

## **ISSOTL22: Personal Reflection**

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I am not overstating my experience when I say that ISSoTL confirmed for me that my lifelong passion is for teaching. The sense of community, the openness, the drive for service, the breadth of experience, the willingness to challenge the status quo in the classroom; these all came to a head for me, and I felt truly electric in workshop after workshop, lecture after lecture. I remember telling my mentors that my time in Kelowna was almost unreal because of how welcomed I felt in every space that I entered.

The issue of “space” was particularly powerful for me, even before I had boarded the first plane for ISSoTL 2022. As an undergraduate student, I recognized that I would be greatly outnumbered by the faculty, teaching staff, and graduate students (both master’s students and soon-to-be-doctors). Logistically, it is more difficult for undergraduates to take time out of our often broadly-based general education to attend a highly specialized international conference. However, I dedicated myself to the task of finding connections and feeling confident in whichever spaces I occupied. I had no idea that it would be so easy! Everyone that I met at ISSoTL was caring, engaging, and understanding, and more than that, interested in what I had to say about my own experiences both as a student and as a researcher of the divide between high school and college education.

There were also clear challenges that I had to face, both practical and personal. I had to answer questions relating to the content that I was learning about, and how it applied to the classes I took as a student and the sections of students that I coached about academic well-being. I had to ask myself whether the post-graduation plans that I had set up for myself were

*really* reflective of what I wanted to do in life: teach! I had to worry about doing homework for classes in the hotel room, edit and write papers due soon after the conference's close, and balance my time between soaking in new information and taking time to rest for myself. And I am so grateful that I had the chance to negotiate these challenges at ISSoTL. Again, the sense of community and care were outstanding and obvious, and I felt safe to navigate in difficult terrain to, eventually, find a new happy (and productive) stasis after returning to "normal" university life.

If you are at all able, and if you have a *passion* for learning and for teaching (though I would argue that they are really one and the same in many ways!), then I would highly encourage participating and attending the ISSoTL conference. It was a radically life-changing experience; I know myself much better after having attended, and I know more about what I want my future to look like. You are the most important student in your own life – and ISSoTL is one of the best opportunities that is available to engage with new, important conversations as a life-long learner.