

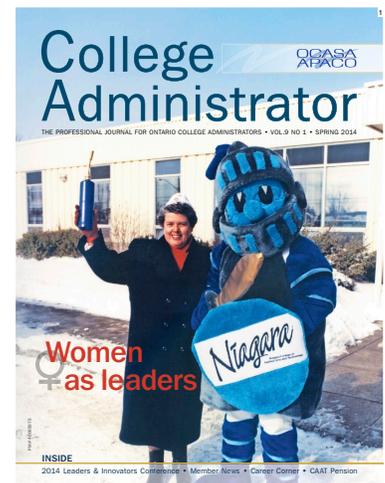
College Administrator



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OCASA is a voluntary, professional association which supports and advocates for Ontario's community college administrators, while building and promoting administrative excellence for the betterment of the college system.

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College manager turns coach

I hired a coach the year I turned 40. The decision sprang from one part angst of impending middle age, one part concern about my work in college administration, and one part curiosity about the increasingly popularity of coaching. I wanted to know what the buzz was all about.

After 10 years at Centennial College – seven as an administrator in the area of dispute resolution/human rights and three as the Manager of Policy Development – a feeling of uncertainty had crept in. Was working in college administration in the cards for my future? If not, what other options existed for me?

I had recently started a Master's Certificate in Organizational Development (OD), and while the program added enormous value to my work, it still didn't shake my ennui. After making a connection with a woman at a cocktail party who had recently become certified as a coach, I agreed to get started. I had no idea when I began just how transformative the experience would be.

The coaching commenced with an assessment to uncover my strengths and an exercise to mine for values – the things that are most important to us. I was stunned by the results and what they illuminated for me. My strengths profile, garnered from the increasingly popular Gallup Strengths Finder tool, showed a talent for influencing people. The values work unearthed the importance of feeling passion for my work and a need for independence.

As part of the coaching process, I started paying attention to the work that energized me. I noticed that I'm

most engaged when I'm in conversation with people – helping them to get to the heart of an issue and challenging them to speak honestly when they get there. Skilled at breaking bottlenecks and impatient with inaction, I'm jazzed when I can spur people to act. I noticed that this showed up in my job when I facilitated discussions about policy-related issues and when I managed staff on my team. But it didn't happen often enough. So with the help of my coach, I set the intention of finding ways to leverage my strengths at work. I sought out opportunities to facilitate, train and mentor at the college.

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Then one day, a friend asked me to coach a manager in his small business who was struggling with some performance issues. I jumped at the chance to see whether my strengths were a match for coaching, something that I was beginning to suspect was true. After a few early morning sessions with my new client, I was hooked. I loved spending time one-on-one in conversation, building a relationship that supporting her growing awareness of the goals she needed to set, the changes she needed to make and the learning required to get her there. So in January 2012, after

completing that Masters Certificate in OD, I registered for the coaching program at Adler International Learning in Toronto.

Fast forward to winter 2014. With 100 hours of coaching under my belt, I'm on track to write my certification exams in early spring. At 45, I have a renewed sense of purpose. Being coached facilitated an awareness of my gifts and their significance in my satisfaction level at work. Learning how to coach allowed me to put my strengths to work in a way that honors my values. I now see countless opportunities in my work as a college administrator to put the skills of coaching to work. What interaction doesn't benefit from an increased ability to listen and ask powerful questions?

I'm also thrilled with my burgeoning coaching practice made up of clients from inside of the college and out. Working as a coach satisfies my need for independence and my passion for being in conversations that matter. I'm excited by a process that allows me to support my staff and clients in building their capacity to grow, learn and change. The buzz was right after all. [CIA](#)

*Curious to learn more about the power of coaching? Join Laurie at the OCASA conference in June for her session **Coaching – More than a trend** where you will have a chance to observe and analyze a live coaching demo.*