

Fanshawe College

FIRST: Fanshawe Innovation, Research, Scholarship, Teaching

PAC Minutes

Event Planning

2-2023

EFG Minutes - Program Review - 2023

Fanshawe College

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Attendees

External Attendees

- Karen Dowhan, Tourism London
- Lori Da Silva, RBC Place London
- Melissa Welsh, Ivey School of Business (Alumni)

Fanshawe Attendees

- Kristi Hall, Program Coordinator, School of Tourism, Hospitality and Culinary Arts
- Ela Smith, Curriculum Consultant, Centre for Academic Excellence
- Colleen Kelsey, Program Review and Development Coordinator, Centre for Academic Excellence

Regrets

- Mary Pierce, Acting Dean, Faculty of Creative Industries
- Michelle Giroux, Associate Dean, School of Tourism, Hospitality and Culinary Arts
- Tricia MacIntyre, Program Manager, School of Tourism, Hospitality and Culinary Arts
- Sharon Lechner, Events by Sharon
- Jennifer Baxter, Children's Health Foundation
- Ryan Craven, City of London
- Lindsay Deveaux, Voices.com
- Janie Rother, London Chamber of Commerce
- Meaghan Holder, Connect Dot Management Inc.
- Chery Finn, London Tourism
- Andrew Kitt, STIHL Canada
- Malak Sidky, Health Care Event Planning
- Amy McNall, Unmistakably You (Wedding Planning and Stationary Design)

Introductions and Process Overview

- Meeting attendees introduced themselves.
- Ela Smith, Curriculum Consultant, provided an overview of the meeting purpose and goals for discussion.

Panel Discussion

What are the key characteristics, knowledge and skills you are seeking in a recent graduate?

- Panel member had a recent interview process with recent Fanshawe graduates from 2020 and 2021 – fully online program as a result of pandemic
- Foundational skills soft skills are lacking; recent hire required major training on behalf of employer (e.g., being late, not having capacity to know to communicate to supervisor, social skills)
- Knowing what can be written in an email, how to present on the phone – different levels of professionalism required (e.g., calling versus email)
- Confident in communications (e.g., navigating difficult discussions, asking the right questions, critical thinking skills)
- Planning an event; knowing the next steps and anticipating next steps
- RBC Place – would not hire a recent graduate into an event planning role (it is a more senior level role);

- Managing expectation of graduates for the type of entry level positions (senior level roles manage \$20-\$200K budgeted events)
- New team members present themselves well – confident, strong social skills, willingness to learn as part of the team
- Post graduate students tend to have a different level of professionalism compared to diploma graduates; sometimes have more work experience
- Manage expectations of recent graduates for the typical jobs that are entry level; recent graduates often have to put in time and effort to build experience level
- Age of graduate provides a different lens on professionalism and expectations. This can be incorporated into course work
- Program recently added co-op for students to have some experience when graduating
- Rubric expectations that align with creative thinking required within the industry
- Attention to detail is required and an acknowledgment of its importance (e.g., spelling, client names)
- Technical skills (e.g., MSOffice Suite, design technology, understanding booking systems)
- SEP2 has incorporated a student uniform of Fanshawe dress shirt and black pants
 - Incorporate dress code for interviews
- Acknowledgement to know culturally appropriate wear for different scenarios (e.g., suit and heels are no longer the only way to be professional, ways to express personal style and still meet client and industry needs)
- Dress code and appropriate dress codes for events and presenting professionally; co-op placement expectations to reflect this
- Adherence to dress code to meet employer needs; professionalism in dress for client meetings (e.g., no workout wear)
 - Dress code days in class (informal/formal/presentation/semi-formal) what does each mean and where would you use it? Appropriate footwear for the expectations of position.
 - Program uniform is implemented to connect dress code and expectations.
 - Employment expectations and how we are working doesn't just mean suit/tie/skirt
 - Importance of appropriate footwear for event planning (e.g., no heels)
- Event planning industry is looking for graduates

Recommendation(s):

- Review curriculum to ensure foundational skills and professionalism are thread throughout the program to align with industry expectations; adjust curriculum as appropriate. Topics include:
 - Appropriate dress
 - Communication skills (written, verbal)
 - Technical skills (e.g., MSOffice Suite, design technology, understanding booking systems)
- Manage student expectation regarding the types of roles they will be applying for post-graduation (e.g., more entry level versus senior level planning roles).

Based on your experience with graduates of the program employed at your organization, what are some key strengths that they possess? Areas for improvement?

Strengths

- Great about sharing ideas on how they would approach things in class
- Confidence in knowledge
- Having a diverse workforce sharing cultural background (e.g., ability to translations)
- Understanding of accessibility and awareness to promote diversity; especially in public sector events
- Accessibility and equity, diversity, and inclusion lens (e.g., organizations are learning and un-learning)

Areas for improvement

- Professionalism and soft skills lacking (see above question)
- Understanding what we do and why we do it (e.g., types of events, hours for set up and tear down)
- Research on the core business for different venues prior to starting new role
- Understanding of the type of hours and work requirements
- Stamina is required for event planning; it is not a typical Monday to Friday or a 7-8-hour days; it is long days and varying schedule; need to be prepared for this reality of the professional and industry requirements

Recommendation(s):

- Review curriculum to ensure content is included to prepare students for industry expectations (e.g., long hours, weekends and evenings). Adjust as needed.

How much focus is your organization currently putting on equity, diversity, and inclusion regarding events and what skills are you looking for in this regard for a new graduate?

- Cultural diversity was great to have as an asset to share with team members
- Accessibility awareness – employer developed programs for leaders and so very important for graduates to understand how to incorporate knowledge and practice throughout special event planning.
- Openness to diversity
- Cultural practices
- Organizations are starting to think from a diverse lens and perspective
- Challenging heteronormative/patriarchal culture
- Should we be using pronouns, how to incorporate (e.g., name tags)
- Organizations are moving to incorporate various religious holidays (e.g., Ramadan, meal timing is important)
- RBC Place, the Board went through EDI training and decided to have more diversified Board members
- Weaving EDI into daily operation – recruiting in different place than before with community groups to have a broader reach for recruiting
- Events are becoming more and more diverse (e.g., plant-based menus are more popular)
- Looking at incorporating gender neutral washrooms – from a physical space perspective
- Supplier list is being more diverse to work with various companies (e.g., food and beverage, AV equipment vendors)

- Many associations are going through EDI process (e.g., hiring consultants to advise on this topic and how to 'walk the walk' and 'talk the talk')
- Asking the why, weaving EDI into daily operations

Recommendation(s):

- Review curriculum to ensure equity, diversity and inclusion topics are thread throughout the program. Adjust curriculum as needed. Topics include:
 - Cultural awareness and practices
 - Pronoun use
 - Land acknowledgements

What are the strengths of our current program's structure and content? Areas for improvement?

Program Background

- Program added co-op in 2021
- Full-time F2F delivery
- Full-time online delivery (new as of last year)
- Part-time offering starting in Fall 2023
 - Panel was cautious about online and part-time offerings; concern students would lack social skills required for the industry
 - Review the admission requirements to ensure student fit

Strengths

- Current courses provide strong foundational knowledge

Areas of Improvement

- With a 2-year diploma it is difficult for students to gain experience (especially if a direct entry student)
- Too much focus on weddings as the only type of event; most graduates do not become wedding planners
- Reality of the industry is that it is more profitable to plan different types of events (e.g., business events, corporate events, not for profit, sports, festivals, associations and consumer shows)

Do students need to focus on event design or on design process? What are the industry's thoughts on this?

- Note, up until recently the program was focused on the design aspect but the curriculum has shifted to be more focused on process
- Recent graduates need foundational knowledge about how big a table is, how many people, floor planning; however, do not need to have event concepts or themes (these roles are often contracted out, niche areas of the industry)
- Students should have a foundational understanding of how to work with event/creative designers and the vendor relationships required for a large event (e.g., food and beverage, design elements, audio visual)
- Understanding of reviewing an RFP is important
- Appropriate venue selection to meet the client needs/criteria (e.g., knowing when an event should be in a convention centre versus somewhere smaller)
- Discussed pros and cons of using a tool like [cvent](#) versus the proposal process through a DMO

- **Action:** Kristi Hall to connect with Karen Dowhan about event and DMO.

Recommendation(s):

- Review admission requirements for the program to ensure the right student fit (e.g., should part-time or online have different requirements for recommended preparation).

What types of experiential learning opportunities could we incorporate into our programs? (e.g., placement, co-op, live-client projects, Job Skills for the Future, SILEx)

- Addition of co-op experience is critical for building experience
- Co-op in May-August is not likely to have access to business events due to the season
- Consider flexibility with co-op option during a different time of the year for business events
- Students who start in January take a fall co-op
- Students who start in Fall take a summer co-op
- Fundraising events with not for profit to connect students to volunteer to build experience
- Consider hosting a student competition at a partnership across multiple colleges and host the event at RBC Place
- Consider adding networking events with community and in industry
- SILEx was a large project and now it is a small project that can be done in small groups to plan an event. How important is it that students participate in a large event planning experience vs a small group planning opportunity?
 - Depends on size and scale of the event
 - Depends on the ability to articulate and showcase personal contributions toward the group event
 - Importance of students having the ability to communicate what they did and how they did the project (e.g., showcase during an interview)
 - Consider working with industry to monitor and gauge the success of the event
 - It is optional to link the project to a community event currently
 - Creativity is important, but logistics and operations are the more important skill set
 - Consider pushing students into areas for skills development that they may not be as comfortable with (e.g., budgeting, marketing, logistics)

Recommendation(s):

- Consider flexibility with co-op timing during a different time of the year to include different event types.
- Consider incorporating networking events for students with community partners.
- Consider hosting a student competition with other colleges; the winner can host an event at a local event space.

What are recent trends in your industry? (e.g., technology, labour market)

- Equity, diversity and inclusion (see discussion above)
- Tight labour market – retaining the team we currently have, engaging new employees
- Technology – 3D events, virtual technology for tours, hologram use
 - Many are happening in the events industry, but may not be in the London market yet due to budgets required
- Increased costs – food, labour and transportation have increased

- RBC Place is looking at automated processes (e.g., underground parking attendant replaced with gate, robotic vacuuming)
- Association meeting point of view – how to create a unique experience, welcoming, engaged
- Sustainability (e.g., incorporating planting trees as part of a business event, net neutral conferences, entire city events are invested in sustainable initiatives)
- Data driven decision making – what is the ROI when planning an event
- Movement of hybrid events – especially due to COVID
- Showcasing local food, diverse foods (e.g., plant-based menus)
- Social media is part of everyday life now – its less of a trend and part of regular business operations
- Use of LinkedIn works better than Twitter now for corporate events – this will be dependent on the audience and type of event

Recommendation(s):

- Recommendation for this section?

Meeting Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 pm.

Employer Survey – Sent February 2023, 2 Replies

Response 1

1. Please share your name and organization.

"Events by Sharon"

2. What are the key characteristics, knowledge and skills you are seeking in a recent graduate?

"time management, computer, graphic design"

3. Based on your experience with graduates of the program employed at your organization, what are some key strengths that they possess? Areas for improvement?

"computer, graphic design"

4. How much focus is your organization currently putting on equity, diversity, and inclusion regarding events and what skills are you looking for in this regard for a new graduate?

"I am a solo entrepreneur and I am happy to work with anyone with the skills I require"

5. What are the strengths of our current program's structure and content? Areas for improvement?

No response

6. What types of experiential learning opportunities could we incorporate into our programs? (e.g., placement, co-op, live-client projects, Job Skills for the Future, SILEx)

"Live Client projects, volunteer work on events leading up to event day"

7. What are recent trends in your industry? (e.g., technology, labour market)

"My event association is very big on sustainable events"

Response 2

1. Please share your name and organization.

Children's Health Foundation

2. What are the key characteristics, knowledge and skills you are seeking in a recent graduate? Single line text.

organized, strategic, creative, outgoing, personable and marketer.

3. Based on your experience with graduates of the program employed at your organization, what are some key strengths that they possess? Areas for improvement?

Not sure I can answer that as we've not hired any graduates from the program. I have interviewed a few graduates and it came down to experience on why I didn't hire them.

4. How much focus is your organization currently putting on equity, diversity, and inclusion regarding events and what skills are you looking for in this regard for a new graduate?

We have a focus on equity, diversity and inclusion for our events. We need the students to be aware of the communities in our area and ensure they know about their culture.

5. What are the strengths of our current program's structure and content? Areas for improvement?

I think you cover all the pertinent information but it comes down to experience for us. Encourage volunteering.

6. What types of experiential learning opportunities could we incorporate into our programs? (e.g., placement, co-op, live-client projects, Job Skills for the Future, SILEx)

I think there needs to be a placement and co-op. This industry is fast paced and you won't get the feel for it unless you're in it.

7. What are recent trends in your industry? (e.g., technology, labour market)

Technology is huge for us but we've also watch the labour market as well.