



## AoC College HE Research and Scholarship Conference 2018 - a plenary?

It was very nearly three years ago today that the AoC stood on this platform to say: It had been going in and out of style and wasn't always guaranteed to raise a smile. But what the Scholarship Project has introduced to you, is an act we've all known for all these years...

Where to start with such a joyous and impressive celebration? – With so many resounding examples of scholarship by staff and students from around the country's CHE providers, it's hard to summarise the 2018 AoC College HE Research and Scholarship Conference. This was, after all, the third scholarship conference and proudly attended by over 100 delegates, who had, once again, descended on The Studio in Birmingham to explore, with even more certainty, in John Lea's words: a "shared repertoire" of expertise with a "similar language" to confirm progress towards a truer identify of scholars.

...As one Scholarship Development Manager had reminded us (by his usual, pre-conference antics) we are, indelibly, as educators and HE practitioners, all looking for the same car parking spaces. Perhaps, until recently, CHE didn't know which spaces to occupy – or which spaces were empty for us. Now we do... (We've even painted over the double yellow lines that prevented us showing up for many years...)

The three year Scholarship Project, is of course, nearing an end and the transition to 'Scholarship Framework' was outlined in John Lea's opening remarks as the culmination of college courses, students and employers creating a shared vision to enhance HE practice by offering resources in four main areas. Namely, these relate to: Curriculum development; Quality enhancement; Student engagement; and Professional development. At the moment 26 resources have been carefully shaped by expert critique, but over 50 agree expected within one year of the Framework's launch in June. These free aids are offered in the most interactive of ways – all dynamically accessible on the new [Scholarship Framework website](#).

The main point of his keynote was that Scholarship is simply bigger than 'research' alone; it enriches learning and is preferred to narrow definitions of scholarly activity that have constrained recognition of colleges' distinct forms of academia. Until now.

So, today showed much learning and yearning for journeying towards that end. Many producers' of knowledge; reducers of uncertainty; and deductors of understanding; with partnerships working, students as partners, developing learning, developing the HE practitioner, as confident and asserting.

The depth of methods seen at the Conference's 36 breakout sessions - to embed scholarship into the everyday lives of HE students - was simply astounding. As Alan Bennet said when asking his audience to take a pew: Scholarship...is like a tin of sardines - we are always looking for the key! The Scholarship Project has been that key, to provide colleges with the riches that we knew existed.

Three examples stand to mind from today's breakouts. Firstly, Myerscough college's golf research to reduce the handicap of disadvantaged students when faced with profiling their swing. Secondly, North Linsey College presenting the lifeline that their provision can inject into the training of nurses to blood numbers into the NHS. And thirdly, sports students from New College Durham putting their footprints in scholarship, to highlight the souls of Podiatry students as part of interdisciplinary assessments.

The sophistication of these, and all others speaking today, was a strength that was evident throughout in a startling exhibition that set a tone of expectation for the sector to live up to from now on.

Of course, some of the day's further keynotes were invited to add argument and deliberate thought to the sector's challenges, demonstrating the purpose of the good, reflective scholar... Kevin Orr's call for a more balanced approach by colleges to justify their meaning in the debate over social justice in education offered insight into the contribution CHE makes to society, and that comparisons with HEIs are somewhat unhelpful to this cause. Phil Miller's clarity of voice in presenting the significance of the Scholarship Project to offer confidence and expertise for the community of CHE practitioners was stated as an indisputable result of the Project's search for a definition that works in the context we all operate in. And Richard Pearce's plea for a continued involvement of all those in college hierarchies, away from research only inclusion, was a resounding description of how college policy, practice and dissemination of scholarship can shape identity. That, fittingly, led to Jolanta Peter's insistence that everyone, aside from the teachers and deliverers of education, can be included in scholarship, whether from student library services or wider support networks.

In conclusion, it is apt to disentangle the web of inspiring ideas, debate and contribution to sustaining the Project's influence, seen at the Conference, by saying:

The day saw reduced consternation, more sophistication...Our 'scholarisation' as a reiteration of communication, and staff utilisation with conversation about the legitimisation of college presentation and collaboration. In this nation's massification we are breaking the regulation of controlled certification in higher education, to offer dissemination through localisation and authorisation. A manifestation of scholarly negotiation with recontextualisation and creation of communities of collectivisation and internationalisation. Is this politicisation, of mobilisation by colleges' higher education here to break the dissemination of segregation through scholarly diversification?

So, no need for further deliberation. The Conference thoroughly recommended our shared notion of scholarship and its revalidation with college pluralisation leading to graduatisation...

As the late, great, Ken Dodd once said: Never put off Scholarship until tomorrow when you can do it today, because if you do it today and you like it, you can do it again tomorrow too!

The day gave us many thoughts of Scholarship - for all our tomorrows...