The Overpatch: Learning in a Cohort

I chose the Overpatch, Learning in a Cohort, as we use the cohort model of education at FNTI. Tony Tilly’s words resonated with me, when he spoke of the class being more than the sum of its parts. The group identity that develops when individual students start to make connections with each other, learn with each other, share positive experiences and struggles with each other is, as he states, “…visible, audible, palpable.” Needing to belong is a fundamental human need. We all need a sense of belonging, a sense of being connected to others. The cohort model of education helps to create this.

In Tony’s words, when speaking of cohorts at Fleming College: “The class started as a collection of individuals.  Gradually connections built up and the identity of, for example, “the Class of 2017”, emerged.  Students identify so clearly with their graduating class and with the array of struggles and accomplishments that went into creating it.  That is visible, audible, palpable. I believe that a graduating class at Fleming carries with them something that goes beyond the curriculum’s learning outcomes specified in terms of knowledge and skills.  They take the energizing experience they have had of working together, one that they want to feel again in their working lives. That is a secret ingredient of the “cohort” approach to creating a college program and a college class.  That class is created on paper by an enrolment plan, a curriculum, and a schedule.  It is created in reality by the faculty, staff and students who contribute to its development and identity.”