Shac 2011-2012

Photovoice Project Examples:

Are we supposed to compete with each other?

This photo highlights two issues that impact student mental health and well-being.

It represents the current course registration system and how it is a barrier to student’s mental health, academic success, and SFU experience. The current course registration is based on the number of credits completed and the student’s GPA. Those with a higher GPA and more credits within their year have an earlier registration date. The chair represents the student who is more privileged with an earlier registration date, allowing him/her to select courses that would advance their studies and eventually graduate earlier. All the empty carrels without seats represent the majority of SFU students who cannot graduate “on time” because they cannot get the courses they want because of their later registration date, because they are not doing as well in school with the stress of juggling a part time job, because they need that job to pay for the extra tuition fees and unnecessary courses, because they need to maintain a full time status for their student loans, because the system categorizes students based on the number of credits they have and their GPAs because...?

This photo also highlights the competitive nature of studying at SFU. Because some faculties curve final grades, students are being compared to other students as a means of determining what mark they receive. Are we all supposed to compete with each other for this chair? Are we all supposed to compete with one another so that I can get an A, meaning that you might get a C? Should I wish that everybody did poorly on the exam so that it would appear that I did well? How is this learning environment preparing me for a successful future?

The strong divide in the middle of this picture emphasize the division of students. The chair represents the support present in a learning environment. To the left, students are kept in the dark and are struggling to “survive” in this competitive learning environment. Without the chairs, what is it about the learning environment that hinders their learning? To the right, the student is given more light, allowing him/her to easily find his/her way and continue to strive in university. With the one chair, what is it about the learning environment that supports his or her learning?
Leaning on one another for support. Learning from one another to succeed.

This photo represents interactive learning in a course setting and how it is a positive contributor to students’ mental health and academic success.

The area outside the circle represents the students learning in their lectures. They are absorbing the course content and information. Once they enter the “circle”, they are placed in an environment where they can apply that information.

The circle represents an interactive learning environment where students are doing group work or are entering into a different learning environment. Here, they are able to translate the information they learned in the course to practice and application of it in a different setting. This allows students to develop practical skills.

The chairs that make up the circle represent the different perspectives and ideas that can be generated when one works in a group or in a different setting. The individual sitting in the chair facing the windows can bring a view about a topic that is different from the views of those facing the inside of the building. Together, these students as a group can bring in information from all different backgrounds and perspectives to learn from one another.

When you are in an environment that allows you to practice skills and share knowledge, you retain the information a lot better, which is represented by the silver metal circle surrounding the chairs. The silver poles represent pillars of support that are more evident when working in a group or in an environment that fosters service/interactive learning.

As represented by this photo, you need both structures in a course to foster a positive learning environment. Both of these teaching and learning methods lean on each other for support to enhance a student’s experience and education in a course.