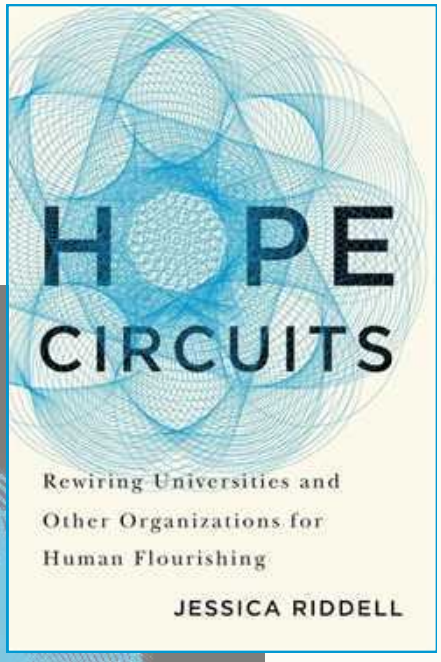
HOPE CIRCUITS

Re-wiring Universities and Other Organizations for Human Flourishing

DR. JESSICA RIDDELL



Dr. Jessica Riddell is a Full Professor of Early Modern Literature at Bishop's University and holds the Stephen A. Jarislowsky Chair of Undergraduate Teaching Excellence. As founder of the Hope Circuits Institute (HCI), she drives systems-change in higher education, focusing on governance, leadership, and student success. In a landscape rife with indictments of broken systems, her work invites people across the post-secondary ecosystem to co-create blueprints for meaningful rewiring that centers justice, equity, and access. Her 2024 book, *Hope Circuits: Rewiring Universities and Other Organizations for Human Flourishing* (McGill-Queen's Press), offers a roadmap for this transformation. A recognized leader, scholar, and educator, she serves on multiple boards and has received numerous awards and grants for teaching and leadership, including the 3M National Teaching Fellowship (Canada's highest recognition of educational leadership), the D2L Innovation Award (the highest recognition of innovation in partnerships), and the Forces Avenir award (Quebec's highest recognition of teaching excellence in higher education). She was also named a Royal Society of Canada College Fellow in 2025.



10 CONCEPTUAL TOOLS

- Slow down and pause
- Surface the systems
- Practise divergent thinking
- Commit to unlearning and relearning
- Live in the questions
- Stay with the trouble
- Reimagine authority and expertise
- Take a systems-level approach
- Change your language, change the world
- Build intentional community

5 MODES OF ORGANIZATIONAL ECOSYSTEMS

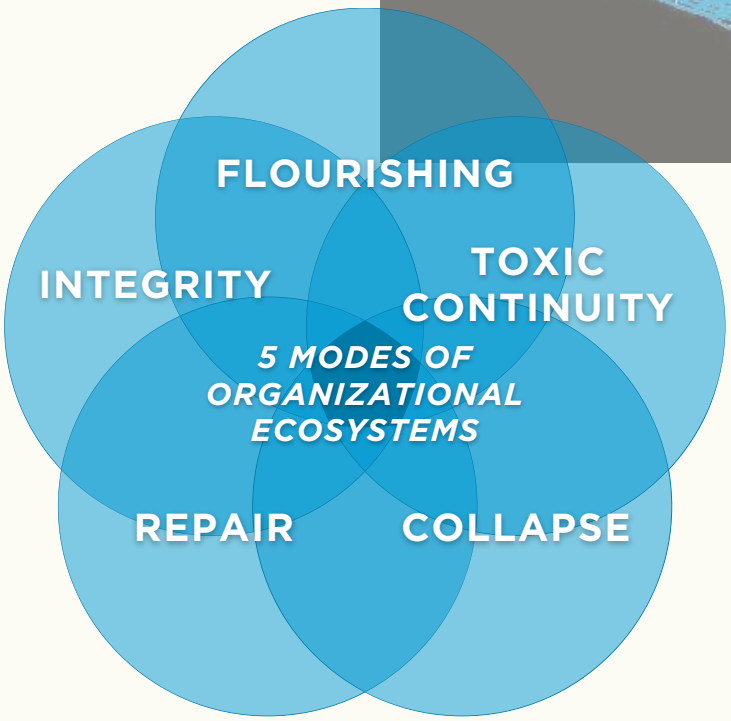
Hope Circuits (Re)Wired: Ecosystemic Approach to Flourishing (forthcoming), outlines five modes of organizational ecosystems in the PSE sector:

FLOURISHING

When an organization or community aligns its mission, vision, and operations, fostering diversity, belonging, and shared purpose.

INTEGRITY

When an organization recognizes the gap between its stated values and actions and works to close it through reflection and action.



REPAIR

After collapse or significant crisis, organizations move into a phase of repair; acknowledging what has happened, there is a focus on recovery, trust building, and building shared vocabulary and governance.

COLLAPSE

In this mode, an organization is in a state of significant crisis (usually a culmination of external and internal stressors), marked by distress and dysfunction. Collegial governance breaks down, trust is broken, and morale across the campus ecosystem is low. However, even in collapse, there is hope for emergence and transformation when the community is willing to stay with the trouble, ask what they can learn, and plant the seeds for something new to emerge from collapse.

TOXIC CONTINUITY

In this mode, there are accumulating stressors (external and internal) that are not addressed with transparency. There is a rise in district over lack of accountability and clarity. Toxic positivity, institutional gaslighting, structural/lateral/relational violence – and a lack of commitment to address structural inequities – creates environments where instability intensifies. Communication breaks down but the organization refuses to acknowledge discomfort or distress within the campus ecosystem. Collapse is inevitable without interventions that can avoid collapse and move into integrity mode.

GUIDE FOR GATHERING

ENSURE ENTHUSIASTIC AND ONGOING CONSENT

Chatham House Rules: candid and confidential; people can express individual opinions, not institutional norms; stories stay, lessons move forward.

ENHANCE PRESENCING

Commit to being connected to gathering without devices or other distractions as much as possible.

LEAD WITH "YES, AND"

Improvise. Build. Stay generative. Make curiosity your default stance.

Try swapping *"Yes, and..."* instead of *"No"* or *"But"* to build on others' ideas – even ones that feel rumbly.

EXERCISE RADICAL KINDNESS

What might it look like if we loosen our assumptions of others—based on past actions, position, or role – and assume good will (acknowledging we don't always show up as our best selves working within broken systems)?

HOLD OPINIONS LIGHTLY & VALUES FIRMLY

Be open to being changed by conversation. Think in *pencil*, not *pen*.

Try saying *"I am going to hold this lightly"* as a generous invitation to examine an idea or issue from multiple lenses.

BE MINDFUL OF POWER DYNAMICS

Name power without shame. Invite play and recentre expertise via lived experience, intersectionality, and/or disciplinary lenses.

EMBRACE NON-LINEARITY

The conversation may not follow a straight line—let it unfold. Trust the organic flow of dialogue and resist the urge to steer too tightly.

FOCUS ON CONNECTION OVER CONTROL

Prioritize trust, relationship, and mutual understanding over rigid outcomes.

Practice: *"I notice..."* or *"I wonder..."* to build threads between contributions.

HOLD SPACE FOR BIG FEELINGS

Hope is capacious—it makes space for anger, confusion, joy, and laughter alike.

BE CURIOUS ABOUT LANGUAGE

Gently surface and explore monolithic or binary language.

Try: "*You mentioned 'us vs. them'—who is included in those groups?*" Invite specificity and nuance and surface false dichotomies.

REFLECTIVE PROMPTS

Opening Prompts

- What's one hope you hold for this year at your institution?
- What is the thing you most love in your work in higher ed?
- What's one thing that brings you joy in your role?

Goal-Setting Prompts

- Where do we see ourselves on the ecosystem map?
- What's one flourishing indicator we've noticed—or hoped for?
- What small intervention could help move us one step closer to flourishing this year?

Small Group Reflection

- What possibilities do we want to nurture?
- How can today's insights shape what we grow together?
- How do we rely on one another to support our mission?

Final Reflection

- What's one way I'm leaving today thinking differently?
- What's one thing I'm committing to bring back to my department/unit?
- What's one thing I'll keep rumbling with?