
No looking back

Presentation for CAUCE 2025 Conference

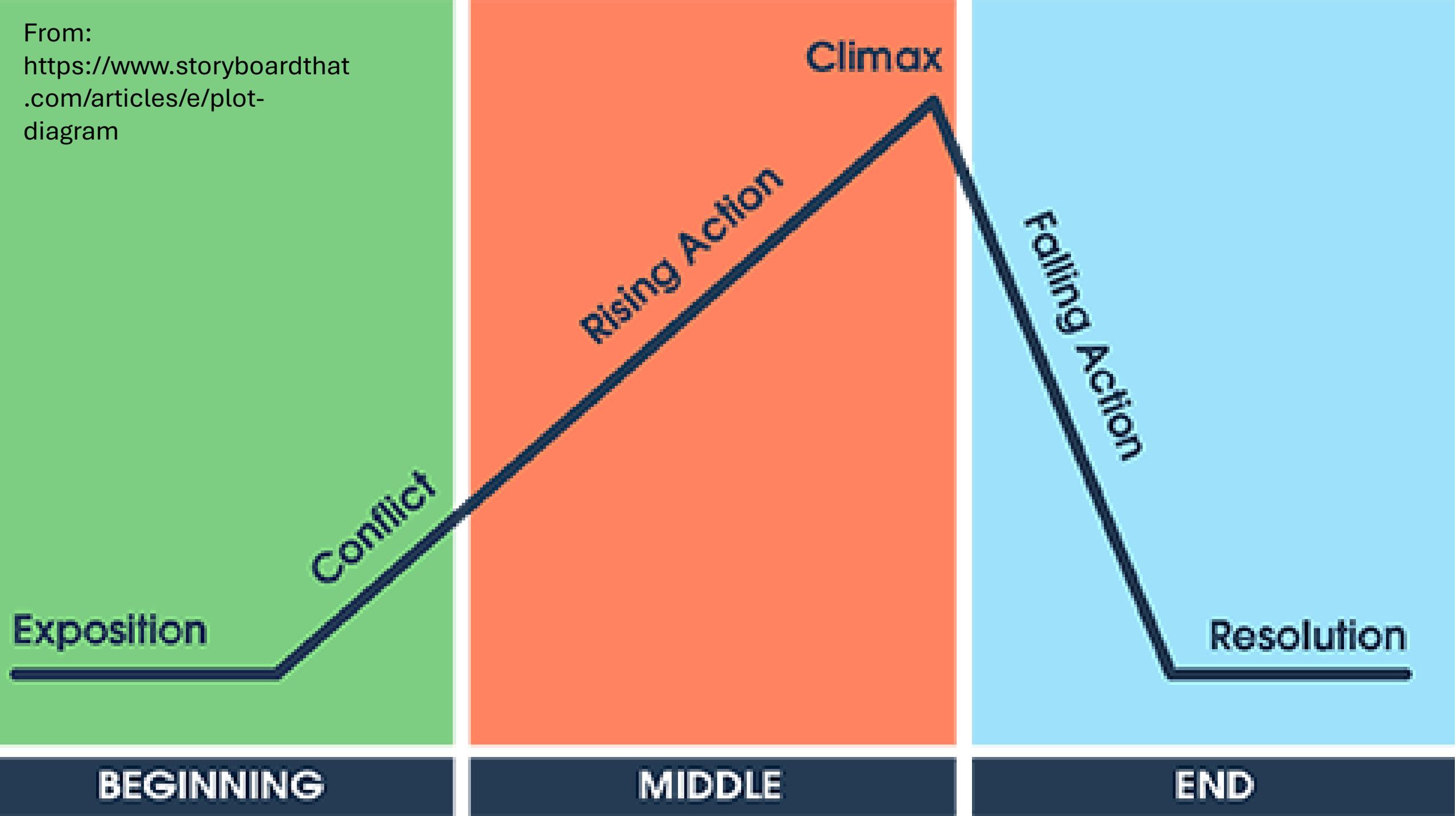
- *Derek Tannis, McGill University*
 - *Terumi Taylor, University of Calgary*
 - *Ewa Wasniewski, University of Calgary*
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Transforming continuing education student services one mode (and season) at a time

- Sharing “stories” of transformation
- *Exposition & Conflict*
- *Rising Action & Climax*
- *Falling Action & Resolution*



From:
<https://www.storyboardthat.com/articles/e/plot-diagram>



Climax

Rising Action

Falling Action

Conflict

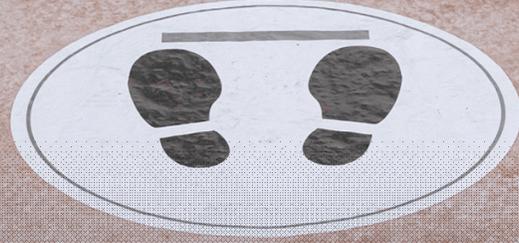
Exposition

Resolution

BEGINNING

MIDDLE

END



**Exposition:
Post-pandemic
realities**

University of Calgary Continuing Education

- Department status (with AVP)
- Over 80 personal and professional development non-credit programs, including micro-credentials
- 21,000+ learners with approximately 41,000+ registrations (Academic Year 2024)
- 80% of programs are offered online, with 44% of sections offered in person
- The average student age is 35, with 64.2% of enrollments being Canadian
- Student Information System- Lifelong Learning and Extended Education (Modern Campus)



UCalgary Programming Areas

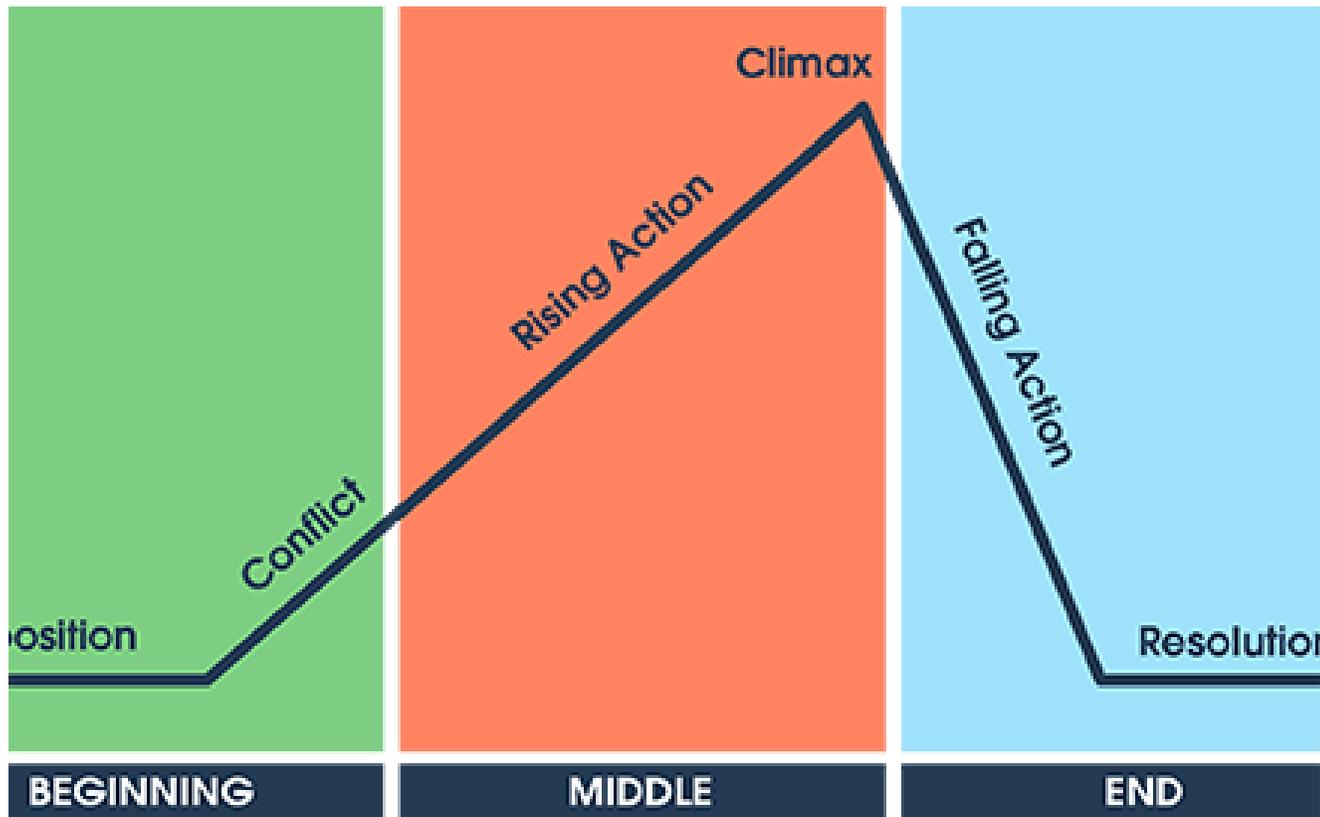
-  Academic Preparation
 -  Adult Learning, Career Development and Advising
 -  Art and Design
 -  Business and Professional Management
 -  Computer and Information Technology
 -  English as a Second Language
 -  Health, Safety and Environment
 -  Indigenous
 -  Languages
 -  Leadership and Coaching
 -  Personal Enrichment
 -  Teaching Second Languages
 -  Writing
-

McGill University School of Continuing Studies

- Faculty status (with Dean)
- 42 credit and non-credit programs with admissions in multiple fields of study
- 6,500 + learners with approximately 20,000 registrations (Academic Year 2024)
- 11 online programs
- 75% of students aged 30+
- Approximately 80% Quebec residents for credit programs, serving a largely newcomer population
- Student Information System- Lifelong Learning and Extended Education (Modern Campus) for non-credit activities and Banner (Ellucian) for credit activities

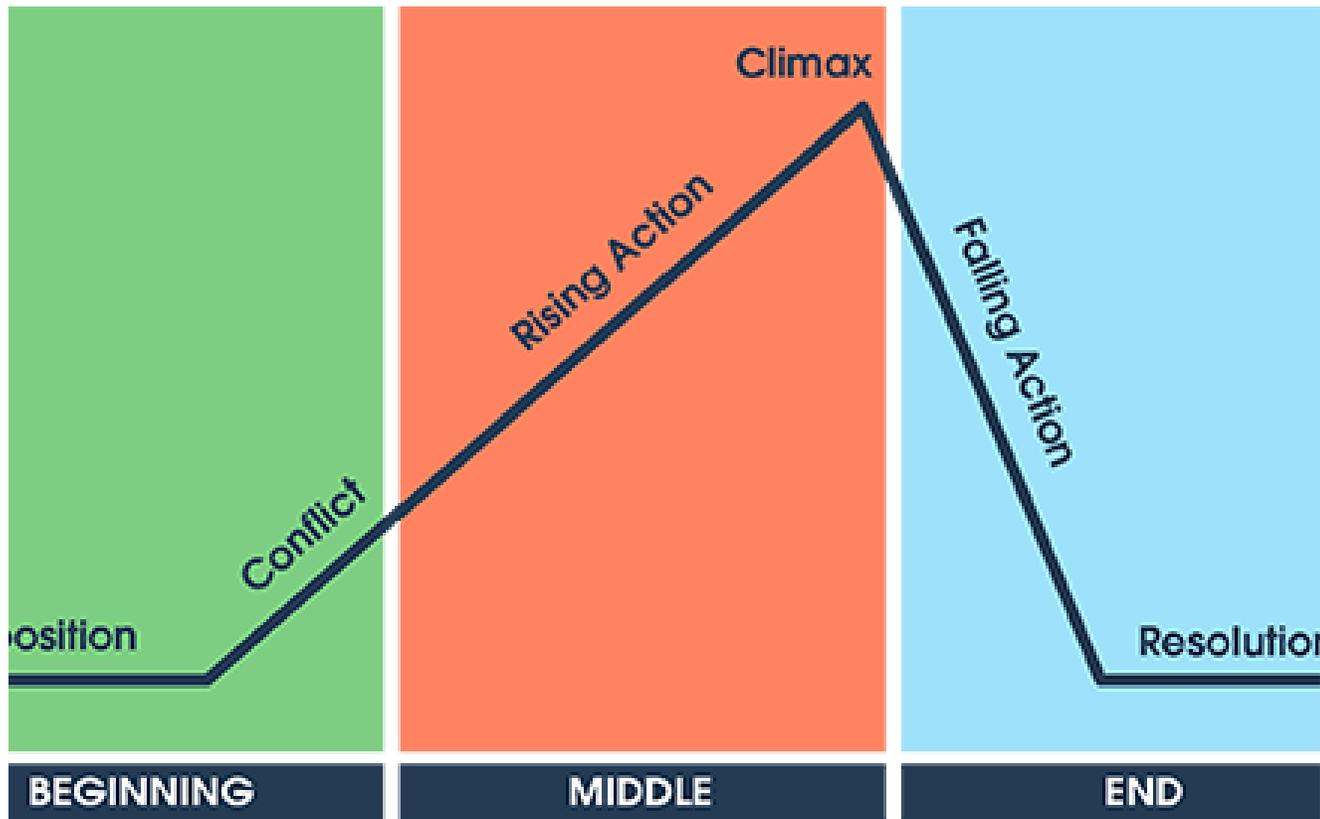


Exposition & Conflict: Scenarios



- Dramatic reduction in demand for in-person service and strong desire for online self-service
- Students frustrated by having to go through (flooded) email and phone lines, with no automated system to reduce junk mail/streamline email
- All service modes/channels open, from 9 – 5 PM, with skewed workload, inconsistent supports for self-service for all programs and courses
- Siloed culture within and across units with individuals singularly holding information / decision-making / access to systems

Exposition & Conflict: Discussion



- Do these scenarios resemble what you have experienced in your institution post-pandemic? What was similar or different?
- How have you responded to the scenario(s) you have found your organization in?

Exposition & Conflict: What we did

University of Calgary

- Increased program repackaging, doubling offerings and lifecycle of programs
- Focused on technology to go digital
- Assessed impact of flat structure
- Recognized impact of information gate keeping
- Addressed frictions in returning to campus
- Governance program approval realignment

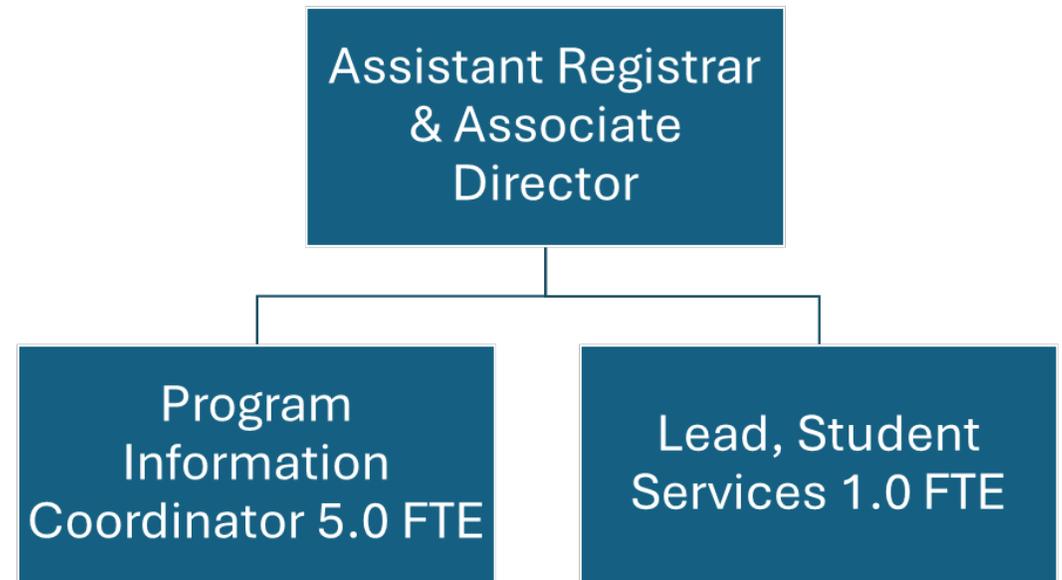
University of McGill

- Completed SCS 3.0 (academic restructuring of the school)
- Consolidated of pre-pandemic planning
- Appreciative Inquiry divisional planning
- Clarified of mandate for renewal/restructuring
- Integrated of “Interim Work From Home” plan
- Normalized online service options

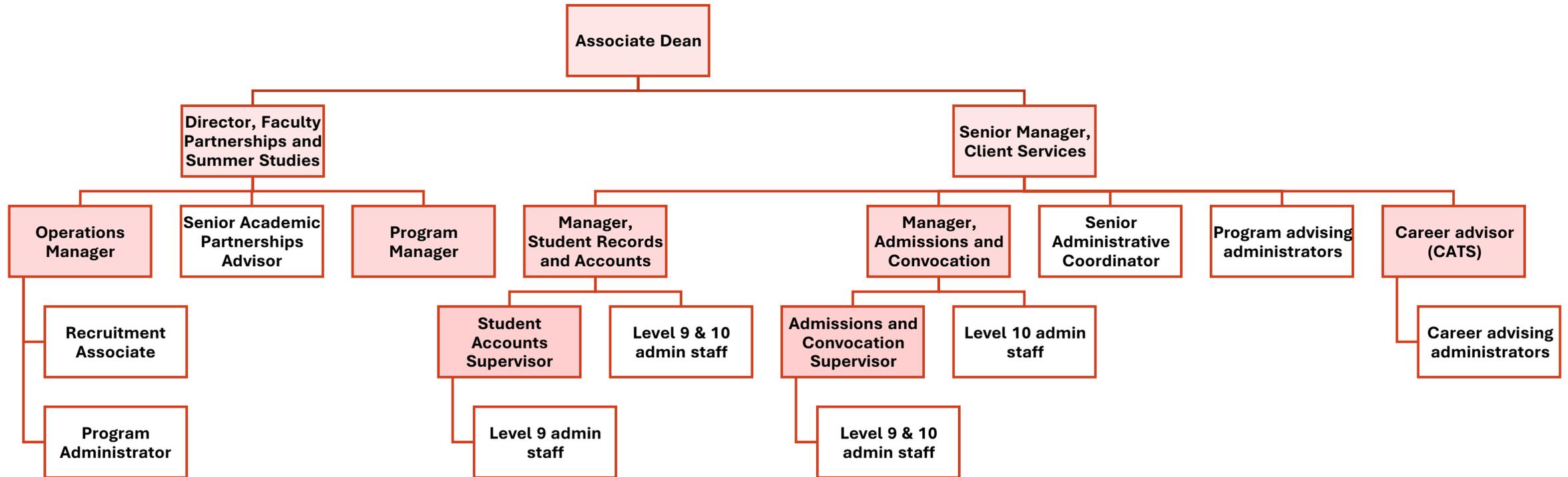
Exposition: University of Calgary Structure Before “Rising Action”

Each staff was a program specialist – with little information sharing. Each person was a SPOF – Single Point of Failure.

ELP has a small dedicated team (2-4 FTEs) to manage student enrollments, agents, and Home Stay.



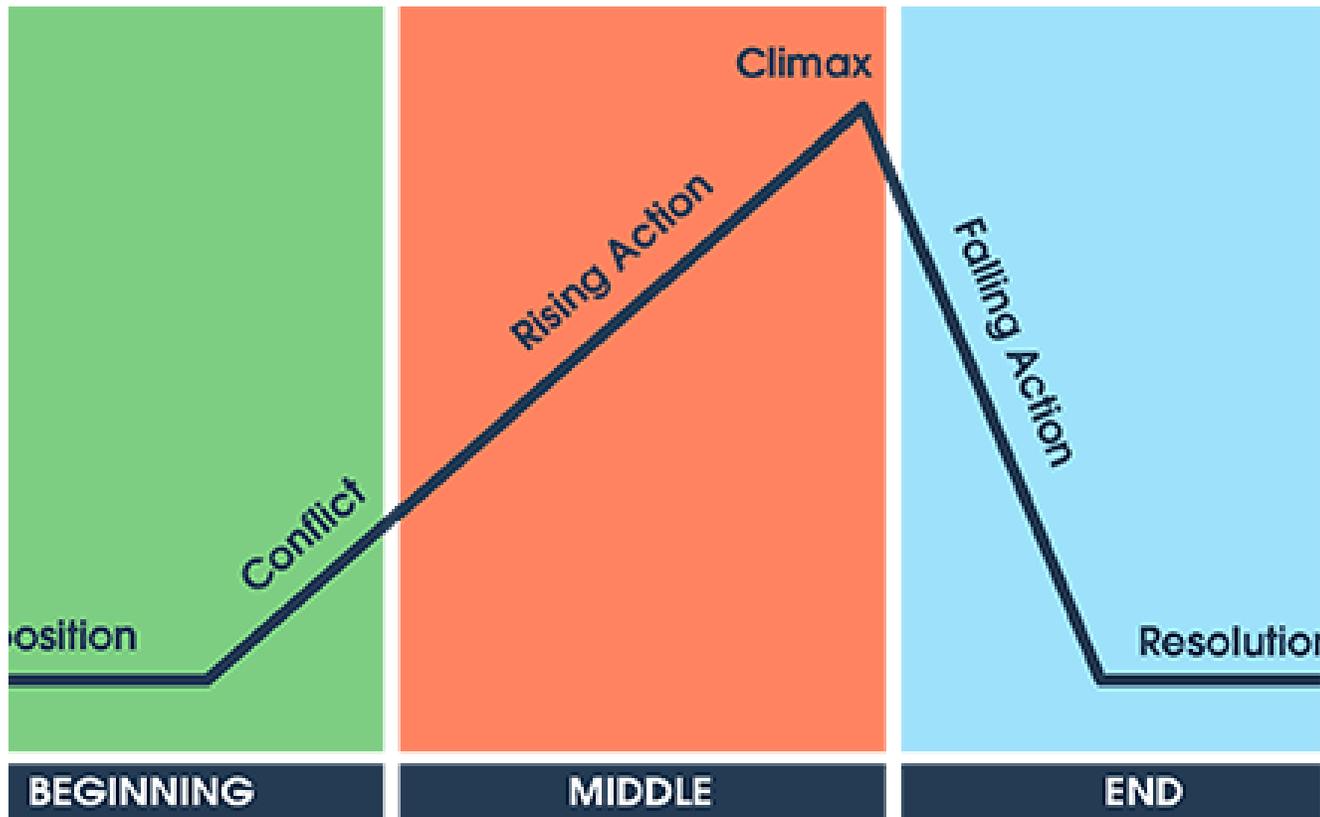
Exposition: McGill University (Client Services, FPSS, CATS)



30+ staff, including 3 faculty (with Associate Dean)

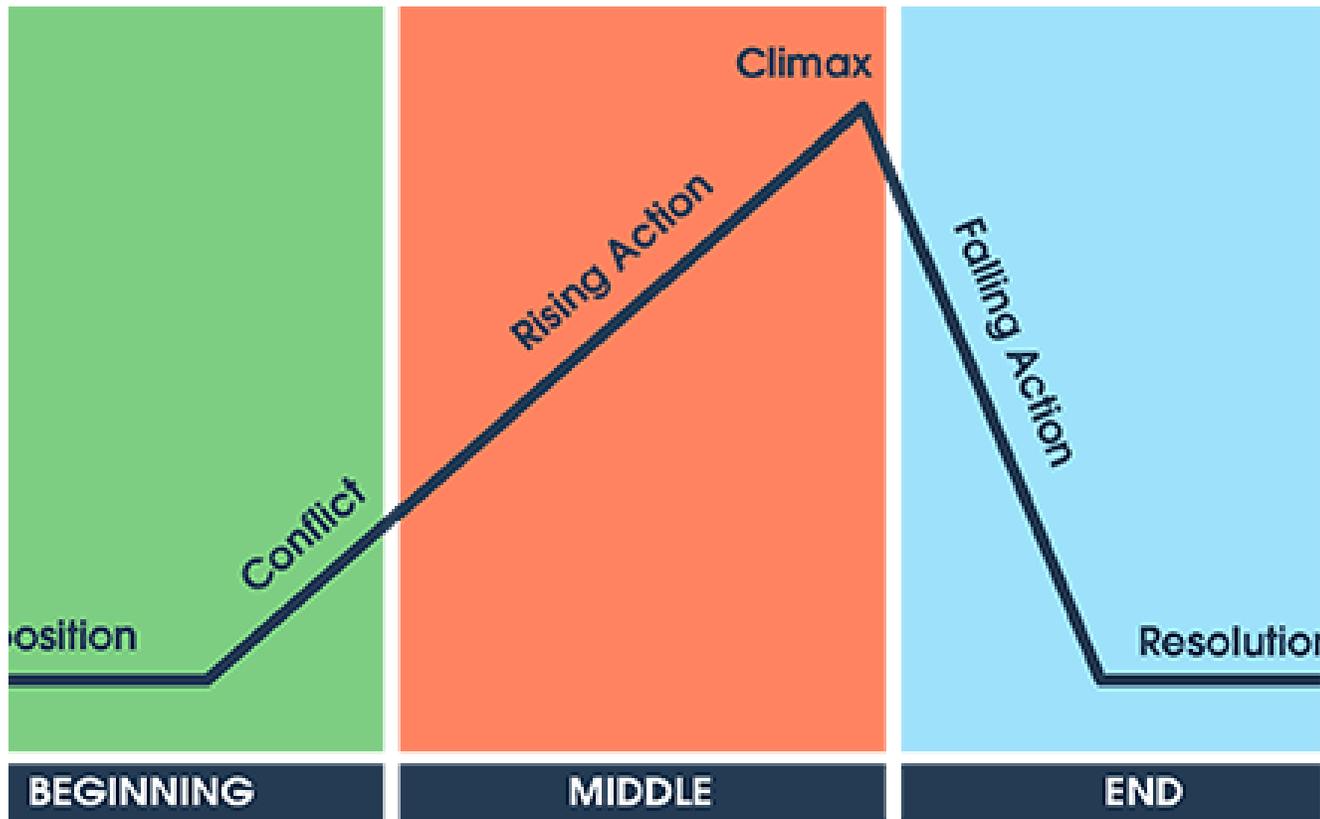
Unevenly distributed roles across the division without clear roles and written procedures

Rising Action & Climax: Scenarios



- No updates to job descriptions for years (10+) and management roles were unbalanced across the division
- Positions were intertwined, without clear definitions of roles and lack of alignment with school structure
- Staff who were previously specialists needing to learn other skills for general business and program knowledge.
- Staff who were previously specialists needing to share tasks with the team and ensure there were no *single points of failure*.

Rising Action & Climax: Discussion



- Do these scenarios resemble what you have experienced in your institution? What was similar or different?
- How have you responded to the scenario(s) you have found your organization in?

Rising Action & Climax: What we did

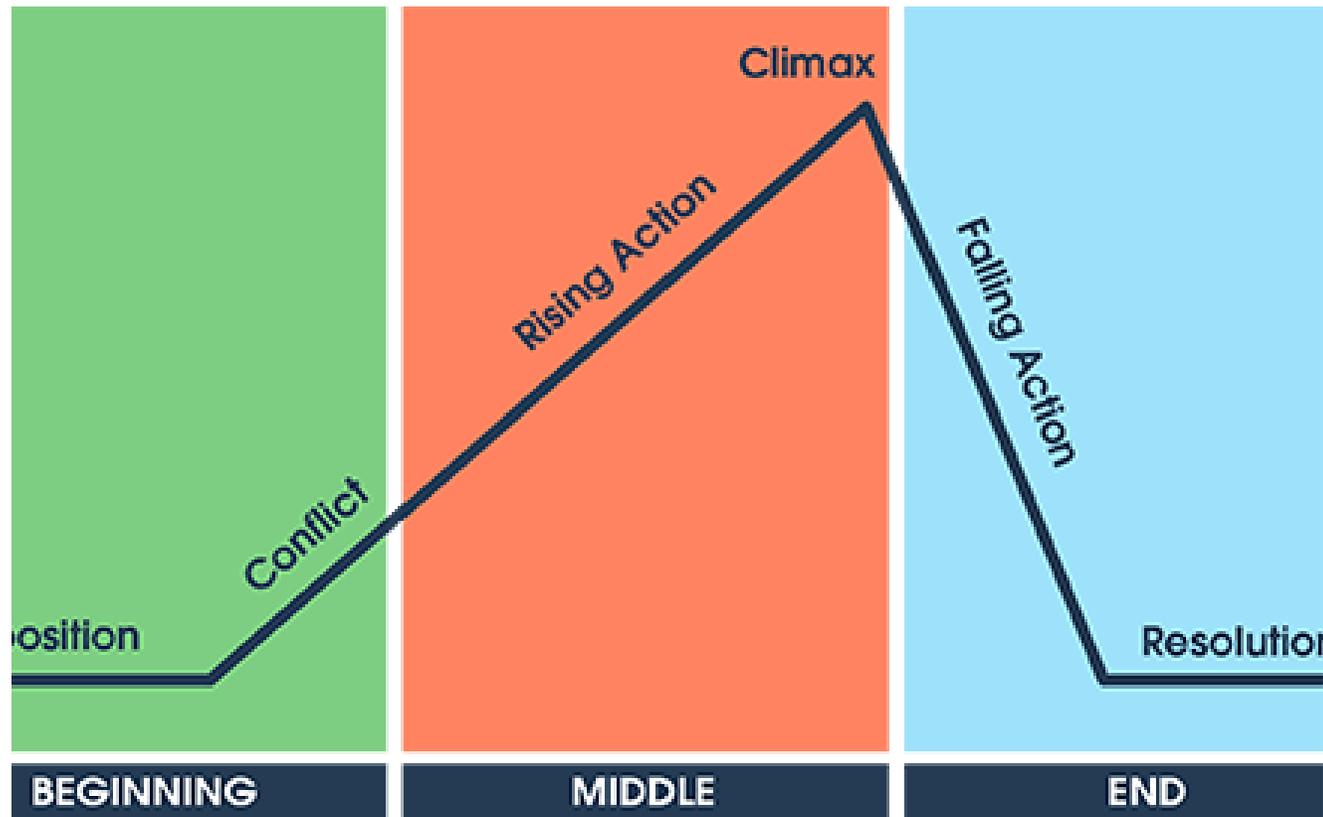
University of Calgary

- Move from specialists to generalists in an adapted, hybrid work environment
- Move to online services and digital work environment, with shared documentation
- Revised job roles and developed hierarchical structure to enable professional growth and improve retention
- Allowed for variations in response and planned differently according to the needs of the team
- Introduce a chatbot

University of McGill

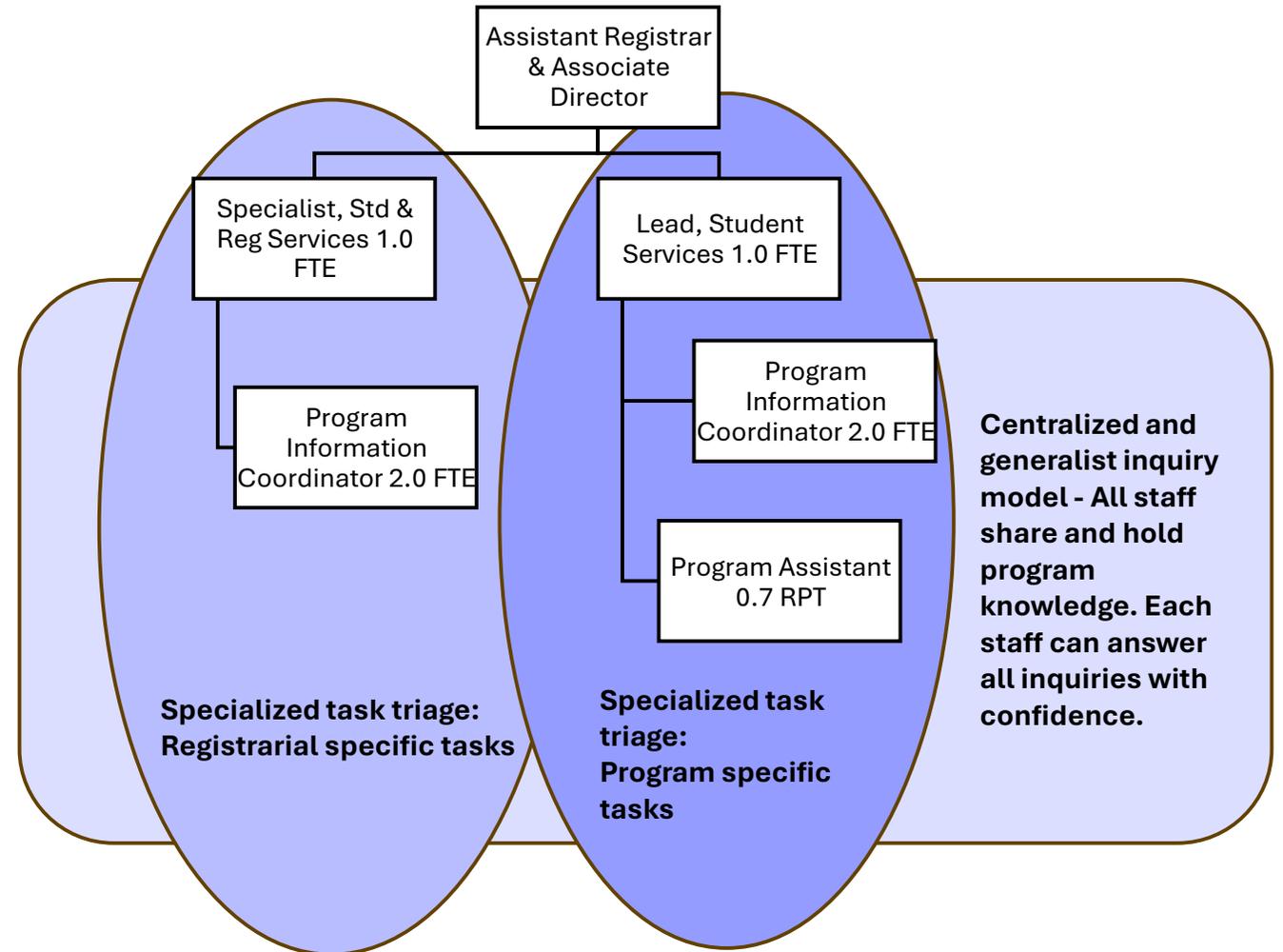
- Set up our “Student Success and Advising Renewal Initiative”
- Began a comprehensive process of position reviews
- Created an IT Road Map for student and enrolment services
- Held multiple staff planning retreats
- Started the school-wide Student Advising, Recruitment, and Retention Committee
- Undertook an internal audit

Falling Action & Resolution: Scenarios



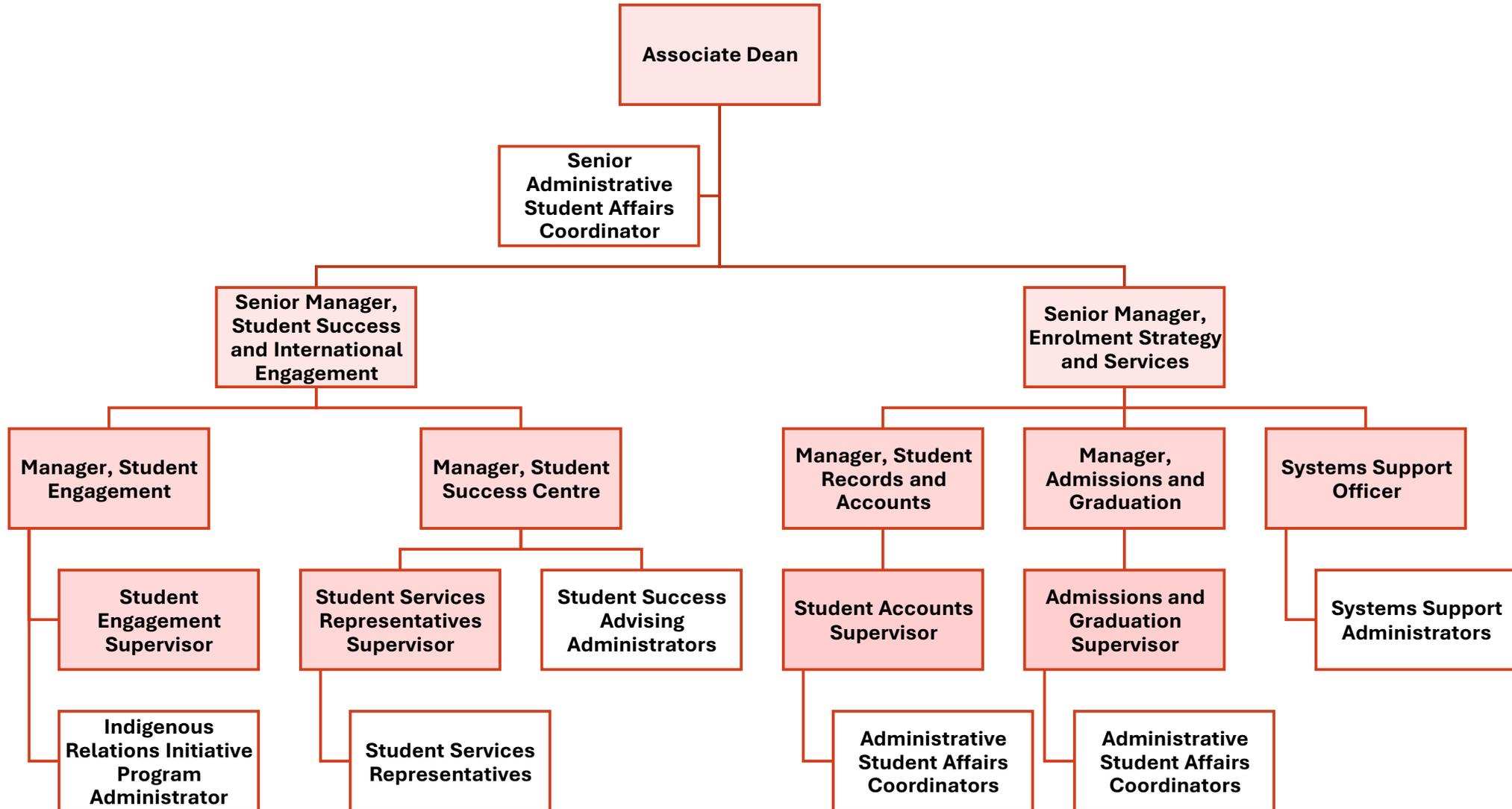
- Implemented renewed roles and structure
- Adopted and adapted to new technology
- Turned on multiple modes of communication and adapted workloads
- Began process to measure impact of changes and shift in service modes

University of Calgary: Post- restructuring



ELP has stayed the same with a small dedicated team (2-4 FTEs) to manage student enrollments, agents, and Home Stay.

McGill: Post-restructuring and the “Student Success Centre”



Multi-mode service delivery



Falling Action & Resolution:

What are we noticing that is different now?

University of Calgary

- Improved retention
- Improved documentation
- Stronger nodes of knowledge within several team members
- Improved sense of vision – less feeling blindsided by programming changes
- Additional and parallel changes to governance impact all teams and staff processes positively

University of McGill

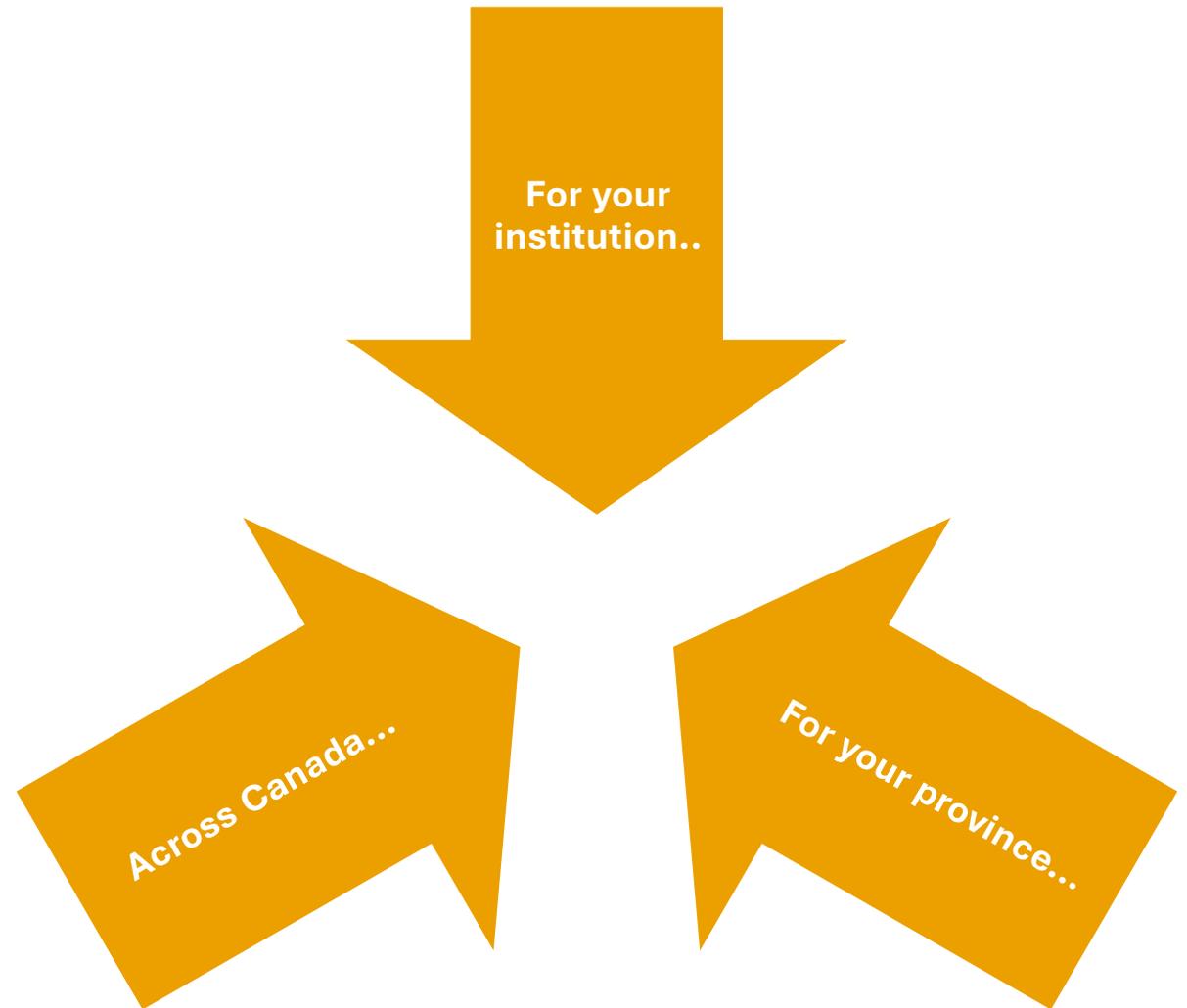
- Improved collaboration/coordination and distributed management oversight within the division and across the school
- Shift in culture toward a more positive, pro-active and interactive engagement with students
- Integrating new/ updating use of systems with a focus on governance, efficiency in communications, privacy / confidentiality, knowledge management and improved access at all levels in the organization

This is a series, not a movie...
What do you think the next season is about?



Note: These are purposefully chosen Canadian streaming providers

What do you think are the “rising action and conflict” of the next season in this series?



Resources

- These two articles are of interest in that they are written 20 years apart and yet speak to a similar theme – one speaks to what is to come in student services innovation and the other speaks to the fact that the innovation is here, and here to stay:
 - Bouchey, B. Gratz, E., & Kurland, S. (2022). Meeting in the middle: Envisioning post-pandemic, responsive student services. In A. Bower & R. Specht-Boardman (Eds.), *New models of higher education: Unbundled, rebundled, customized, and DIY*. IGI Global Book Series: Advances in Higher Education and Professional Development.
 - Burnett, D. (2002). Innovation in student services: Best practices and process innovation models and trends. In D. Burnett & D. Oblinger (Eds.), *Innovation in student services: Planning for models blending high touch/high tech*. Society for College and University Planning.