

# Foreword

**Sarah Watts-Rynard**

Polytechnics Canada

As I consider this special issue, the word that comes to mind is resilience. According to the Oxford Dictionary, resilience is the “capacity to withstand or to recover quickly from difficulties.” Over the past several months, “withstand” and “recover” have been particularly relevant skills.

As an advocate of the polytechnic model of education in Canada, my day-to-day work involves conversations with policymakers in Ottawa. Because post-secondary education is a matter of provincial jurisdiction, federal officials rarely understand how policy decisions in one department undermine the goals of another. The impact of international student policy on the ability to produce work-ready graduates for high-demand roles is a relevant example. Some days, resilience seems like a high bar.

Yet, as I read about how polytechnic educators are preparing learners for a shifting world of work, I can’t help but be inspired. The research to understand what a new generation of students will need to thrive at work is informing partnerships, curricula and pedagogical approaches.


While each generation comes with unique ambitions and lived experiences, all require educators adept at passing along practical knowledge and creating opportunities to develop key skills. The ability to develop both competence and confidence in polytechnic students is not simply a matter of dusting off last year’s curriculum for each new cohort.

The world of work is changing and, with it, the skills required for success. Graduates will need more than technical proficiency. They will be expected to exhibit sound judgement and self-management skills, common sense and the ability to navigate team dynamics. In addition to these longstanding skills for workplace success, a new one has emerged. Today, learners need the capacity to live with uncertainty and thrive despite it. In other words, they need to be resilient, flexible and confident in their own capacity to rise to whatever occasion presents itself.

This issue of the journal illustrates that the hard work to ensure polytechnic education meets this threshold is actively underway. Resilience in action.

## Author’s Note

**Sarah Watts-Rynard** assumed the role of Chief Executive Officer at Polytechnics Canada in July 2018. Polytechnics Canada is the voice of leading research-intensive, publicly funded polytechnics, colleges and institutes of technology. The organization is involved in federal advocacy related to skills and innovation policy, reflecting the strengths of its member institutions. Sarah chairs the CWB Foundation Board of Directors and is Vice-Chair of the Canadian Centre for Women in Science, Engineering, Trades and Technology (WinSETT Centre).

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