](#)[®], “School climate and social emotional learning (SEL) have often been treated separately by researchers and practitioners, but both are necessary to build healthy schools, are co-influential, and benefit each other. A positive school climate creates the conditions for SEL; the social and emotional competence of each member of the school community, both individually and collectively, affects school climate.”



Elena Arias Ortiz, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

“Success is a skill set, not a secret.”

— Jennifer Baszile, Dean of Student Success and Career Development at Trinity College

Participants also noted the “chicken-and-egg” issue of how to develop SEL and shift climate and culture when they are co-dependent. As with other SEL challenges, they concluded that one key step is to ensure that all stakeholders are “on board” with the benefits of SEL, which helps in the identification and resolution of institutional barriers. (See more in the “Institutional Lens” section.)

Opportunities, Challenges and Recommendations

Opportunities:

- In K–12 and higher education, SEL provides an opportunity to teach, measure and credit strengths that are not easily quantified and can go unrecognized.

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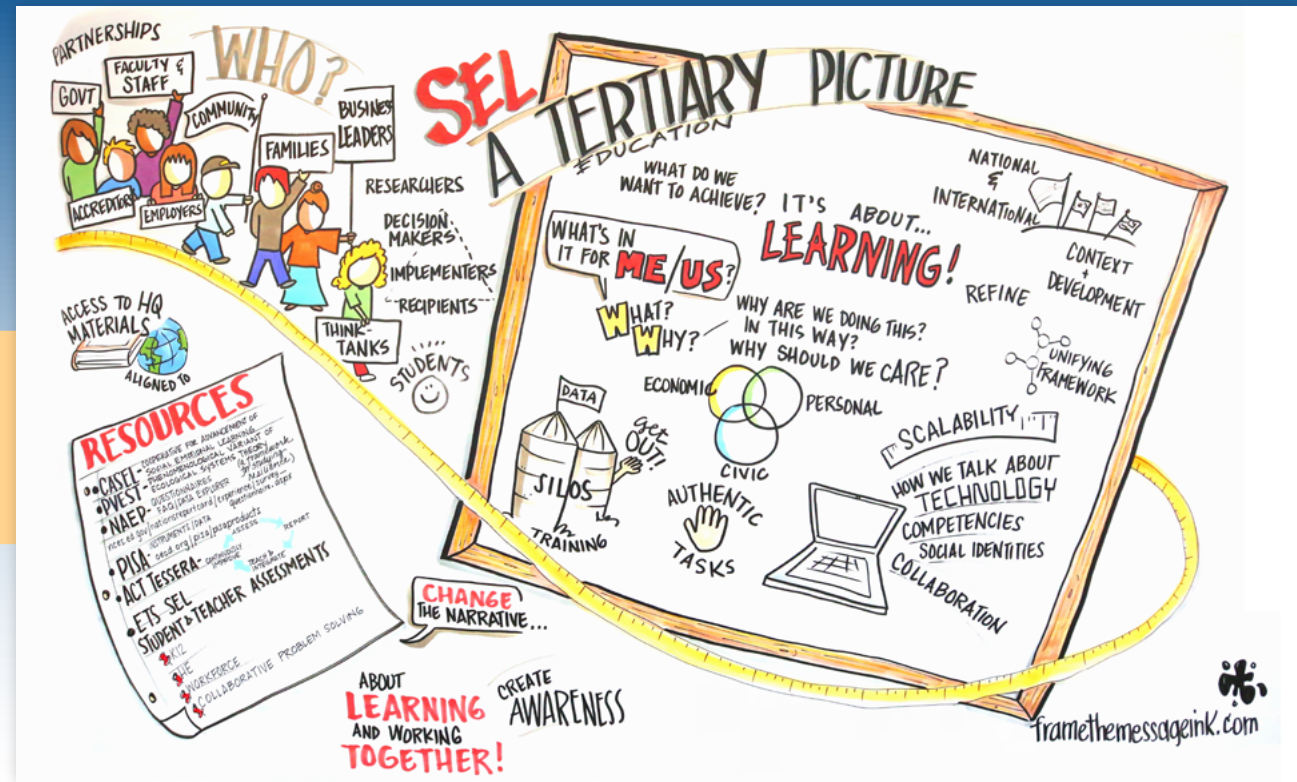
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Over the course of the event, Taryl Hansen, Frame the Message Ink, created a series of posters, in real time, of the discussion.

- Measuring and appreciating the importance of SEL skills, which can be a strength among underserved, underrepresented and first-generation college applicants, provides admissions officers (and students) with a more complete picture from which to predict college and university success, thereby expanding access.
- Beyond benefits to individuals or groups of underserved/underrepresented students, when embraced by leadership, funders, faculty and other stakeholders, SEL may help to shift school (or departmental) culture and climate.

Challenges:

- Ensuring that SEL programs and measures open, not close, doors on opportunity for underrepresented and underserved communities.
- Involving all stakeholders to support and do the work of building and sustaining connections between SEL, school climate and culture for the improvement of all three.

Recommendations:

- Ensure all students have access to quality teachers and materials for both academic and SEL curriculum.
- Include all stakeholders in program planning to ensure that all communities are represented and to increase buy-in.
- Ensure that the language of SEL is aligned with local culture while also developing global competencies to provide equitable access to global labor markets.
- Expand experiential, student-centered pedagogy to ensure that all students have the global competencies to contribute and succeed in the community.
- Expand measurement and recognition of SEL competencies in the college and university admissions process.

- Consider a design-thinking, human-centered SEL approach to help learners recognize the skills they bring to their environment (campus, work, community) and apply them to the challenges or barriers in said environment, and to assess the skills they need to develop to navigate that context successfully.

Teaching and Learning

Presenters and participants agreed that SEL and good teaching go hand in hand. And when it comes to SEL, said **Mark Sparvell**, Senior Manager of Microsoft’s education division, “If the needle doesn’t shift in terms of classroom practice, all of the policy research and rhetoric means nothing.” **Jennifer Adams**, Director of Education for Ottawa-Carleton, Canada, schools, added, “Sound instructional practices develop both cognitive and noncognitive skills and bring SEL competencies to life. When taught well, lessons in all disciplines — math, arts, science and reading — will include opportunities for students to develop competencies, such as communication skills, collaboration, self-regulation and perseverance.” Participants noted that it can be helpful to frame SEL in this way when introducing programs to faculty who may mistakenly assume it is wholly separate from the academic curriculum or just “one more reform.”

As seminar participants from Mexico pointed out, teachers often feel overwhelmed by the volume of professional development and new evaluation criteria for which they are responsible. In Mexico, teachers cite emotional management issues, such as lack of attention, empathy and self-regulation, as their greatest challenges in the classroom, according to those delivering the SEL teacher training. However, as **Emiliana Rodriguez Morales**, Research Director of AtentaMente Consultores (AC), noted, some teachers

assume social and emotional characteristics are an immovable part of a person's personality and cannot be taught. She added, "We try to cultivate a growth mind-set and emotional self-efficacy in both teachers and children, so they know that with training, they can transform their habits and emotional patterns."

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— Jennifer Adams, Director of Education for
Ottawa-Carleton, Canada, schools

In higher education, social and emotional skills and good instructional practice are no less important. But, as participants pointed out, while faculty are content specialists, not all have developed their own social and emotional skills. **Jacqueline Hamilton**, Manager of Academic Programs at the University of Guelph's College of Business and Economics, added: "They're hired for research and there's typically little investment in or reward for attention to teaching and learning." In fact, she noted, good teaching and social and emotional skills are often eyed suspiciously, as in, "They're not serious about their research." Hamilton and others pointed out that in a unionized environment, where tenure and promotion criteria vary so widely from discipline to discipline and leadership turnover is frequent, the culture won't shift overnight.

In the meantime, **William Franklin**, Vice President for Student Affairs at California State University-Dominguez Hills, noted, social and emotional learning occurs inside *and* outside the classroom, including

through sports, political organizations and clubs. "We need to champion both curricular and co-curricular SEL, with clear learning outcomes and assessment ... we can be more intentional about co-curricular learning experiences, which can be life changing." To this point, **Donna Younger**, Adult Learning Facilitator and instructor at DePaul University, asked, "How can classroom faculty recreate those powerful co-curricular experiences for part-time or adult students who can't take advantage of life on campus?" Panelists agreed that this question further reinforces the need to reform the incentives and rewards structure in higher education to place higher value on the quality of teaching and learning.

Franklin noted that not every professor needs to build or champion SEL programming to at least make space in the classroom for collaboration and interaction. He added, "If you can't even move the chairs, how are you going to encourage conversation?" Ortega described a similar need for universities to reflect on curriculum, pedagogy and capstones to promote SEL skills. For example, she noted, case-based study can reinforce cultural competence. And, she wondered, "What might a fully collaborative dissertation or thesis look like?"

Opportunities, Challenges and Recommendations

Opportunities:

- SEL has the potential to inspire innovative teaching practices; teachers who are using good instructional practice are already well-positioned to more explicitly address SEL skills.
 - SEL supports the cognitive processes and well-being of both students and adults, which means classrooms can become more productive and enjoyable places for everyone, including teachers.
- Kari Marken**, Educational Strategist at the University

of British Columbia, stated that “student-centered” teaching doesn’t mean teachers shouldn’t attend to their own personal and professional SEL as well.

- SEL happens both inside and outside of the classroom. Co-curricular activities present an opportunity to intentionally reinforce social and emotional skills.

Challenges:

- Convincing adults responsible for teaching social and emotional skills that they need to develop strong social and emotional skills themselves.
- Convincing faculty and leadership that SEL and high-quality teaching and learning are not only compatible, but co-dependent as well.
- Convincing higher education to incentivize and reward good teaching.
- Making physical spaces conducive to fostering SEL.

Recommendations:

- Communicate and support the connection between good instructional practice and SEL throughout K–12 and university.
- Map academic learning outcomes and evaluation standards to SEL skills.
- Prioritize SEL professional development for teaching faculty and administration.

Technology

Technology is one of the reasons social and emotional skills have come into such sharp focus as a differentiator in the workplace. Increasingly, information and actions are becoming the purview of machines, and people’s ability to problem solve, create and work together are the drivers of productivity. Technology is also the way people,

especially children and young adults, make sense of the world. As Sparvell describes it, “Technology has the potential to foster and amplify social and emotional learning . . . if we stop using [it] as a distraction or entertainment in the classroom and be very intentional about choosing and using the right tools to leverage digital thoughtfully.”

Sparvell suggested that technology is most useful in the classroom when educators:

1. Capitalize on what works:

The World Economic Forum reported that games with the greatest potential to support SEL are role-play, strategy and “sandbox” style games, in which the player has choices and freedom to explore. In selecting games, look for structure of interaction (can be played over multiple sessions, involves turn-taking and exploration), elements of play (nonlinear and can choose their own adventure, remodel the environment) and assessment and reinforcement (allows journaling, feedback and additional scaffolding).

2. Embed SEL in the digital experience:

Opportunities to learn and practice social and emotional competencies can be built into the game or platform. For example, Berkeley’s Web-Based Inquiry Science Environment (WISE) platform includes hard science content while weaving collaboration, communication, self-regulation, etc., into the design.

3. Expand the realm of possibilities:

Augmented and virtual reality platforms are powerful because, without replacing real-world experiences, they can allow students to explore difficult or dangerous environments in productive and controlled ways. The technologies also allow for slowing or replaying time, which can be helpful in training or for



Diana García Coli3n, Secretariat of Public Education (SEP); Rosalinda Ballesteros, Universidad Tecmilenio; Ingrid Garc3a Pinz3n, Ceneval; Agust3n Paul3n, GEMIINI Learning Systems; Emiliana Rodriguez, AtentaMente Consultores (AC); Cimenna Chao Rebolledo, Universidad Iberoamericana; Sofia Frech, Ministry of Education, Mexico; Benilde Garc3a Cabrero, UNAM

therapeutic uses, such as teaching social cues, body language or other affective signals.

Seminar participants agreed that technology can be a powerful learning tool; however, they also cautioned that it is *just* a tool and, as such, it can amplify good and bad teaching practice and enhance or hinder equity depending on resources and access. **Agust3n Paul3n**, CEO of Gemiini Learning, Mexico, shared his group’s observation that technology must be employed thoughtfully and reflect SEL goals. The group encouraged “intentional design for social collision that creates more opportunities to connect and transfer knowledge.”

Opportunities, Challenges and Recommendations

Opportunities:

- Technology can amplify and expand upon SEL experiences.

- Well-designed games can seamlessly blend cognitive and noncognitive learning experiences and incorporate instant feedback.
- Technology offers the opportunity to expand collaborative learning space for students and teachers.
- Augmented and virtual reality platforms can offer safe, controlled experiences for practicing skills and control the pace of experiences for therapeutic uses.

Challenges:

- Technology requires new skills, which can be a source of anxiety for teachers.
- Technology for technology’s sake uses resources and time unproductively. The challenge is to select and use technology intentionally.
- Enthusiasm for tech can cause people to overlook simpler, sometimes equally effective (and more cost-effective) low-tech solutions.



Dominic Regester, Salzburg Global Seminar (SGS); Jennifer Adams, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, Canada; Jennifer Baszile, Trinity College; Sofia Frech, Ministry of Education, Mexico

Recommendations:

- Focus on both short- and long-term goals. Simple apps like Mood Meter and Calm can be an easy first step toward incorporating technology for SEL, whereas virtual reality is likely a longer-term goal.
- Explore the range of platforms and game designs available. Many are developed and released almost daily.
- Intentionally attend to students’ digital citizenship, as online is a new social identity for them.
- Incorporate human-centered design. As with all aspects of SEL development, all stakeholders should be at the table.

Institutional Lens

As mentioned earlier, context matters. The SEL opportunities and challenges that participants discussed specific to measurement, equity, teaching and learning, and technology also are a function of institutional context. While it is challenging to develop a framework for assessing social and emotional constructs, it is even more challenging when there are vacancies on the leadership council. There are as many variations on institutional context as there are educational systems in K–12 through

postsecondary education. Participants identified the following contextual factors as being particularly influential on efforts to incorporate social and emotional learning in higher education.

What’s in it for me?

Time and resources are scarce — for individuals, departments *and* institutions. The opportunity costs, perceived or real, of SEL programs and assessment mean that practitioners and policymakers must not only be convinced of their importance to students, but also of the value to themselves and/or the organization. Union stewards advocating for instructors may question whether course redesign for SEL falls within the contract. Department heads and other administrators may question whether the “burden” of SEL and any resources it may require are distributed equitably across disciplines and departments.

Incentives and Rewards

Related to time and resources is the question of institutional culture and priorities. Currently, the culture of most higher education institutions favors cognitive skills, research and publication over teaching practice and social and emotional learning. This is true in the admissions process, faculty

recruitment criteria, advancement/promotion and tenure policies. Although there are variations among disciplines and pockets of progress, it's fair to say that, overall, the structure and gateways of higher education neither incentivize nor reward social and emotional skills.

Change Management

Efforts to change practice and culture call for “buy-in,” which can pose a challenge. Change is uncomfortable and resistance to change, whether conscious or subconscious, can be potent. Hamilton commented that 100% buy-in is the goal, but it may not be necessary to have *everyone* on board. Some faculty will view themselves as “self-employed,” and that perspective is not easy to change. However, as long as there are multiple touchpoints with SEL throughout the college experience, students and faculty can still benefit and the culture can begin to shift. Another challenge to buy-in and maintaining momentum is administrative turnover, the effects of which can be felt over multiple years. During the search process, investment drops as ongoing faculty and administration wait to see how the new leadership will approach an initiative. Once new leadership is in place, there's the getting-to-know-you and getting-up-to-speed period and some retooling as the new administration brings its own perspective and priorities to bear.

Co-curricular Learning

In terms of providing multiple SEL touchpoints, the reminder that learning happens inside and outside the classroom prompted discussion about documenting students' SEL skills. Adams explained that students' learning skills and work habits are on page one of their transcripts, but college admissions offices do not get that page. Franklin described work California State and other universities have underway with the American Association of Collegiate Registrars



Jacqueline Hamilton, University of Guelph; Emiliana Rodriguez, AC; Mark Sparvell, Microsoft®; William Franklin, California State University-Dominguez Hills

and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) and NASPA: Association of Student Affairs Professionals to develop a co-curricular transcript to document students' cross-cultural and other skills for a more complete record of “who the student is beyond courses they took and their grade point average.” Hamilton described the co-curricular transcript used at the University of Guelph, emphasizing that the SEL skills on that transcript were mapped to institutional learning outcomes. The University of Guelph also has a peer helper program, for which students receive experiential learning credits, and a new business career preparation course, the purpose of which is to “translate their experiences into social and emotional learning in addition to their technical skills.”

“If you can't even move the chairs, how are you going to encourage conversation?”

— William Franklin, Vice President for Student Affairs
at California State University-Dominguez Hills

Insistence that SEL skills not become a competitive tool arose during conversation about measurement



Agustín Paulín, GEMIINI Learning Systems; Kari Marken, University of British Columbia; Nick Yoder, American Institutes for Research (AIR); Cheryl Talley, Virginia State University; Mark Sparvell, Microsoft; Jasmine Williams, Committee for Children; Sofia Frech, Ministry of Education, Mexico

and admissions criteria as well. **Monika Gibson**, Director of Graduate Student Services at Virginia Tech, expressed concern about something similar to grade inflation occurring with SEL when she asked, “How do we reconcile what is and should be the intrinsic value of social and emotional learning with the need to document and communicate about those skills? We want to be sure we’re documenting that students actually have these skills, not just that they’ve been exposed to them.”

Communication

When asked who should be “at the table” in planning for and developing SEL programs and measures, participants inevitably arrived at the answer, “Everyone.” The process calls for attention to culture and context, and all stakeholders should be involved. Despite the logistical challenges an inclusionary, iterative process poses, participants agreed it pays off in the end in terms of instructional quality, equity, data validity and outcomes. This raises the question, “What’s the best strategy for engaging

and communicating with the range of stakeholders in regard to social and emotional learning, both within and outside the institution?” Participants emphasized that it’s important to reflect upon and clearly communicate the “why” of SEL: Why are these skills important, and in what way are they relevant to the individual or group with whom you are communicating?

Opportunities, Challenges and Recommendations

Opportunities:

- SEL can improve quality of life, learning and productivity for those in higher education.
- SEL can help shift institutional culture to ensure campuses are “ready for their students.”
- SEL measures offer a more nuanced and complete way to identify, recruit, enroll, hire and retain students and faculty.
- Campuswide SEL efforts help break down silos because they cross departments, levels and generations.



Catherine Millett, ETS; Dominic Regester, SGS; Elena Arias Ortiz, IDB; Mark Sparvell, Microsoft; Michael Nettles, ETS

- Identifying and measuring social and emotional skills taught in co-curricular activities can help advance SEL efforts where other methods may be slow to take root.
- Including noncognitive skills on students' transcripts can provide a more nuanced and complete view of their experiences and competencies.

Challenges:

- Time and resources are limited. Thoughtful choices must be made in a process that includes all stakeholders.
- In a unionized environment where there are few commonalities across departments and disciplines, it can be difficult to demonstrate the ways in which SEL is already a part of expectations and practice and to make change where needed.
- Historically, higher education neither incentivizes nor rewards teaching and learning of social and emotional skills.
- Administrative turnover is particularly disruptive to the momentum of efforts to develop SEL programs and assessments.

Recommendations:

- Take inventory and build on what's already in place, both inside and outside the classroom (even if it's not called "SEL"). Also, consider the partnerships that already exist among faculty, services, and teaching and learning centers on campus. How might those relationships be developed and/or leveraged to support SEL for students, faculty and staff?
- Align SEL with the core institutional mission and values, and frame all communication about SEL programming and measures with this coherence in mind. Remind teachers and administration that good instructional practice and SEL go together.
- Rethink and reform incentive and reward structures to link SEL with success for students, faculty and the institution. This includes admissions, hiring and tenure practices, as well as attention to the connections between SEL "climate" and retention, persistence and graduation.
- Capitalize on the opportunity SEL provides to work across and break down silos.



Jim Soland, NWEA; Diana García Coli3n, Secretariat of Public Education (SEP); Elena Arias Ortiz, IDB; Cimenna Chao Rebolledo, Universidad Iberoamericana; Ingrid Garc3a Pinz3n, Ceneval; Cristina Anguiano-Carrasco, ACT

- Conduct and share more research locally, nationally and internationally. Consider the implications and requirements for taking research to scale.
- Develop a clear vision, framework and communication plan. Document and communicate the “why” of SEL for all stakeholders.

Next Steps

In concluding this seminar, hosts Millett and Regester noted the overlap of the topics discussed in all four of the series’ seminars. Enduring discussion themes include how students acquire and demonstrate their social and emotional skills in the pre-K to postsecondary continuum, how to prepare and work with educators to incorporate SEL aspects in their teaching and research practices, and how to measure and assess SEL skills. The resonance of the topics across multiple countries and across the education continuum suggests that SEL is a timely topic that merits multiple dialogues.

Millett and Regester invited colleagues to continue their work, collaborate with this nucleus of committed colleagues on projects and research, and join them in December 2018 for the capstone seminar “Social and Emotional Learning: A Global Synthesis.”

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