Teaching and Learning Centre

Looking back, looking ahead | 2017–2018
Director’s message

I came to Simon Fraser University just over a year ago to lead the Teaching and Learning Centre. Since then I have been impressed by the many ways in which TLC staff interact with faculty, academic units and other members of the SFU academic community.

At the same time, I have been left with the unfortunate feeling that this work is often invisible. Although most members of the university community are aware of the TLC, it seems that not everyone understands the breadth and depth of the centre’s activities. This report is our attempt to provide a more complete look at the range and impact of what we do.

The content is organized to highlight the centre’s multi-level approach: we engage with individual instructors and graduate students, but also with academic and service units; and we advance institutional priorities and initiatives through our involvement with working groups, committees and system-wide support structures.

I hope you will come away with at least two insights:

• First, that the workshops and professional development opportunities the centre organizes are just the tip of the iceberg, and that the TLC plays an integral role in supporting all facets of teaching and learning at SFU.

• Second, that the work of the TLC is fundamentally about encouraging reflection, innovation and continual improvement—and the faculty members and partners who engage with the centre in this work are distinguished by their creativity and commitment to enhancing student learning.

The report will also give you a glimpse of TLC priorities for the coming years.

My hope is that in reading this report you will gain a more complete picture of what the TLC does—and of how we can work with you to support your teaching and learning initiatives. Have a question or an idea? Please feel free to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.

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**Front cover (by column, from left):**  
*Aoife Mac Namara*, Dean, Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology, 2018 Undergraduate Research Symposium  
*Daniel Laitsch*, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, 2017 Building Connections  
*Atiya Mahmood*, Associate Professor, Department of Gerontology, 2017 Rethinking Teaching  
*Petra Menz*, Senior Lecturer, Department of Mathematics, 2017 Building Connections  
*Steve Whitmore*, Senior Lecturer, School of Engineering Science, 2017 Building Connections  
*Shauna Jones*, Senior Lecturer, Beedie School of Business, 2017 Symposium on Teaching and Learning

**Back cover (by column, from left):**  
*Lara Aknin*, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, 2017 Building Connections  
*Andrew Hawryshkewich*, Senior Lecturer, School of Interactive Arts and Technology, 2018 TAWG Speaker Series  
*Veselin Jungic*, Teaching Professor, Department of Mathematics, 2018 Teaching Matters  
*Somayeh Kamranian*, Limited Term Lecturer, Department of French, 2018 TAWG Speaker Series  
*Diana Bedoya*, Lecturer, Department of Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology, 2017 Building Connections  
*Tun Myint*, Lecturer, Faculty of Health Sciences, Demofest 2017  
*Geoff Mann*, Professor, Department of Geography, 2018 Undergraduate Research Symposium
Engaging with faculty

Inspiration
Communities of practice and other places and spaces for peer exchange of ideas and solutions, including the annual DEMOfest learning technology day and the Symposium on Teaching and Learning.

Skills
Workshops on everything from video production to public speaking to designing for blended learning.

Resources
General and discipline-specific literature, templates and models for planning and practice.

Solutions
Individual support for course and curriculum planning, educational goals development, and technology and media implementation.

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Engaging with faculty

Individual faculty members are at the heart of what the Teaching and Learning Centre does. When instructors want to experiment with new teaching practices, locate resources for course planning, or pick up new skills for their teaching roles, the TLC supports them through workshops, consultations and project assistance. Here are examples of what those interactions looked like this past year:

- TLC media specialist Duane Woods worked with a member of the Biology department to produce instructional videos that introduce foundational course content, freeing up instructor time for direct interaction with students.

- Associate professor Mark Blair (Psychology) wanted to introduce “mastery grading,” in which students write a test, review the results, and rewrite the test as many times as necessary to achieve a prescribed level of proficiency. TLC technology specialist Robyn Schell helped him implement this form of assessment using the Quiz tool within Canvas to automatically generate new questions for each iteration of the test.

- Several dozen faculty members and teaching support staff met individually with TLC voice specialist Sanders Whiting to develop their lecturing and presentation skills by focusing on elements such as breathing, gesture and movement.

- More than 20 faculty members took advantage of the annual Rethinking Teaching workshop to develop or redevelop a course with input from peers and educational consultants.

- Almost 800 faculty members contacted the TLC’s learning technology hotline for assistance with the application of Canvas tools and other technologies to their teaching.

- Faculty members and teaching support staff made up the bulk of the 1,580 participants at 75 events presented or co-presented by the TLC in 2017–2018.

A faculty member in Criminology told us, “I find that I get my best ideas about teaching from listening to or watching other people who teach.” Sometimes the greatest impact occurs when we bring together colleagues within and across disciplines to talk about teaching and learning. Read about one such community of practice in the sidebar.

TEACHING MATTERS: A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

For the past nine years, TLC educational consultant Cindy Xin has partnered with teaching professor Veselin Jungic (Mathematics) and other members of the Mathematics and Biological Sciences departments to present the Teaching Matters Seminar Series, a grassroots, university-wide initiative in which faculty members “discuss literature, share experiences and demonstrate practices related to teaching and learning.” Recent topics have ranged from “Assessing and Evaluating Teaching” to “Productive Failure: Learning Through Trial and Error.” The series has become increasingly popular and interdisciplinary: the final session in Spring 2018 attracted faculty members from six of SFU’s eight Faculties. Teaching Matters is one of several teaching-related communities of practice supported by the TLC to introduce a stimulating social element into what is often a solitary role.
Preparation for teaching roles
Certificate Program in University Teaching and Learning
A 13-week part-time program about the theory and practice of teaching. Offered twice each year.

Orientation for teaching support staff
TA/TM Day
SFU’s premier orientation event for teaching assistants and tutor-markers, with sessions led by veteran TAs. Held in January and September.

A framework for course planning and delivery
Instructional Skills Workshop
An internationally recognized forum that introduces new teaching methods and approaches. Offered up to seven times each year.

Confidence and comfort
Private Voice Sessions
Individual coaching that addresses vocal projection, enunciation, breathing and other elements to help speakers present more comfortably and effectively. Ongoing.

A foundation for career advancement
Teaching Dossiers for Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Fellows
A professional development workshop on how to document teaching activities and accomplishments. Presented in spring and fall.

Preparing graduate students
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Graduate students are the future of post-secondary teaching, but they are also the present. For example, in 2017 they filled more than 2,900 teaching assistant and tutor-marker roles, providing support for an estimated 122,000 student enrollments in labs, tutorials and online courses at SFU.

The Teaching and Learning Centre supports graduate students with workshops and programs designed specifically for them. The flagship is the 13-week part-time Certificate Program in University Teaching and Learning, which accepts 20 graduate students each spring and fall for an intensive interdisciplinary examination of teaching that is both theoretical and practical. One participant lauded the program for giving her “a dedicated time and space to reflect” on teaching and said the experience made her a more participatory, transparent and confident instructor.

The TA/TM Day orientations for teaching assistants and tutor-markers draw well over 100 graduate students from all Faculties every spring and fall for peer-led training sessions. New TAs and TMs profit from the expertise shared by veterans—and at the same time, those veterans gain valuable presentation experience. “Facilitating ... workshops enabled me to develop and fine-tune some of the teaching tools I use in my own classes,” said one doctoral student about her experience as a presenter.

Other workshops such as the Instructional Skills Workshop, the Teaching Dossiers for Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Fellows workshop, and various voice and presentation skills sessions deliver additional targeted professional development.

All these workshops and programs benefit not just the participants, but also the many undergraduate students these participants interact with as TAs and TMs, especially in large multi-section classes. And they are helping to create a new generation of university teachers with unprecedented preparation for their teaching roles.

“Graduate students shape the university through the types of pedagogy they bring.”

Jeff Derksen, dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies, speaking at the graduation celebration of the Spring 2018 Certificate Program in University Teaching and Learning (CPUTL)

Graduate students shape the university through the types of pedagogy they bring.

CPUTL facilitator Sheri Fabian.

CPUTL: A LASTING IMPACT

Every Friday morning for 13 weeks during the spring and fall semesters, participants in the Certificate Program in University Teaching and Learning (CPUTL) meet to consider why, what and how they teach. They share discipline-influenced approaches, examine models and develop teaching philosophy statements to guide their own practice. They also acquire practical skills; for example, in how to draft a lesson plan. In Spring 2018, the program was facilitated by senior lecturer Sheri Fabian (Criminology), who completed the program herself as a graduate student. At the graduation celebration for the Spring 2018 cohort, one participant shared her thoughts about the program: “The big thing that was helpful for me was to be able to hone the skills I already have and gain confidence in my ability to teach.”
Supporting academic units

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Program and curriculum design and renewal

Support for academic plans and teaching priorities

Development and assessment of educational goals

Support for Indigenization initiatives

Student evaluation of teaching and courses
Supporting academic units

Courses are situated within programs, and faculty members are situated within departments, schools and Faculties. The Teaching and Learning Centre recognizes the importance of context and operates at multiple levels within academic units to create environments that support effective teaching and enhanced learning.

One area in which the TLC often plays a significant role is program and curriculum planning. Vivian Neal’s contribution to the new Sustainable Energy Engineering program at SFU’s Surrey campus is an excellent example (see the sidebar). The TLC also supports departmental processes such as the development and assessment of educational goals by sharing resources, providing models, and facilitating retreats and planning exercises.

TLC staff members build relationships within the Faculties by participating in local activities and in some cases also teaching. In Spring 2017, for example, TLC educational consultant Sarah Louise Turner worked with faculty teaching fellow Ker Wells, associate dean Stuart Poyntz, doctoral student Tara Mahoney and associate professor Kate Hennessy in the Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology (FCAT) to organize an event showcasing community-based learning projects by FCAT faculty members. Her ability to mobilize the TLC’s event planning and promotional capabilities was instrumental in the success of the event.

The combination of centralized TLC resources coupled with staff members who are familiar with the needs and priorities of departments, schools and Faculties is central to the TLC’s strategy of providing academic units with flexible and cost-effective support.

THE NEW SUSTAINABLE ENERGY ENGINEERING PROGRAM

One of the most exciting teaching and learning stories currently happening at SFU is the construction of the new Sustainable Energy and Environmental Engineering Building at the Surrey campus and the development of the groundbreaking Sustainable Energy Engineering (SEE) BASc program in the Faculty of Applied Sciences (FAS). TLC educational consultant Vivian Neal led the curriculum development initiative for the SEE task force, carrying out extensive faculty consultations to develop a program designed to meet the accreditation requirements of the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board. The monumental initiative included the development of course outcomes, syllabi and deployment details for 38 new courses—all within a five-month period. According to Kevin Oldknow, associate dean of FAS, she showed “great leadership in managing, coordinating and motivating the team in moving through the curriculum design process ... Without Vivian’s experience, passion, leadership, commitment and dedication, it is highly unlikely that the team would have been able to succeed.” The results will become visible in September 2019 when the SEE program welcomes its first students.

Vivian Neal

Kevin Oldknow
Partnering with the community

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Partnering with the community

Teaching and learning has many “champions” at SFU—individuals, academic and service units, committees, working groups and more. Collaboration is a core value of the Teaching and Learning Centre, and wherever possible we partner with these champions to take advantage of complementary strengths.

The following examples illustrate the nature of these partnerships.

• For students, well-being is positively correlated with academic success—and instructors can do a great deal to foster well-being in their classrooms. In March 2018, the TLC, SFU Health Promotion and the SFU Faculty Association drew on their expertise in teaching practice and wellness to host the third annual Building Connections: Well-being in Teaching and Learning showcase. The event served as a forum for faculty members to share practices that lead to improved well-being.

• The Open Educational Resources (OER) Grants program, funded by the Office of the VP Academic and jointly administered by the TLC and the SFU Library, provided funding to nine faculty members in 2017 for the integration of open educational resources as primary course material. The TLC and the Library also provided in-kind support to grant recipients. Similar grant programs around the themes of the Student Learning Experience and Indigenizing the Curriculum are under development and will be launched before the end of 2018.

• More than 20 percent of SFU faculty members have received funding from the Teaching and Learning Development Grants program administered by the Institute for the Study of Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines (ISTLD). TLC staff members regularly support faculty members in the development and completion of grant projects designed to implement and evaluate innovative approaches to teaching.

• In November 2017, the third annual DEMOfest provided faculty and staff members as well as selected external vendors with a place to showcase the tools and practices they use in their classes. The event has become an efficient way to share teaching and learning solutions within the SFU academic community. Many of the solutions were jointly developed and implemented by TLC staff working with instructors.

• The Undergraduate Research Symposium, held on April 6, 2018, was notable for its success in connecting the spheres of research, teaching and learning, and community engagement. Thirty-eight undergraduate students from 14 departments presented their research to an audience of faculty members, fellow students, friends and family. The symposium was a unique collaboration between the Office of the Vice-President, Research, and the Office of the Vice-President, Academic, co-led by the Teaching and Learning Centre and the Library with the support of Research Operations and Student Engagement and Retention.
Educational goals/ Learning outcomes

• Represented on EGLO Working Group
• Produced strategic framework for TLC support of EGLO development and assessment
• Providing consultation to individual faculty members and academic units
• Maintaining EGLO support website

Student evaluation of teaching and courses (SETC)

• Maintaining SETC support website
• Supporting faculty members and academic units in developing forms, boosting response rates, generating reports, and interpreting and using results

Selected committees, councils and working groups

• Academic Integrity Committee
• Advanced Professional Engagement & Exploration (APEX) Steering Committee
• Beedie Teaching and Learning Committee
• CELLTR Core Team Committee
• Communication Initiative Action Committee (Beedie)
• Educational Goals/Learning Outcomes Working Group
• Educational Systems Stewardship Committee
• Learning and Teaching Coordinating Committee
• Learning Environments @SFU
• OER Grants Team
• Physics Undergraduate Curriculum Committee
• Senate Committee on University Teaching and Learning
• SFU Surrey Campus Coordinating Committee
• SFU Sustainability
• Teaching Assessment Working Group

Valuing teaching

• Represented on Teaching Assessment Working Group (TAWG)
• Developed recommendations for TLC and institutional support of teaching awards
• Maintaining Faculty Recognition website
• Organized TAWG speaker series in Spring 2018

Indigenization (2017 and 2018)

• Launched weekly lunch-hour Indigenous learning circles for TLC staff
• Began hiring process for new Associate Director, Indigenous Initiatives, position
• Currently establishing Indigenous Initiatives Advisory Committee
• Commissioned Indigenous wall hangings and added Indigenous paintings and maps in TLC office
• Incorporated Indigenous drumming and ceremonies in TLC activities
• Currently developing relevant workshops for faculty members and students

Building the institution

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Building the institution

When the university identifies institutional priorities for teaching and learning, the Teaching and Learning Centre provides resources and expertise to the many groups and individuals involved in implementing those priorities. One example is the Teaching Assessment Working Group (TAWG), established in 2017 to help the university find better ways to assess and recognize teaching. The group includes a TLC representative and has drawn on internal TLC reports to develop its understanding of topics such as teaching awards. In addition, TLC staff created the TAWG website and organized a TAWG speaker series that was launched in March 2018. This case illustrates the dual nature—both strategic and operational—of TLC involvement at the institutional level.

Other examples of support for institutional initiatives include the following:

**Educational goals/Learning outcomes:** When the university first began implementing educational goals as part of the external review process for academic departments in 2013, the TLC provided workshops, a support website, templates and resource materials, as well as direct support to departments developing program-level educational goals. In 2017–2018, the TLC focused on developing a strategy to support departments as they conduct mid-cycle reviews of their progress. The strategy frames educational goals as an opportunity for continual improvement.

**Indigenization:** In 2017–2018, the TLC provided office space to William Lindsay, special advisor on Indigenous issues to the VP Academic. William, along with TLC educational consultant Janet Pivnick, began organizing lunch-hour Indigenous learning circles to foster understanding about Indigenous issues among TLC staff. The TLC also began a search to fill the newly created position of Associate Director, Indigenous Initiatives, within the TLC, and established plans to create a TLC Indigenous Initiatives Advisory Committee. This work is preparation for the role the TLC is expected to play in supporting the Indigenization and decolonization efforts of faculty members and academic units in the next few years.

**Student evaluation of teaching and courses (SETC):** When instructors want to increase the response rates for their online student evaluations or need help interpreting evaluation results, TLC staff members provide options. Their focus is on helping faculty members use the system effectively to improve their courses and teaching. In addition, they provide input to the university’s Advisory Committee for SETC (ACE) and offer guidance regarding appropriate use of student evaluation results for tenure and promotion decisions.
Priorities for 2018–2023

SFU’s next Academic Plan will cover the period 2018–2023. The Teaching and Learning Centre is finalizing a strategic plan for the same time frame to align its work with the university’s priorities.

The TLC has already identified five priorities (shown below) for which it is developing expertise and resources that will enable it to support the academic community in the coming years.

**Flexible learning and teaching**
Foster dynamic, innovative teaching practices and ubiquitous learning environments with appropriate technologies to provide situated and experiential learning that is adaptable to student and faculty needs.

**Valuing teaching**
Find better ways to celebrate and honour teaching, encourage formative processes, support teaching portfolio development, and provide recognized professional development credentials; and support the work of tenure and promotion committees.

**Indigenous initiatives**
Support academic units in their efforts to decolonize teaching and learning and to indigenize the curriculum to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing; and encourage community-informed teaching and learning to ensure “nothing about us without us.”

**Educational goals**
Provide consistent support for the development of educational goals and assessment strategies across disciplines and at the course, program and institutional levels within a “continuous improvement” framework; and provide models, templates and tools.

**Impact on practice**
Incorporate continual evaluation and improvement within the TLC and promote evidence-informed practice and scholarship of teaching and learning as a way to document impact.