Reflections on CAN 2018 from Jasper Shotts, principal lecturer in the School of Social Science, University of Lincoln and Reece Taylor-Long, student, University of Lincoln

Jasper and Reece presented session 7.4 on Friday called 'Making it worth your while; staff-student partnerships for more flexible learning'

Jasper Shotts' reflection:

Having already attended several great Jisc conferences and network meetings on this occasion what I really enjoyed was accompanying a student through conference presentations and other activities. This gave me a different experience by doing things together, comparing perspectives and seeing things through his eyes.

 One of my main conference 'take aways' emerged from taking part in Sarah Knight and Helen Beetham`s discovery tool workshop (6.4). Using the discovery tool to compare teacher and learner perspectives gave me a particular context from which to draw new insights on how this tool might be applied. During the workshop exercise, students responded to this tool by highlighting how keyboard and Microsoft office shortcuts might improve their assessment fluency and experience which has given me a great project idea to take forward with my institution.

My next step is to incorporate similar diagnostic screening and student generated shortcuts in a subject level online assessment toolkit. The design to would aim to enhance student assessment readiness and progression through an undergraduate programme. It builds on my earlier work using diagnostic tools in assessment. Using the online assessment toolkit, students could test and increase their readiness through a series of digital and assessment agility exercises. This would take place prior to teaching delivery to allow time to signpost students to other services and prepare further through follow up activities as needed. Survey data reports could also alert teachers to learner assessment expectations and any significant changes in comparison with previous cohorts to allow subsequent formative and summative activities to be adjusted if required. Also in the toolkit would be assessment templates and podcast briefings to frame activities and all these activities might prompt teacher assessment readiness as well as that of learners.

Reece Taylor-Long's reflection:

When I was a first year Media Production student, I joined a team within the University of Lincoln called the Video Based Learning Support Assistants, which was a paid, part-time position focussing on giving staff a source of information for any digital difficulties or requests they have. A year and a half later, our team is now called the Video Support Assistants and I have had the opportunity to collaborate with many students and staff across the University. One of these staff members that I've had the pleasure of working with is Jasper Shotts, a principal lecturer within the School of Social Science. It's this partnership that we developed that led to me attending the CAN conference at the University of Winchester in 2018.

The conference gave a diverse range of staff from Universities across the UK the chance to conduct presentations regarding the championing of student-staff collaborations and the steps they are taking in the 'Age of Change'. I, along with Jasper, was given the opportunity to present at the conference on the topic of making staff-student partnerships worth your while. I was also able to attend other presentations that were given over the two days of the 19th-20th April. This conference, and the work that I completed both before and during it, presented me with concepts and opportunities that I would have otherwise not come across. In my eyes, there were two main benefits that I have found I can take away from the conference.

The first was the opportunity to test the pilot of a new Digital Capabilities quiz, created by JISC, that assessed your digital capabilities in several areas and rated you as either developed, capable, or proficient. The aspect of this that I found to be the most helpful was the unique report generated once the quiz had been completed, in which you found all of your ratings in the various areas, as well as tips and ideas on how you can develop your skills in each. As an aspiring filmmaker, one of the most important aspects of my life is networking in order to get my name known, and it was interesting that this report revealed that my ability to manage my Digital Identity was actually my weakest skill.

On the topic of networking, I found that this was the second main benefit of attending this particular conference. When I arrived at the venue, I had no expectations of being able to advance my career through conversations with the other delegates who were arriving at the same time. However, I was introduced to various University staff members who were able to offer me advice in various aspects of my own future career. For example, a delegate who specialises in engagement with students over social media was able to give me tips on how to increase my presence online. Another networking opportunity came through Sarah Knight, who I hope to collaborate with in the future.

I was able to experience more during this conference than I thought I would be able to, and I've also found that I am able to take some things back into my personal and professional life as a student. The main thing I will be taking back and working on is the report generated for me when I completed the Digital Capabilities quiz. The tips and advice that it gives on each of the areas will prove invaluable to me, for example creating a website for myself that will tie all of my social media accounts together.

Overall, my visit to the University of Winchester for the CAN conference of 2018 was a productive one, and something which I would be open to doing again in the future. I am hoping I will be able to collaborate with JISC and CAN further in the future, through schemes such as becoming a student partner.