Bob Cox

George Brown College

I graduated from Centennial College in '71 or '72 in Child and Youth Work -- and then, I worked in Lakeshore Psychiatric hospital, in a number of different jobs -- as a child and youth worker; then wound up as a Director of residential services for the children's Aid Society in Scarborough, and that was in 1978; I started teaching at Centennial in 1978 -- a session Faculty in Child and Youth work; and then, I guess, about 1995 or so.

In the early '90s, I started teaching English at Centennial College and then in 1995 I was seconded to the Faculty Development Program -- so, I spent 5 or 6 years there working at the faculty around teacher training; and then, in 2001, I went to George Brown as a director of staff and organizational development.

In George Brown I was responsible for the teacher training, the leadership training and Support Staff Training.

In '78, there was a residential program for Centennial faculty, and we went away to some hotel around Niagara Falls for about 4 days; and they hired a couple people from OISE; they came and they really gave us a good grounding in teaching for the 4 days, and then that was it -- we went into the classroom.

By the time I left George Brown, we had quite a rich program. For the new faculty, there was a three-year program, we didn't do a residential thing but we had an ongoing kind of program where the faculty had to meet certain goals and etc., for a period of time, and yeah, doing a probation.

I started in the summer with one course in sociology, and continued in September, took kind of a full course load, and then at the end of September, I fell in love; and moved out of the city; and then, by December fell out of love and moved back into the city, went back to Centennial.

So I just not expected to get back in, and they said, "Sure, what you can do is you can take the next month studying all the courses that you were supposed to take, come back in January, we'll give you an exam, and if you pass the exam in all those courses, then you can just continue." I wouldn't want to give you the impression that the College courses were easy. I studied for hours every day for a month in order to get ready for those exams. In hindsight, I think that this approach gave me the opportunity to demonstrate to my teachers that I was serious -- they could have just kicked me out, but instead gave me the benefit of a doubt and a second chance, and that was the beginning of a life-long passion with education.

I learned that school is a place to make mistakes, and it should be a safe place. You shouldn't be fired because you're a young person and you make mistakes. As long as you're learning from it, you (should) have an opportunity for re-do.

When I was teaching, I had set the students final exam on a topic to research and when they'd come back to class they'd write the essay. So, they all went off and did this and this one student from Japan -- a very nice young woman -- memorized an entire essay. When she wrote her essay, it was a professionally written essay, but she'd memorized everything, punctuation, spelling, everything.

And I looked at it and thought "Okay, so I could call this plagiarism, or I could kind of ask her what was going on." And turned out -- I just asked her what was going on and she said that she didn't know how to write English, the only way she knew how to write was to memorize it and that her parents would be very upset if she failed the course and would probably put her out of school; and so I decided to give her an "incomplete," even though she had completed the course At the end of the year, she would have to retake the exam. I gave her a grade at the end of that. That came from my experience as a student, and I would use kind of "incomplete" in ways that wouldn't be accepted these days.

I had very bad experiences with high school; (college) just changed everything for me. So I wound up going to university, getting a degree, and then a Masters' degree; and I would never have done that, I don't think without that college experience.