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Editorial: Building and valuing relationships

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After just over eight years, this is my last editorial as Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal’s editor-in-chief. During that time, we have published more than 165 articles, with over 88,000 full article downloads and 304,000 abstract views from our journal website. This represents a huge effort by and for network members, and I’d like to give a personal thanks to all the authors, reviewers, editors and readers who have built this journal up to become an established part of the Researching, Advancing and Inspiring Student Engagement (RAISE) network.

I’m sure that everyone reading this will want to join me in thanking Katrina Ingram, who has been the editorial assistant over the same period and who is also stepping down after this issue. Katrina has embodied the supportive, developmental approach of the journal editorial board and has made the development of the journal possible. It is excellent news that Ella Dyer will be taking over this role and continuing to keep the journal running smoothly. Kiu Sum and Stuart Sim will be taking over as editors-in-chief and have many plans to make the journal bigger and better, so there is much more development to come. Keep writing, and reading, about student engagement!

Our usual student voice section is a book review this time: [Xiuxiu Bao](https://sehej.raise-network.com/raise/article/view/1379) has reviewed *‘University and You: Strengthen your skills and develop your potential’*: by Catriona Wilson and Rebecca Wilson from the perspective of a student. Will you read it, or recommend it to students? The review will help you make up your mind.

Case studies have always been an important part of the journal’s developmental approach, as an opportunity to publish about a smaller project or get something out there quickly. We only have two this issue, but they are quite different from one another. [Nicole Patrie and Fiona Gironella](https://sehej.raise-network.com/raise/article/view/1251) describe the development of community engagement projects which enabled students to undertake an equivalent of field-based learning during the pandemic. There is much to take away here for a range of situations where students can be working on live or community projects, and not just the emergency case where external placements are not possible. In a completely different discussion, [Zoë Allman](https://sehej.raise-network.com/raise/article/view/1365) presents a way to capture student voice from a range of stakeholders, including, hopefully, those who don’t always volunteer for focus groups and similar activities. They selected statements to describe twelve risks, previously identified by the Office for Students in the UK, that may affect a student’s opportunity to access, succeed in and beyond higher education. These were presented in a public place and participants were asked to select the three most pertinent to students at that university.

The nine longer articles in this issue span a very wide range of student engagement topics. [Spencer and Rayner](https://sehej.raise-network.com/raise/article/view/1227) use co-created mixed methods to explore the lived experiences of the support offered to LGBTQ+ students in a large UK university, and make several recommendations for practice development more generally. One aspect of this was the importance of building trust, something also developed in a large study by [Benander and Kramer](https://sehej.raise-network.com/raise/article/view/1254) which used the idea of anonymous weekly check-ins which asked students about their emotional wellness and which were followed by a debriefing from the teacher and which seem to have a positive impact on engagement and overall feeling that the teacher cared about them. Possibly providing a way to think about the issues raised in these two papers, [Jones and Sweeney](https://sehej.raise-network.com/raise/article/view/1240) present the Psychosocial and Academic Trust Alienation (PATA) theory as a framework for understanding student engagement in Higher Education. The PATA theory suggests that a student's self-concept and self-esteem influence their trust in educational systems, which in turn affects their engagement.

SEHEJ is a journal which privileges the student perspective on engagement, but staff perceptions are clearly important in relationship-building and student engagement. Exploring this, we have a second article in this collection from [Caroline Jones](https://sehej.raise-network.com/raise/article/view/1370), this time with Huw Bell, which brings together teacher and professional services staff views to make recommendations about the social and relational practices that staff would prefer to see in their work. The student perspective is presented from Finland in this issue, where [Siklander et al](https://sehej.raise-network.com/raise/article/view/1226) have worked with newly arrived international students to investigate their approaches to engagement and the relationship to students own goals and previous experiences.

Putting some of these kinds of approaches into practice, healthcare students contributed to a framework for embedding Emotional Intelligence into the curriculum of a British university programme as reported by [Uzma Abid Siddiqui](https://sehej.raise-network.com/raise/article/view/1204). Engagement featured in both the design and the implementation of the resulting framework. And [David Forrest et al](https://sehej.raise-network.com/raise/article/view/1250) evaluate a scheme to encourage students from historically underserved backgrounds to carry out internships as experts through a Knowledge Exchange scheme for undergraduates, A significant majority of the students reported feeling able to connect their academic skills to practical tasks and gain confident in their own abilities.

Bringing technology into the discussion about building relationships, two articles explore the potential impact of gamification and emojis, respectively, on student engagement. [Amanda Shaker and Christopher Brignell](https://sehej.raise-network.com/raise/article/view/1250) consider how gamification can help students to focus on their goals and break down learning into manageable tasks, among other things. Trialling an approach in both a UK and an Australian university, they found impact on student experience, but no significant impact on outcomes on the whole (there was one exception which you can read about in the article!). [Tessa Graftdijk and colleagues](https://sehej.raise-network.com/raise/article/view/1358) carried out a delightful investigation using emojis, memes, and GIFs and their use in communications between staff and students, and make some specific suggestions about their use – you may be surprised by the findings 😊 .

Enjoy the issue, and I hope that it inspires you to make changes in your own practice, and also research your impact for future publication in SEHEJ. We welcome new authors and reviewers at all times, so do consider getting involved if you have time. The journal is run by network members for network members, and all are welcome to contribute.