

**One Podcast to Start Your Day**  
**S1E1: Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) in Canada**

Alex Usher:

Hi there. I'm Alex Usher and this is Higher Education Strategy Associates *One Podcast to Start Your Day*

Good morning and this is the inaugural edition of One Podcast to Start Your Day. This is our new experiment in cross-media posting and the topic of today's podcast is going to be Strategic Enrollment Management in Canada, and with me to discuss this today are Melissa Padfield, who is University of Alberta's, Deputy Provost of Students and Enrollment. Melissa, hi.

Melissa Padfield:

Hi. Nice to be here. Alex.

Alex Usher:

Darran Fernandez, who is the Assistant Vice Provost and University Registrar at York University here at Toronto.

Darran Fernandez:

Hello. Thanks for having me.

Alex Usher:

And all the way from Vancouver is Jonathan McQuarrie, who is Higher Education Strategy Associates', Director of Academic Planning.

Jonathan McQuarrie:

Hi, Alex. Good to be here.

Alex Usher:

Thanks everybody. Really glad you could be with us. Hope you will sit through the bumps of this inaugural podcast as we try to nail down the format a little bit. Basically I'm the convivial host. I'm going to be passing off a few questions to our panelists, and hopefully they will get in it with a minimum of, as I'm told, bullshit and a maximum of a deep you know, pertinent pieces of interesting banter. So, let me just start off, Darran, with you. I guess I'm going to ask the question about Strategic Enrollment Management. This is a practice that started in the United States 30 or 40 years ago, eventually it came up to Canada. What's your understanding of strategic enrollment management? What can you tell the folks at home, so to speak?

Darran Fernandez:

The easiest way for me to think of it is a visual diagram, which I'm going to try and paint out via this podcast. So, through looking at the student spectrum in many ways – everything from what we're doing to position our institution at the outside of the spectrum to get students interested in the process. Different than the funnel that we might be really commonly familiar with. What

happens when they actually become curious and interested in the university through all those different elements. But the real thing that I think sometimes gets maybe lost or there's not a lot of attention to around strategic enrollment management or SEM is that middle bit of what happens once they actually come to our institution? and what we need to do to keep them here and keep them engaged and ensure that they remain connected to the institution in a deeper way. Ultimately, hopefully having them graduate and become successful alumni of the university. And then potentially seeing them back at the start at the continuum again. So I see SEM to be inclusive of all those pieces, and I think there's been a bit of a history to focus typically at the front end of that piece, and that being a lot where the energy goes. But I think over time, both, you know, colleagues in the states and here in Canada have evolved to see its span and have a greater focus on that middle bit of what it means to ensure that students remain engaged through various means, you know, outside of the classroom activity as much as inside. When I say outside, I mean co-curricular education, experiential learning, that sort of stuff.

Alex Usher:

Interesting. Melissa, let me ask you a question because you know, this does come from the United States. I've mentioned that, Darran's mentioned that. The United States is a much more competitive market. And I don't mean that they're better institutions, I just mean there's a lot more of them and so they're fighting for position and in a lot of cases they don't necessarily have the same base of public funding to fall back on. I can say that to someone in Alberta, I can't say it to someone in Ontario, but you know what I mean. They usually have a little bit more to back them up. So it's a little more existential for American institutions is my take on it. I mean, what's your take on the difference between how SEM is practice here and in the US?

Melissa Padfield:

I think existential is the right way to put it when we talk about what it was in the States. Although we tend to lag around these ideas usually about 10 or 15 years behind some of the ones that catch on. And then we steal the practices that we think work for our context, and then we make them Canadian-ized, right? So, when you talk about this is a way to achieve financial sustainability for a lot of US universities - I mean, let's get real about that - that's what they're doing it for. For us, there's an element to that. I mean, there has to be, right? When I think SEM, I think of the activation of our mission through planful approaches to student enrollment management and class creation, right? So insofar as there's a sustainability aspect to that, which there always has to be; can you afford to offer the programs you need to offer in the balance of where your funding comes from? That's just smart because the student experience isn't going to be managed in a positive way if you can't afford the programs that you're giving. That said, I think we take a little bit more of that holistic view to it that Darran was talking about. So, in Canada, I think we really are talking about class building for the purpose of learning community, right? That's the starting point and then developing a learning community. Now, are we agnostic to the fact that we have financial realities that have to be managed through our enrollment? No, I mean, absolutely not, but I think there is a lot more conversation about the student experience and a learner-centered enrollment management that we are able to engage in, because we do have sort of a different funding relationship in some ways. I think that we hear a lot of the same conversations around access in the SEM discussion that happen in the US as here. One of the things I think we covet about the SEM discussion in the US is their data and the way in which they can get data. I would love a national student clearinghouse level data in Canada to be able to really understand student demographics differently than we can right now. and I think you'll see that evolution continuing on. I know stuff is happening with OUAC

(Ontario Universities Application Centre) and OCAS (Ontario College Application Centre) around data in common applications, and I think the same will happen in Alberta as well. But I think we have the luxury of a broader view of SEM in some cases, because we haven't had the same financial pressure early on.

Alex Usher:

You used a phrase in there that I have not heard before, learner-centered enrollment management. What does that mean?

Melissa Padfield:

Yeah, for me that means that when we start thinking about class building, we have to build it in the context of student success. So, when we look at how we help enable persistence, we enable student path finding, we enable program fit discussions and different sorts of outcomes that students are looking for. How do you build a class environment? How do you build a learning community environment that actually enables students to know what there is available for them? To find the programs that are going to be the most successful for them? And access the resources that are going to help to retain them in the programs that they're looking for? So that's a different way I think, of looking at SEM than just from an institutional needs perspective, right? This is about learner needs as well.

Darran Fernandez:

I'll just add to that, a part of it that sort of learner-centered approach is allowing, at least in my reflection Melissa, is allowing them the ability to have a degree of agency around how they stay in a program or could move to another one. That also shifts the ownership of some SEM decisions in relation to the institution versus a faculty-level or departmental decision. If we provide our learners a greater degree of agency in choice in how they learn and what they learn.

Melissa Padfield:

Yep. Totally.

Alex Usher:

Yeah. So I think what's, what's interesting about what you guys have talked about so far as you talked about strategic enrollment management as largely as increasingly being a whole-of-institution affair, right? It's about the way you design courses and the way you design programs and the way you integrate student support and the way all the stuff that goes along with the retention agenda which can be very broad interact. I guess my question to all of you, and I'm going to start with you, Jonathan, I'm curious what you've seen in different parts of the country and different parts of the world as you've been doing work on this subject here at HESA is: are universities any good at that? Sorry, it sounds unnecessarily nasty, but whole-of-institution things are maybe the hardest thing to do at universities. It doesn't matter if it's enrollment or retention or anything else. When you have that many people in the room, how do you get them to play nicely together and for someone (or someones) to have the responsibility to get it done because it's very fragmented, right? Jonathan? Your thoughts?

Jonathan McQuarrie:

As to whether anyone's any good at it, I think there are a couple institutions that are getting good at it. But, the issue is when you're talking across so many different sectors and different

sort of stakeholders in different groups, et cetera, you need to develop some common languages and some common respect for each other. I think that's starting to emerge. I remember talking to a registrar who's not here, who was saying one of her main missions right now is really just impressing on faculty the fact that the Registrar, the schedulers, the administration folks have expertise and frankly have a body of scholarship that's emerging. So they're trying to talk a little bit more in a peer-to-peer way, because the issues are becoming so complex and so challenging to navigate; the academic imperatives with the administrative imperatives with the student supported imperatives. It's becoming such a complex topic that there needs to be growing recognition of the expertise of people who have to manage and do that. A lot of them have increasingly advanced degrees and professional capacities. I think professors increasingly, at least more professors who are inclined to be open to that sort of thing, are more inclined to listen to that. Like, "okay, look, there's some expertise around this that I think we need to take seriously," but from what I've heard these are emerging still. I can't think of one place where this [inaudible], but I have heard a couple of examples across the country where these conversations are emerging and becoming a little bit more collegial.

Alex Usher:

Georgia State gets a lot of credit for what it's done on retention and the way it's re-done that. I've never heard it linked particularly to the funnel side as Darran puts at the front end. But that's the closest I can think of. Yeah. Melissa? Darran? Have you any thoughts from you? Who does this well?

Melissa Padfield:

Yeah. Who does this? Well, I mean, I want go back to something you said though; it's really hard to do this in the way in which our organizations are structured. I think it's really hard to do this in a way that is respectful to the benefits of collegial governance, but also attentive to the fact that you kind of need a higher-level actor that's accountable, right? And so that's one of our biggest problems because a lot of people can come in and try and think about doing it as a hammer. "We're going to do this, and that's what you have to be, and here's the kind of class composition you're going to take, because that's the thing that helps the bottom line". You see that in a lot of American institutions, right? I think trying to do the marriage between the benefit of really trying to bring along a collegial governance aspect to something that still needs higher level accountability is where the tension exists. I'm really encouraged, I'm going to say I'm feeling hopeful today around SEM and its evolution in Canada with some of the stuff that we're even doing at UofA right now. So we put in place: number one, the creation of my role would not have even been contemplated six years ago. Having somebody with the word enrollment in a higher level position at the university would not have happened five years ago. So that I think, is testament to a shift in culture. But because you have to have the endorsement of the whole in order to really do those things in a way that could actually work, we've created/introduced a new structure around enrollment management service partners that work cross faculty to try and collaborate on outcomes and have the awareness of "if we do this, how does that work for the trickle down from right inside the classroom to the student support?" to the space that you need, to the different ways in which we structure programs, et cetera and so forth. So, the fact that we actually have faculties and deans bought into using those folks for cross collaboration purposes, that's hugely shifting in terms of opening up our ability to respond quickly to issues, but also to have some prospective strategy on issues. So, I mean, I think, is anyone doing this hugely well? In pockets? Yeah. And on certain issues? Sure. But I think we're still, we're evolving, but I like that we're evolving with an attention to the fact that universities are structured in a

particular way around collegial governance, and you can't throw that out and expect a sustained success on this.

Alex Usher:

Darran, any thoughts?

Darran Fernandez:

I think about how most of those roles and how they're positioned in the United States are in a senior leader capacity and that that's not overly common in a Canadian context within universities in Canada. I reflect on my own institution and the leaders in our faculties who do a lot of work that's centered around SEM - that gets to SEM goals, that gets to SEM principles - and I would say the vast majority understand the connection to it. But as they transition out of their roles, there comes an educational piece that they need to do for those that follow, and we need to do to support them, that I think can be more deeply embedded in our culture and a Canadian context to realize, as Jonathan acknowledges, that there is a body of literature that's associated with this. There are subject matter experts that are in our academy that we can pull on to help build this out. So, I think there is a benefit to not having that sort of positional leadership role in some places, if there is a willingness to have a culture around it and to really embed the language in roles that in some cases we may not naturally think would be contributing to SEM, but very deeply do. For example, anyone who might be at a first-point-of-contact in any of our students spaces is someone who's a key contributor to the retention element to strategic enrollment management,

Alex Usher:

Including professors, correct?

Melissa Padfield:

Yeah.

Darran Fernandez:

Oh yeah, absolutely. Right. Especially professors. and all the above. I would say if you were to do a broad-based poll to ask some professors if they even knew what the three letters meant, you may not come out on top of on very much, but when you break it down to what SEM actually means they could most definitely see themselves within it. So, how do we ensure that that sort of understanding of our codified language around strategic enrollment management is understood more broadly in our institutions? That is, I think, where we'll see the greater benefit as opposed to us needing to attach ourselves to three letters.

Melissa Padfield:

Well, and how you make sure that we don't corporatize SEM? Because if SEM starts to be interpreted by folks in our campuses as if it's part of corporate culture which we've got a lot of people highly resistant to, then it gets diminished, right? But when you frame it the way that you were talking about it, Darren, around SEM is really *everybody's* accountability around creating an optimal environment within which our missions thrive and get activated. I know that sounds like a lot of buzzwords, but if you break it down, it's true, right? How we activate our learner mission is to do strategic enrollment management. Whether it's the frontline recruiter, or it's the service

provider in the faculty, or it's the professor in front of the classroom, right? All of that is SEM. And if SEM becomes more attached as a notion within our core business and isn't seen as in opposition and a corporatization of our business, then it has a lot more power as a common thread to allow us to have some more strategic conversations about the choices we make about access, and the choices we make about our admissions practices, and the choices we make about our spaces. So, I think you're absolutely right there. And that's what I worry about is that when they see it in the American context, they go straight to a corporate lens on it sometimes, even though I know a lot of our American colleagues aren't doing it in that way, it can sometimes get dismissed which I think is uphill battle for us in some context.

Alex Usher:

Melissa, a second ago you were noting how the culture was shifting around a more integrated approach to SEM. Why? What's pushing this?

Melissa Padfield:

What's the driver around it? I think folks are seeing that... well, there's a few levels, right? One is we have to get more serious about class building from just a sustainability standpoint, right? To be responsive to the pieces of our mission that say we should have more accessibility, that our classrooms should reflect our society, these sorts of pieces, right? You got to be intentional if you actually want to shift that and just not replicate the kind of class you've had for years and years and years. So, I think our conversations on equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility have actually shifted people to want to be more intentional about these discussions. I think when we've seen internationalization and bringing more international students in, that has started to change the conversation around SEM. There's more attention there; both to international student numbers, but also international student quality and making sure we have the right supports in place. So, I think we've got that. And then, you know, to be frank, funding arrangements and the balance of where money comes from and making sure that we create a good optimal learning environment that's sustainable means we need to retain the students we recruit and means that we need to make sure that we've got a balance that can keep programs sustainable from a financial standpoint. So pressure is everywhere.

Alex Usher:

That's the view from Alberta. Darran, does it look the same from York?

Darran Fernandez:

I think in very similar ways. I would say that I mean the "universal we" has become much smarter in thinking about what it means to recruit international students. I think there is a deeper way of thinking about how an institution is structured and how a classroom thrives with a diversity of perspectives. So, that has changed that culture shifting because it's less of the "once-upon-a-time" thinking of an avenue solely for dollars to the institution and much more progressive present day, at least in my own space around "*how does that shift the learning in the classroom? How does that bring in a different perspective?*" As we think about how we structure recruitment practices, how do you actually ensure that your international student body is diverse and ideally as reflective as it possibly could be of the local area and community? I think that has helped to shift culture. I can't say that's consistent across the country because if you look at recruitment and enrollment numbers from international students at different colleges and universities, they vary greatly. But it's an observation that I have that I'm grateful for: to see that there's less of a focus on the dollars and much more of a focus on future potential for what

could happen in just providing education and access to education to groups of individuals who may be either traditionally excluded from our system or can help to contribute to a diversity of perspectives in a classroom environment on a particular topic.

Alex Usher:

Jonathan, I'm going flip it over to you because Darran made an interesting comment there. Internationalization is one of those things that I think has, in some ways, derailed the SEM discussion. Well at least in some parts of Canada because SEM is seen as being something registrars do or enrollment managers do, whereas internationalization is something the international VP does, you know what I mean? The sense that the responsibility has sort of been that the international class is somehow seen as being apart from the domestic class, not everywhere, but in some places, and the focus has been so heavy on the dollar signs that, that in some places that it sort of takes over. Jonathan, what's your sense across the country with the balance between how many of the SEM plans that we see really take internationalization you know, seriously? I think the way that Melissa and, and, and Darren have been talking about.

Jonathan McQuarrie:

I'd say most of them do. I don't know, I feel like the characterization there is a little stark.

Alex Usher:

Me? Stark? is that like...

Jonathan McQuarrie:

I think because part of it is the SEM structure is catching up to internationalization. Because there was the imperative to get international students from 15-20 years ago, and SEM structures in Canada have only evolved over the past 5-10 year. I've struggling to think of a SEM plan, or at least an outlined SEM strategy that I've seen in Canada that doesn't at least partly think about international students and sort of supporting international students.

Alex Usher:

Because not everywhere has a SEM plan that's...

Jonathan McQuarrie:

That's more the thing is there just aren't that many. In Canada, there still aren't that many fully articulated SEM plans as I discovered when I was talking to a bunch of people across Canada. They're like "*well, yeah, we're making one,*" or like, "*we're on the road to one*". We have a lot of SEM principles and ideas about SEM, but coordinated plans are not incredibly common. So, I think because of that though, a lot of them are catching up to the conditions that are in play and the fact that international students are so essential, it's very difficult to imagine that a SEM plan emerging in Canada that doesn't think about international student numbers and support pretty, fairly seriously.

Alex Usher:

Interesting. Melissa, you've mentioned a couple times the term "class building" and I think that's a really interesting one because the big American discussions around SEM at least the more flowery ones you know talk about "crafting a class", "creating a class". I think that was the title Jeff Selingo's last book and it was an excellent book. It was a fascinating book about how

admissions drive so much of the activity at a university. I recommend Jeff's book to everybody because it's an amazing way of understanding American higher education. But when he uses that term and you use that term, I think we're talking about something different. The American view of crafting a class is partly an affirmative action discussion in some places. Partly it's a financial discussion; you know, on early admission and how much you can charge people at different times of the cycle. But also partially, it's how many athletes are we getting? and you know, the whole the varsity blue scandal in part comes out of the crafting a class thing. And then there was Tina Fey in that, that film on admissions, right? Which is how many of them can play the clarinet? Do we have everybody in for the band? Right?

There are really weirdly micro considerations that go on in that I don't think that happens in Canada and I don't think that's what you mean by creating a class. So could you elaborate a little bit of what you do mean and how it's different?

Melissa Padfield:

Yeah, for sure. And I mean, some of the reason we don't get that granular is because we simply don't have the data to get that granular. So, I think there's some of that, that happens. But I will say I've sensed a shift from admissions and class building being about exclusion to it being about inclusion. And it feels like a bit of a moment in time shift because institutions, particularly selective institutions, have been about exclusion because we've had very either small seats or we've had high demand relative to small seats. I think we're looking at a different way of class building now in the last 5-7 years around how do we bring a more diverse set of students in, right? So, class building becomes a situation of creating structures, financial supports, support structures, so once students get here, we are be able to steward and help success for a more diverse set of students, right? So, class building becomes a bit of... this is when I go back to activate your mission: what's the mission of your particular institution and what kind of students help you to activate that mission and help evolve your institution forward, right? For us, we're talking about making sure we have Indigenous students that hopefully are as prevalent here as they are as part of the population in Alberta, right? So, do you have a reflective population and to Darran's point around international students: Can you be a globally relevant institution without a significant proportion of international students? I think it's hard to, right? I think you need to provide the diversity of opinion. Can you be a nationally relevant institution without a national voice where you have students from across the country? Harder to do. Can you be stewarding your province where you are located if you don't have a good percentage of local students? So, you actually do have to be attentive across a number of dimensions. Then it's also program diversity. When we talk class building too, we're making sure that we are ensuring that our programs are healthy and if we don't have health in those programs, what is that going to do to our ability to, again, activate what our goals and mission are? So, it could be more granular if we had more data, but I really think it's around becoming more accessible and more reflective of our objective. So, I think it's getting more precise, to be honest. And I think it's getting more about bringing students in than keeping them out.

Alex Usher:

Darran, you got any thoughts?

Darran Fernandez:



I agree with the number of things that Melissa said. As either provinces or individual institutions become a bit more either open to- or create pathways to collect additional data points about students, whether they be through an individual student census data at individual institutions, or as Melissa alluded to the Ontario University Application Centre is starting to collect data among its applicants to be shared with post-secondary universities, there has to be an ethical view to how we use that data to inform our admissions practices. That is not a really deep-seated or prevalent thing in our sector yet. I think there's a consciousness that we should be protective and supportive and attentive to the data and not want to have it be accessible by those that should not have access to it. But, a really conscious effort as to how our ethical standards are applied when we receive that data and how it's used. I think this issue is going to surface greatly. I think the class building conversation has a real opportunity to elevate those that have been traditionally excluded from our sector. However, those that have been traditionally excluded from the sector will question heavily the disclosure of that data to a third party, how institutions will use it and whether they will do so ethically. So, there is an education piece that we will need to do with our community across the country, and globally ultimately, around how we will enter into that world or greater data safely and supportively of our learners.

Melissa Padfield:

So true Darran. Yeah.

Jonathan McQuarrie:

Maybe the work that National Clearinghouse has done along some of those lines might help, at least a press to see the point of direction of where that could go. You can definitely see how they use the data in ways that say *"here's how we are changing admissions policies"*, *"here's how we're targeting different communities"* and *"here's how we're developing retention supports,"* et cetera, that target specific groups of students and *"here are the outcomes that we can see from that in terms of improved retention, improved recruitment"* et cetera.

Alex Usher:

I'm curious from all three of you, just as a last point before we end this, I want to come back to the point earlier about this being a cross university affair. What are the biggest barriers to in effect to enthusiastic adoption of cross university initiatives like this? And do you think we'll overcome them in the next 5-10 years? What are the things that need to happen from your perspective? I'm obviously not going to ask you about your own institutions but I think all of you've got a pretty good sense of how these issues are playing out in in large institutions across the country. At least some of you on it. What do you think? What are the big barriers? How do we get to the promise land with SEM?

Melissa Padfield:

So, it's the easy question last!

Alex Usher:

Yep.

Melissa Padfield:

Ok, good. Thanks. I'm glad we ended with a softball. I think one of the things that's come up even as a theme through this conversation is around education, right? And educating our

campus community about SEM but doing it in a way that we get to the “them”, right? The “*what's in it for me*” and “*how does that actually advance what I'm doing day-to-day?*” I think about that in the context of helping engage in dialogue with our professorate. Why do they care what we're building as far as a class, right? Why do we care about that? I think there is the thing, reflecting back the Darran's point, the things you're already doing that actually are SEM and helping people to see the activity that they're already engaged in as relevant to that objective and how it's been important to their work in the past and how it can be important to their work in the future. And then I think there is an opportunity once you've got those pieces in place to really bring things into more aggregated conversational structures that feel familiar for a new purpose. What I mean by that is feel familiar from the collegial governance standpoint, but are used for the purpose of strategic enrollment management. You can steer it not to go into committee purgatory, right? Because we're good at that. But to actually create useful collegial structures that lead us to that education and also input processes that can make SEM work better. I think that a lot of our institutions right now, because of the soup we're cooking in around accessibility, around internationalization, around sustainability, have an opportunity in the next 3-5 years to do that well in ways that we haven't been able to before. Because there's a bit more of a burning ambition on some of those pieces that will let us have those cross-campus conversations differently. But this is not easy, this is not easy work. And if you don't start with the “*what's in it for the individual*”, I don't think you get very far.

Alex Usher:

And what happens if the money situation gets worse? I mean, I hear you and I agree with you, Melissa, but I think it depends on being able to play on that balance between funding and diversity. You know, how desperately do you want to catch that next international student? I think in Ontario, the thing that's worrying the heck out of me right now: if I take the the two traditional sources of income, which is domestic tuition fees and government grants, those have both been frozen by the provincial government for the last four years and I'm going to guess it's going to be frozen for another four. So, by the end of that period we're going to end up in a situation where institutions are 30% poorer from those sources. So I guess my question is: is this kind of balance a luxury? Is SEM going to get pushed back to the “*hey, go find the dollars because we just we're desperate for the dollars?*” Darran, how do you think that that that institutions will react in a crunch to this kind of thing?

Darran Fernandez:

You know, people will have the visceral, guttural reaction to what we do. I think, and maybe I just wear a lot of rose-colored glasses, but my hope is that institutions, regardless if it's a university, college, institute, or other place of higher learning, turn back to their values that they are trying to guide how their strategic or academic plans work and say “*how can we then shift according to these core principles that we have?*” Partially because if the dollars become the main focus around this, we're going to repeat a cycle that that existed, 60 years ago, 80 years ago, and it's going to put us in a place where our society is positioned very differently in the bigger picture. So, I'm going to keep my rose-colored glasses on it and hope that institutions look back at their values and think about other places that can help to shift to either fill that gap by looking creatively in different spaces. I'm not going to go try and re-muff lists right now, but it will turn the conversations to who is in our class? how are we recruiting students? what are we recruiting students for? Which I think is actually going to be the bigger question at the end of the day into our programs and how they're connected to society and how they're connected to present- and future-day opportunities, both job opportunities, but opportunities beyond that as well. So, my

hope will be a return back to core values and then rethinking our approaches that from that lens from my, you know, sunshine and rainbow's perspective.

Alex Usher:

Got it, got it. Just for our listeners at home, Darran is wearing glasses, but they're not rose color. They're fabulous. Anyway,

Melissa Padfield:

They're just nice glasses. To build on what you're saying, Darran, you can make it a dichotomy - money or values driven, but it doesn't have to be. It is often thrown up as a dichotomy and I think that's dangerous. I think it actually is really dangerous for the future sustainability of our institutions. I think we have to be able to see that there's a way to do financial sustainability that also relies on our values and our purpose. There is, and you can see it in some institutions, which I don't think there's a perfect institution, but even look - Once Michigan got through some of their scandal around some of their promotional material, University of Michigan and all that. But, I think there's a lot of thoughtful attention going into how do you create equitable structures, how we've talked with them recently, you know, and, and how do you do that? But how do you also make sure when only 10% of your grant is coming from your state, how are you financially sustainable? And this is going to get institutions confronted with the notion of right-sizing, how do you steward your communities in the way that you need to, but how do you have a right-size for programming? How do you have a right-size in terms of enrollment so that you can stay true to those values? So, it's a hard questions road, but I don't think it is necessarily a dichotomy of money or class building in a more equitable way.

Jonathan McQuarrie:

The Michigan example is really interesting because as I understand it, and please correct me, but they have one of the most robust education panels for first-gen students. I remember citing them quite a few times as an example of that and breaking that dichotomy because it isn't just like, "*sure, but they're chasing some new student dollars*", but they're putting a ton of effort to just explaining processes that for students who come from families with academic backgrounds are simple. But, for a lot of students they are not so that's weird for them.

Alex Usher:

Jonathan, let me end this with you. You've been looking quite a bit at SEM in different institutions around Canada and around the world. What's the most interesting thing you've seen in SEM in the last couple of years?

Jonathan McQuarrie:

The most exciting thing happening in some of the last couple years. You know what, I think one of the interesting things that's happening is probably the expansion to graduate students- and this is a pretty new frontier. So, if we're talking last two or three years, we're literally in that timeframe, I think the first working paper in the States came out like 2018 and they're like, "*right! graduate students! Oh! they exist!*" and they have that really interesting relationship as both students but also, in many cases the educator. So, they have that really complex role of being those first-line people are going to get students those services, supports and accesses, but they also need those services, supports and accesses. And you need graduate students who come from a diverse range of families. If there is an area that needs a lot of EDI attention, definitely

graduate studies and graduate student populations is definitely an area, I think we've all seen the reports about how many people that end up going through and getting the tenure track jobs are coming from the kids of people who have tenure track jobs and that's ever growing. So, I think a lot of dynamics we were talking about in play here are just starting to be investigated at the graduate level, both in research graduate degrees and professional graduate degrees. So, I would say it may be exciting start work because it's still nascent, it's still emerging, but I think it's probably the area to keep an eye on to see how it interacts because it's going to be a very complex issue but I think really crucial part of SEM.

Alex Usher:

Thank you very much Jonathan. And thank you very much to Melissa and Darran for joining us today. Darran Fernandez, Assistant Vice Provost and University Registrar at York University. Melissa Padfield, Deputy Provost Students in Enrollment at the University of Alberta. And Jonathan McQuarrie, Manager of Academic Planning here at Higher Education Strategy Associates. We hope you enjoyed the podcast and join us back here in a couple of weeks.