



2019 CATE Award for Research on Teacher Education

Dennis Sumara

In recognition of Dennis Sumara's exceptional contributions to and leadership of research on teacher education over his career, both within Canada and internationally.

First and foremost, Dennis Sumara is an exceptional scholar in education. Indeed, Dennis is one of Canada's most distinguished researchers on teachers, teaching and teacher education. Over three decades, Dennis has made substantial research and scholarly contributions in curriculum and instruction, in such areas as phenomenological approaches to the teaching of literature and literacy; the development and articulation of queer theory and research on gender and sexuality in teaching and teacher education; applications of constructivism and progressive approaches to curriculum in teacher education and schooling. The resultant corpus of Dennis's work – spanning over one hundred and forty scholarly publications, books, monographs and major articles and chapters — has had a major impact on teacher education and the reform of teaching in Canadian education more generally. His contributions to teacher education research are widely adopted and well recognised in North American and international communities.

Dennis Sumara's early scholarly work was recognized by The Canadian Association of Curriculum Studies Dissertation of the Year Award for his work *Literary Imagination and the Curriculum*. His book *Why Reading Literature in School Still Matters: Imagination, Interpretation, Insight*, was recognized for excellence with an Ed Fry Book Award at the National Reading Conference (USA). Three of his books have been widely adopted

at several universities across Canada for pre-service and graduate education: 1) *Engaging Minds: Changing Teaching for Complex Times* (First, Second, & Third Editions), 2) *Complexity and Education: Inquiries Into Learning, Teaching and Research*, and 3) *Action Research as a Living Practice*. A highly sought after expert on Teacher Education, Dennis Sumara has accepted over 35 invitations as a keynote speaker on diverse topics such as *Literary Engagements As Purposeful Pedagogy*, *Complexity Science and Initial Teacher Education*, *Fitting Teacher Education in/to/for an Increasingly Complex World*, and *Leading Educational Institutions In Complex Times*. Dennis Sumara's leadership and contribution to the International scholarly community continues to grow and have impact through the organization of several conferences in Curriculum Studies and by establishing and serving as the Founding Editor of the peer reviewed journal, *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies*, currently in its 16th Volume, and co-editor of the *Journal of Curriculum Studies* for four years.

Over his career, Dr. Sumara has worked in five different faculties of education across three provinces, and has constantly broadened his research perspective and influence. At *Simon Fraser*, he led the development of cohort-based teacher education in inner city schools. He also established participatory action-research projects with teachers in their classrooms. While at *York University*, Dennis contributed to an inclusive teacher education curriculum that drew from his research in complexity theory and anti-oppressive education. At the *University of Alberta*, Dennis built on his earlier leadership in foundational education courses and led the development of new curriculum and pedagogical approaches to teacher education. As *Head of the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy at UBC*, Dennis reshaped the teacher education and graduate programs to reflect a more complex, inclusive, and interdisciplinary structure. As has been his practice throughout his career, Dr. Sumara was guided by his research in complexity thinking and teacher education to create more inclusive conditions for learning.

Second, Dennis is an exceptional leader in Teacher Education.

Dennis's diverse research, teaching and leadership experiences across Canada laid the groundwork for his leadership of the Werklund School of Education. From 2009 – 2019, Dennis Sumara led a change in the research culture, activity and impact of collective scholarship in Teacher Education that has raised the Research Reputation of Werklund School of Education to the top 5 of the U15 Faculties of Education in Canada. Dennis Sumara led significant change and innovation in the Werklund School of Education during his decade as Dean. It was through Dennis's leadership that the Werklund School of Education became the first named faculty of education in Canada, and attracted a significant philanthropic gift of 25 million dollars that have been strategically invested in academic, research and community priorities, such as awards for doctoral students, undergraduate students, and postdoctoral scholars, investments in Werklund professorships, hiring new academic staff, Excellence in Teaching Awards, graduate supervision, research and support staff awards, Teaching and learning and research grants, and Student initiative funds.

As Dean, Dennis also engaged in fund development in the community, and enthusiastically shared our aspirational goals and vision for changing teacher education, and invited diverse individuals to invest their time, talent and treasure in the School's vision. Dennis secured an additional \$20 million in external funding for several new initiatives that he championed, including the Werklund Foundation Centre for Youth Leadership Education, the Imperial Oil STEM in Education Initiative, the Carlson Family ADHD Research Award, the Canadian Oilsands Early Math Learning Initiative, and the Silver Gummy Research Chair in Masculinities Studies. Each initiative directly impacts teacher education in provincial, national and international communities. In the last 10 years, 10 new research chairs and professors have been recruited, along with 53 new tenure-stream faculty members, 18 new staff members, all in priority areas aligned with the faculty's and university's Strategic Academic Plans. With Dr. Sumara's leadership, the Werklund School of Education has recruited 18 new post-doctoral fellows, a notable achievement for a Canadian Faculty of Education.

Finally, Dennis is an outstanding researcher in Teacher Education *because* he is an exceptional teacher.

As the Dean, Dennis Sumara led development of several new undergraduate and graduate programs in teacher education, educational research and psychology, that have increased student engagement and success. He has led the newly designed BEd program that allows for direct entry of students from high schools, as well as the first Community-Based BEd program in Western Canada that allows students from rural and remote locations to engage in teacher education from their home communities. Dennis has led implementation of newly designed, flexibly delivered and highly attractive professional masters and doctoral programs with more than 1,300 students currently enrolled, that impact schools, school jurisdictions, diverse work contexts and community organizations both nationally and internationally via distinguished graduates who lead innovation and change in leadership, teaching and teacher education, and educational psychology.

Dennis Sumara's mobilisation and sponsorship of the Werklund School of Education, of his academic colleagues, his leadership in rethinking and reworking research on teacher education has had a major impact not just on Calgary and Alberta schools and teachers, but has also had a visible role in 'changing the subject' of education In Canada and around the globe. Dennis Sumara has systematically refocused our understanding of conventional, albeit progressive, approaches to teacher education into dynamic, innovative and challenging approaches to teacher education in Canada. He has deliberately brought issues of diversity, inclusion and interdisciplinarity into teacher education, with a centrepiece focus on Indigenous issues, provoking curriculum, and promoting excellence in teacher education.

In the words of one referee: *"There are indeed many fine Canadian scholars and researchers in teacher education of Dr. Sumara's generation; and many teacher educators who have 'successfully' transitioned to Deanships, Provost positions and so forth. But there are very few who have translated the principled heart and soul of their scholarship and research not just into*

grants and publications, but into the reformation of a field and the remaking of the very practices, procedures and experiences of teacher education for this next generation of young Canadian teachers. Dr. Dennis Sumara has made a unique and genuine lifetime contribution to Canadian teacher education and to the field of education that warrants this esteemed recognition.”