

The University of British Columbia – Okanagan

Review of the Centre for Teaching and Learning

By

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Background, Goals and Context of the Review

Procedures at The University of British Columbia (UBC) call for regular and systemic review of units and are normally conducted every five years. The UBC-Okanagan Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), established in 2005, was put forward for review in 2010. Following the development of a self-study document by the CTL in the Spring 2010, a three-person external team was constituted to prepare a review report. The Review Team consisted of three individuals from Canadian research-intensive institutions who oversee similar teaching and learning leadership, support and scholarship portfolios, including:

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The Review Team visited the UBC-Okanagan campus in late September 2010. The goals of the review were presented to the Review Team as:

1. To assess the achievement of the Centre for Teaching and Learning over the past few years.
2. To provide advice on the opportunities, goals and directions for the Centre for Teaching and Learning
3. To recommend changes to improve the effectiveness and impact of the Centre for Teaching and Learning

This report comprises the review.

About the Centre

The Centre for Teaching and Learning is a five person academic support unit positioned within the Learning Services Portfolio of UBC-Okanagan. According to the self-study document (*Centre for Teaching and Learning Review: A Partner in Learning Services with Continuing Studies, the Library and Information Technology, Media and Classroom Services*) provided to the Review Team, the CTL serves 310 tenure track faculty, 96 temporary faculty, 108 teaching assistants and over 500 graduate students. The establishment of the CTL was coincident with the transition from Okanagan University College to The University of British Columbia Okanagan. Over the intervening years, UBC Okanagan underwent tremendous growth, including hiring significant numbers of new faculty, transitioning existing faculty from a college to a research-intensive university context, developing new academic programs, establishing graduate programs, increasing student enrolments and building physical infrastructure.

Review Process

In advance of the site visit, the Review Team was provided with documentation including University, Campus, and CTL planning documents, the aforementioned CTL self-study document and other pertinent materials. Associate VP, Gwen Zilm held a teleconference with the Review Team on September 13, 2010 to plan details of the site visit and to develop a detailed agenda and plan for the site visit and report. Additional resource materials were made available on site and upon request. A list of materials reviewed is included as Appendix 1.

The Review visit was conducted September 27-28, 2010 at The University of British Columbia Okanagan Kelowna campus. Over the course of the two days, the Review Team met with stakeholders (please see Appendix 2 for schedule and participants), including senior University administrators, senior academic administrators, Learning Services management, faculty members, graduate students and CTL staff. The interviews were focused on eliciting perceptions of the CTL's accomplishments and service orientation, as well as exploring potential strategic directions and opportunity spaces for service growth. In addition to interviews, the Review Team toured the CTL facilities. The interviews were conducted with all Review Team members present. On the afternoon of the second day, the Review Team met to discuss findings and develop a set of recommendations. The Report was developed collaboratively by the Review Team.

Findings

Senior Administration

As outlined in Appendix 2, the Review Team met with members of senior administration, including the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Principal, the Provost and Vice-Principal Academic and Research, the AVP Learning Services, Deans and Associate Deans from a variety of Faculties as well as the Senior Management of the Learning Services Portfolio. When queried about the mandate of the CTL, there was overall agreement about the expectations of the Centre, which included:

- Learning technology support – supporting faculty understanding of how to leverage technology to support practice;
- Innovation/experimentation – investigating new approaches to teaching and learning;
- Best practices and scholarship – supporting faculty with implementing scholarly approaches and conducting research that contributes to the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL).
- Improving practice (remedial) – support faculty who are struggling with their teaching.

The Deputy-Vice Chancellor provided a strong context for the Review Team. UBC-Okanagan is relatively new and is establishing its brand as a research-intensive University that offers a unique, high quality learning experience to students. Teaching excellence and smaller class sizes are positioned as positive differentiators for UBC-Okanagan. He indicated that excellent teaching is recognized and “bad teaching is fatal”. He also discussed the importance of community engagement, calling attention to the strong and positive relationship that the University holds with the Okanagan Nation. The Provost provided additional context, outlining some of the unique challenges faced by the campus in the context of the CTL, including the shift in culture for some long-serving faculty as they transitioned from a College to University setting. The AVP Learning Services drew attention to the critical role of the Director (Peter Arthur); as a Faculty member, he works within the academic

structures of the Institution, serving on Senate and participating in significant high level committee work, while managing the activities of a professional service organization.

What is being done well?

All of the Senior Administrators expressed support for the work of the CTLL, indicating that it has been highly effective in its approach and practice. The CTL is seen as welcoming and open - a place where faculty can go and be supported, not judged. There was praise for the faculty-centred approach, including the structure of the mentorship/peer programs and the development of communities of practice that are driven by faculty needs, while nurtured by the CTL. CTL staff are seen as educators that know technology well, as opposed to technologists pushing tools. Members of the Learning Services portfolio signaled that they considered the Centre a strong partner, and saw their role as “drafting in behind the CTL” as needs are identified and programs developed. Graduate Studies signaled a similar synergy with respect to development and delivery of its programs for graduate students. There was strong praise from the Deans and Associate Deans regarding communication from and with the CTL.

Current Constraints

The most significant constraint that was identified in discussions with the administration related to the historical context. Given the rapid growth of the campus and its rapid hiring rate, the need to ensure new faculty are oriented to the campus, introduced to the culture and provided with the basic training and tools for teaching has dominated the work of the CTL. A particular constraint identified was the lack of grant funding for innovation and for SoTL research. Finally, there was some concern expressed with respect to their ability to access good, well equipped teaching spaces.

In addition, there was a strong recognition that some of the work that needs to be done for faculty in the area of supporting career progression, developing leadership skills, clarifying research vs. teaching priorities, summative peer review, etc., is the responsibility of Academic leaders (Department Heads, Associate Deans, etc.) and faculty colleagues. The CTL, with its current staff complement, is not positioned to take on these types of activities. There was also concern that involvement in some of these activities, outside of facilitating dialogue over issues, would negatively position the Centre – placing its “neutral”, support position at risk.

Opportunities

There were a wide range of opportunities (at times positioned as challenges) identified, particularly amongst the Deans and Associate Deans where disciplinary differences enabled a diverse dialogue with the Review Team. Some of the challenges relate to the professional schools, such as preparation for accreditation. Some put forward unique teaching situations (e.g., clinical, lab and experiential settings). Others described a desire to innovate their practice, particularly with respect to technology (e.g., develop simulations) and promote SoTL. When queried about the role of the Centre in supporting curriculum development (e.g., curriculum mapping), there was an interesting pause. Some had not considered the possibility. Notably, there was good support for the CTL staff to facilitate curriculum development processes.

Faculty and students

The Review Team met with three separate groups of faculty, variously identified as “New Faculty”, “Experienced Faculty”, and faculty who were members of the Community of Practice on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL).

What is being done well?

All three groups expressed high praise for the work of the CTL. They commended the diversity and quality of programs and services offered, indicating that these met the needs of the University at its

current stage of development. New faculty members felt that the CTL had helped them to grow, working with them individually to meet their unique needs, while the more experienced faculty members felt that the role and mandate of the CTL have been expanding with the growth of the campus. Despite its expanded role, it was felt that the CTL has maintained the “culture of service” that it had developed from its inception.

All three groups were particularly enthusiastic about the staff of the CTL, describing them as “phenomenal”. Not only were CTL staff members (individually and collectively) perceived as knowledgeable, but they were also viewed as highly responsive, accommodating, flexible, supportive and non-judgmental. In the words of one faculty member, “the CTL is teacher-centred because they make life easy for us teachers and help us enhance the student experience”. Another explained that “the CTL has made the idea of teaching and learning a huge part of the campus culture”.

These views were echoed by the group of graduate students who also met with the Review Team. Without exception, the students affirmed that their experience with the CTL and its staff was positive. In particular, they identified the CTL’s “technology offerings” as “excellent”.

Current Constraints

Faculty and students seemed unanimous in identifying the current location of the CTL as a huge constraint. They perceived that the location marginalized the CTL making it more challenging for them to promote their events. Location was perceived as more than a physical constraint as the experienced faculty members in particular felt that CTL events should be more visible and easily accessible from the University’s home page.

Another constraint that the faculty groups identified was the culture at UBCO that does not appear to support SoTL. One view was that SoTL is “tolerated but not promoted”. Asked to expand on this statement, the faculty member explained that although SoTL was promoted to instructors as an avenue for informing and improving their teaching, it is not considered core to their job. The more experienced faculty would like to see more opportunities for disseminating SoTL and a much greater push for SoTL, especially for later career faculty members. The members of the SoTL Community of Practice felt that although SoTL is growing steadily on campus, it is constrained by insufficient funding/resources expressly for SoTL projects.

Opportunities

The imminent relocation of the CTL should be seized as an opportunity to reposition the CTL strategically and reduce the perception that it is marginalized. The repositioning strategy could build on the CTL’s reputation for being flexible and adaptive, demonstrating that a growing University with increased emphasis on graduate education requires a Centre that facilitates the development of faculty members’ capacity for educational research. This increased emphasis on SoTL would also present an opportunity for CTL staff to develop their own capacity for facilitating and participating in educational research. For example, the graduate students expressed a desire for more offerings in qualitative methodologies including exposure to Nvivo software.

CTL Staff

The Review Team had an extended meeting with Dr. Peter Arthur, the CTL Director, followed by a meeting with the staff of the centre, where for the second half hour the Director was not present. It is clear that serving the needs of individual instructors was a top priority of the CTL and

unanimously shared by all the staff. The policy of rapid response to almost any query, constant availability by telephone, and individualized service beyond the call of duty is admirable, but the Review Team had some worry about the sustainability of such policy and the potential for staff burnout.

The staff seemed to be looking to the external Review Team to confirm their belief that their work is successful and appropriately focused. While external experience can offer some recommendations on the latter (focus of the work), it is really difficult to judge the success of the activity. Assessment of the success of the Centre requires an analysis of and explicit statement of desired outcomes combined with evidence of the degree to which these outcomes have been achieved. While general goal statements and general outcomes have been articulated, these are difficult to measure. The Review Team heard many endorsements and accolades from all parts of the campus, but is struggling to find the explicit desired outcomes.

What is being done well

The staff felt that their current programming and their individual consultations were successful. The number of attendees at workshops, short courses, community of practice meetings seems to be favourable. The number of consultations with individuals is seen by the staff to be manageable. The OMR Scanning service for multiple choice exams seemed inappropriately placed in the opinion of the Review Team, but we were impressed to learn that this service serves as a unique and somewhat unusual opportunity to consult with instructors who might not otherwise come to the Centre!

The enterprise and system-level supports for learning technologies rely heavily on the UBC main campus services and this allows the CTL staff to focus on individual and small group training activities and frontline troubleshooting. Examples of troubleshooting requests seem to indicate that proportion of pedagogical to technical support requests may be inappropriately skewed to the technical. This results in consultations that may be inefficient, requiring re-direction to another unit, or help requests that can be answered by CTL staff, but that may erode capacity to work on other tasks more central to the CTL mandate.

The work with graduate students on mentored teaching and teaching assistant training is seen to be very successful by the staff. The positive feedback from faculty and administrators as well as from the students themselves confirms this.

The many endorsements and accolades received by staff in the centre help to confirm that programs and supports provided are effective and appreciated by people across the university. But accolades and anecdotes alone are not evidence. The staff realizes that a more comprehensive program assessment process is needed to confirm what is being done well (and not).

Current Constraints

The CTL is working at full capacity to meet the service demands that come its way. It seems that all the staff are working full out to carry the demands and to meet the precedent of individual service that has been set. The staff believes that there are unmet needs for additional individual consultations, programming for graduate students, and possibilities to expand work in the areas of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and consultation and facilitation roles in curriculum and academic program design and development. This adds up to a belief that the staff

complement is barely adequate for the current level of activity and there is a strong argument to increase the number of staff members.

Space and the current physical location of the Centre are also seen to be barriers. The out-of-the-way location of the CTL makes drop-in traffic less likely. There is much enthusiasm about the planned relocation of the Centre into a more central space and some hope that the long-term plan for a new library with integrated learning commons and CTL will help the unit serve teaching and learning even better.

Opportunities

The staff members recognize areas of potential expansion including more work on supporting the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, more work with graduate students, as well as an initiative in supporting curriculum development. The SoTL work has already begun with some research funding and the development of a small community of practice. But there is room for considerable growth in this area. The implications for the CTL involve more consultations with faculty and more demand for assistance with educational research methods.

As the number of graduate students at UBCO increases, there will be a greater demand for TA training and teaching development. This is seen as an opportunity area by the staff. Increasingly other Centres across Canada are working in partnerships with academic departments to support and facilitate curriculum development and to support program assessment. The CTL staff members have seen this as a potential growth area for their Centre.

Discussion

The Review Team heard a consistent, positive message about the people, programs and value of the Centre for Teaching and Learning to UBC Okanagan. The staff are committed to top quality service. They are helpful, knowledgeable, available and accessible. The CTL is teacher-centred and nurtures a culture of high quality teaching. The activities support individual growth, but situate the activities in a community of practice. The Centre is seen as a safe, supportive place to talk about teaching practice. The current needs of faculty are being well met.

The startup phase of the Institution has rightly focused this team on the needs of the individual faculty member. The staff have done a good job of constructing programs that leverage peer interactions and have managed to keep up with new faculty as they have been hired. To date, the Centre has managed to grow at a rate that keeps pace with the increase in needs.

The Review Team is, however, concerned about the ability of this small team to continue to keep pace with the volume of activity. In the start-up phase of any organization, one expects staff will be deeply engaged, invested and willing to work long hours and routinely go “above and beyond” to advance the organizational needs. There is a need to ensure that there is appropriate career development of the staff in the Centre, as well as some room for innovation.

More importantly, there are some areas that are emerging that will require more attention and resources in order to support a longer term “maturation” of the institution, including:

- Academic leadership development (for new Department Heads, Associated Deans, Directors);
- The scholarship of teaching and learning (as opposed to scholarly approaches);
- Curriculum design and transformation;
- Graduate student skills development (beyond TA training); and
- Teaching and learning innovation, particularly with technology.

Given the volume of work, these needs will not be well met by the Centre without additional staff and diversification of skillsets.

Please note, the Review Team is not suggesting that all of these areas should be conducted fully in the CTL. As identified in the self-study document, the CTL operates well within a partnership framework, Continued attention to strong partnerships with other units and on campus, such as Faculty Relations (Human Resources), Graduate Studies, the Library and IT, Media and Classroom Services will help. Continued partnership with UBC Vancouver will also support the strategic goals of the Centre.

External partnerships are also important, including that with UBC Vancouver. In the five-year start-up phase of the Centre’s growth, there has been a strong reliance on technology infrastructure and software licensing agreements negotiated through the UBC Vancouver campus. The arrangements have been amicable and mutually beneficial, however, over time, without a formal agreement in place, there is a potential for misunderstanding and duplication of effort. In addition, the UBC Okanagan Centre for Teaching and Learning and the UBC-Vancouver Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology have the potential to provide a strong bridge between the two campuses, particularly in the area of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. An annual or bi-annual meeting of the management of the two centres focused on identifying joint projects and exchanging best practice ideas would benefit both campuses.

Managing partnerships is time consuming and consideration of how partnership activities are tracked and success measures identified is important. A careful analysis of the administrative needs of the Director should also take place to ensure that as the organization grows further, the individual retains a keen academic focus (an acknowledged strength of the current Director).

Recommendations

The Review Team was favourably impressed with the quality and quantity of activity within the CTL. The Centre has been very successful and has the respect and admiration of faculty, graduate students, and administration.

The Review Team is presenting a set of recommendations. The first ten speak more to the Centre for Teaching and Learning programming, direction and staffing, whereas the final two focus at the Institutional level. Some of these recommendations require additional resources and if these are to be implemented, the University needs to increase the Centre's budget and staff complement.

Recommendations for the CTL:

1. Continue to support the outstanding service culture that has been nurtured in the Centre.

The current excellent support for teaching and learning is greatly appreciated by all stakeholders and is a source of pride for the staff of the Centre. Maintaining this level of exemplary service is encouraged, but attention must be paid to the possibility of staff burnout.

2. Continue to facilitate effective technology use in the context of teaching and learning.

One of the strengths of the CTL is its good understanding of learning technologies and this is bolstered by a high degree of confidence by faculty in the capabilities of Centre staff. This must be continued.

3. Develop a strategic positioning plan that is well articulated with Centre staff and University administration.

The Director is building effective relationships within the University and the Centre's credibility and influence are strong. Focusing this influence in a strategic way will advance the Centre's position further.

4. Engage with the academic community to inform programming; consider establishment of one or more Advisory Councils that include student representation, faculty, and senior academic administration.

A more formal advisory structure will help with strategic positioning and will build support for growth of the Centre.

5. Expand programs in alignment with Place and Promise: The UBC Plan and UBC Okanagan's Strategic Action Plan:
 - a. Graduate student programs (teaching assistants, graduate student professional skills)
 - b. Curriculum design and development (curriculum mapping, enriched educational experiences, integrating the nine commitments of Place & Promise)
 - c. Program assessment facilitation
 - d. Research / Scholarship (Teaching and Learning, Curriculum)

The new strategic plans call for the creation of new programs for the CTL and the expansion of existing CTL programming. Expansion will require additional resources.

6. Diversify the faculty career development programs beyond new faculty to include academic leadership support (e.g., programs for new Heads and Academic Program Directors).

The relatively new and growing faculty complement at UBCO indicates that there will be ongoing need for leadership development training. At other Universities units like the CTL are engaged in supporting such development. This is a natural extension of work with new faculty. It does, however, require partnerships with other units and with senior faculty and the support of University administration.

7. Increase staffing complement consistent with projected increase in programmatic activity as above. Consider the following:
 - a. Add a minimum of two new staff positions to support graduate student programming, curriculum (not course) innovation support and scholarship of teaching and learning administration.
 - b. Strategically leverage faculty secondments, faculty cross appointments, visiting faculty, and staff exchanges.
 - c. Support student involvement through undergraduate and graduate academic assistantships (work study, work-learn, co-op placements, internships, summer work study).

The current staff levels are barely sufficient to continue with existing CTL activity. Increases in graduate student numbers and expansion in the Centre's mandate will necessitate additional growth in staff.

8. In alignment with UBC's Focus on People Plan, support leadership and scholarly growth of Centre Staff through professional development opportunities, budgeting appropriately to ensure availability (conference, travel, professional visits).

Professional development opportunities for staff members are important. Sufficient funds (and time) must be found for staff members to attend conferences, prepare and present papers based on research or innovative practice, and continue to build their professional skills.

9. Consider delegation of some of the Centre's operational/managerial responsibilities (possibly adding an Associate/Assistant Director responsible for program administration, partnerships tracking and human resources).

The Director is a strong academic and administrative leader of the unit and is well connected with the stakeholder groups. The demands of the Director are significant and there is danger that the Centre would not function as well if he were, for example, to take a sabbatical or administrative leave. Perhaps more of the administrative management activities could be delegated to experienced staff. Perhaps other faculty members from across the University are interested in participating in or learning about the academic leadership of the Centre.

10. Make the Centre easier to find through more central physical positioning and increased visibility, particularly on the Home Page (under Faculty) and Quick Links of the UBC-Okanagan Website.

While the work of the Centre seems to be well understood by many individuals from across the campus, there is a benefit to increased visibility. The upcoming move of the Centre's offices will be a positive step. The CTL is urged to continue to work on making known and promoting its activities and services.

11. Continue to encourage Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, but clarify expectations of faculty with respect to career progression.

Faculty expressed some questions regarding the relative weight placed upon SoTL accomplishments, with a wide range of opinions expressed as to when it is appropriate to engage in this type of research. A clear articulation of the distinction between scholarly approaches to teaching and learning and the scholarship of teaching and learning, with guidelines on how these two activities contribute to career advancement would support improved understanding and enable faculty members to participate appropriately.

12. Continue to leverage the learning technology infrastructure of the UBC system, but develop a formal memorandum of understanding with appropriate units.

In order to ensure a long-term healthy relationship between the two campuses, implement regular meetings regarding current and pending projects, service arrangements and resource requirements with UBC Vancouver Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology and UBC Vancouver Information Technology.

Conclusion

The Review Team was provided with good background information and the dialogue over the course of the two-day visit provided an excellent opportunity to investigate the operations and strategic direction of the Centre for Teaching and Learning. CTL staff should be praised for how well they have grown their organization and established a high level of respect for their professionalism and knowledge. Dr. Arthur has served as an excellent academic leader and manager. In addition, the CTL is well positioned organizationally to continue to advance the teaching and learning mission of UBC Okanagan, an area identified, and from our visit, demonstrated to be a high priority for the campus. The recommendations provided by the Review Team focus on growing the Centre for Teaching and Learning's capacity to support the future needs of this growing campus. We wish them the best in their endeavours, and look forward to working with them as colleagues.

Appendix 1: Documents reviewed

1. Centre for Teaching and Learning Review (self-study document).
2. Centre for Teaching and Learning Strategic Plan, 2009-2012
3. Place and Promise: The UBC Plan
4. UBC Okanagan Strategic Action Plan 2010
5. Facts 2009/10
6. Attendance Statistics, Centre for Teaching and Learning
7. UBC Okanagan Campus Organization Chart
8. Programs for the annual teaching and learning conference (2005-2010)
9. CTL Newsletters
10. CTL Marketing and promotional materials
11. CTL Workshop and seminar materials
12. UBC Guide to Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure Procedures at UBC 2009/10
13. UBC Okanagan Faculty Complement Breakdown by Rank and Tenure Status

Appendix 2. Interview Schedule

Date	Time	Meeting Details
September 27	8:00 am	Meet at entrance to Manteo Resort for pick up and delivery to UBCO
	8:30 – 9:15 am	Informal meeting with Centre Staff
	9:15 - 10:00 am	Dr. Doug Owram, <i>Deputy Vice Chancellor and Principal</i>
	10:00 - 10:45 am	Dr. Alaa Abd-El-Aziz, <i>Provost and Vice-Principal Academic and Research</i>
	12:00 - 1:30 pm	Lunch meeting with Deans
	1:30 - 2:00 pm	Campus Tour
	2:15 - 3:00 pm	Learning Services Management Melody Burton, <i>Chief Librarian</i> Don Thompson, <i>Director IT, Media and Classroom Services</i> Gwen Zilm, <i>Associate Vice President, Learning Services</i>
	3:00 - 3:45 pm	Meeting with New Faculty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lukas Bichler, <i>School of Engineering</i> • Corinne Crockett, <i>Nursing</i> • Claude Desmarais, <i>Critical Studies</i> • Suzanne Gott, <i>Critical Studies</i> • Nina Langton (* SoTL), <i>Critical Studies</i> • Rachelle Hole, <i>Social Work</i> • Laura Patterson, <i>School of Engineering</i> • Jordan Stouck, <i>Critical Studies</i>
	4:00 - 4:45 pm	Meeting with Graduate TAs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ali Ahmadi, <i>Graduate Studies</i> • Jonathan Brown, <i>Graduate Studies</i> • Carolyn Labun (Experienced Faculty), <i>School of Engineering</i> • Jin Xian, <i>Graduate Studies</i>

Date	Time	Meeting Details
September 28	8:00 am	Meet at entrance to Manteo Resort for pick up and delivery to UBCO
	8:45 - 10:00 am	Dr. Peter Arthur, <i>Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning</i>
	10:00 - 11:00 am	Centre for Teaching and Learning Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Peter Arthur, <i>Director</i> • Ms. Heather Hurren, <i>Manager, Academic Development (via Skype)</i> • Ms. Janine Hirtz, <i>e-Learning Instructional Support Specialist</i> • Ms. Vania Chan, <i>e-Learning Instructional Support Specialist</i> • Ms. Tricia Wohlgemuth, <i>Centre for Teaching and Learning Support</i>
	11:00 - 11:45 am	Meeting with Experienced Faculty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wendy Andrews (not confirmed attendance), <i>Nursing</i> • Jan Cioe, <i>Barber School of Arts & Science</i> • Stephen McNeil, <i>Barber School of Arts & Science</i> • Chris Schneider, <i>Barber School of Arts & Science</i> • David Scott, <i>Barber School of Arts & Science</i> • Jeanette Vinek, <i>Nursing</i>
	11:45 am - 12:30 pm	Meeting with SoTL Community of Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andis Klegeris, <i>Barber School of Arts & Science</i> • Wilda Watts, <i>Nursing</i> • Teresa Wrzesniewski, <i>Barber School of Arts & Science</i>
	12:30 – 1:00 pm	Lunch
	1:00 - 5:00 pm	Working Session for Review Team
	7:30 pm	Supper at Summerhill Pyramid Winery



2011

**Response to the Review of the Centre for
Teaching and Learning**

Centre for Teaching and Learning
November, 2011

Centre for Teaching and Learning Mission

To lead, support and promote teaching and learning excellence, innovation and scholarship at UBC Okanagan.

Context for the Review

According to the University of British Columbia Board policy number twenty-two, an external review of an academic unit is considered during the renewal process of a head of an academic unit.

The Review Process

In the spring of 2010 the Centre for Teaching and Learning produced a self-study document. This document and others were provided to the review team prior to their UBC Okanagan campus visit. The Review visit was conducted September 27-28, 2010 at The University of British Columbia Okanagan Kelowna campus. Over the course of the two days, the Review Team met with stakeholders, including senior University administrators, senior academic administrators, Learning Services management, faculty members, graduate students and CTL staff. The review team focused on the following three goals:

4. To assess the achievement of the Centre for Teaching and Learning over the past few years.
5. To provide advice on the opportunities, goals and directions for the Centre for Teaching and Learning
6. To recommend changes to improve the effectiveness and impact of the Centre for Teaching and Learning

The review team consisted of three individuals from Canadian research-intensive institutions who oversee similar teaching and learning leadership, support and scholarship portfolios, including:

1. **Dr. Jim Greer**
Director, The Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness
Director, University Learning Centre
Professor, Computer Science
University of Saskatchewan
2. **Dr. Michelle N. Lamberson**
Managing Director, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology
The University of British Columbia, Vancouver
3. **Dr. Joy Mighty**
Past President, Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Professor, School of Business
Queen's University

Overview

We wish to thank the three reviewers for a thorough report that included a number of thoughtful recommendations. The CTL Team recognizes and values the committee's expertise and insights into the operation of university teaching and learning centres.

The review reported on meetings with each of the following stakeholders: senior University administrators, senior academic administrators, Learning Services management, faculty members, graduate students and CTL staff. For each stakeholder meeting the reviewers reported on what is being done well in the CTL, current constraints and opportunities. The review team then presented a set of twelve recommendations.

This response will start by reflecting on some of the positive statements' and challenges outlined in the Review. In addition, we respond to each of the twelve recommendations.

Overall Evaluation of the Centre for Teaching and Learning

Positives

1. CTL Positive Climate and Praise

The reviewers commented on the positive atmosphere that they experienced as well as when talking to others about the CTL. Faculty, graduate students and staff feel that the CTL is a safe place to receive support for teaching and learning initiatives, with all members of the CTL being welcoming, accommodating, non-judgemental and above all always willing to help and be accessible. The culture of service demonstrated by the staff of the CTL is recognized as a major asset to the university. It was noted that the CTL does an effective job of keeping the focus of campus culture on the importance of quality teaching and learning.

Both new and experienced faculty feel that CTL staff and programming are accessible and on-target for serving their needs and making the student learning experience more successful. The reviewers commented many times on the overwhelming praise the Centre receives from its clients especially about their availability and knowledge.

2. CTL Approach

The review pointed out that the CTL is known for its faculty-centred programming including mentorship programs and communities of practice that grew out of faculty needs assessments. All efforts and initiatives are focused around faculty needs and support for faculty in all areas of teaching, research and service. This is the mandate of the Centre. The CTL team makes every effort to serve the needs of individual faculty through consultations and formative evaluations of teaching efforts as well as large group activities for faculty like workshops and seminars designed with faculty input.

3. CTL Staff Knowledgeable in Pedagogy and Educational Research that Supports Effective Teaching & Learning

The reviewers noted and the faculty interviewed agreed that the CTL has hired its staff with the goal of all members having an educational background with sound knowledge about teaching and learning. Faculty are assured that CTL initiatives are sound educational pursuits as opposed to highlighting or promoting a new strategy without the careful analysis and critique of CTL staff. The teaching and research background of the collective staff is superior to many Centres.

4. Communication

Reviewers noted that communication avenues and strategies were very robust which gave faculty and departments easy access to Centre news and offerings. Deans and Associate Deans made a point of expressing the ease and extent of effective communication with and from the Centre. The website, newsletters and personal emails contribute to the Centre’s success. The Centre utilizes every avenue available to advertise events and programming. Centre staff are always searching for new and better ways to communicate in today’s social media climate.

5. Partnerships

The Centre was positioned as part of Learning Services during the review period. The partners within Learning Services included the Library, IT services and Community and Continuing Studies. Many initiatives were undertaken to ensure constant communication and collaboration within those partnerships and even though Learning Services no longer exist and the Centre’s immediate partners have changed, there is still a need and desire to continue positive relations with those previous partners. Many programs and offerings are done in collaboration with the Library and IT services. Community and Continuing Studies no longer exists.

Newer emphasis has been on partnering with Student Services with the goal of enhancing the student learning experience and also working closely with Research Services in regards to the Centre’s emphasis on scholarly teaching.

External partnerships exist with UBC Vancouver campus as well as other campuses across Canada. CTL is involved with a research project involving Thompson Rivers University and BCCampus.

6. Programming

Concerning programming the reviewers indicated that the CTL has does an outstanding job of offering a variety of programming options for faculty within the constraints of a small staff. Faculty have been very pleased with programming options and the CTL responds to faculty requests for either individual or group consultations. Each term the staff initiates new programs and offerings whether it be with an innovative teaching technique or tool or another community of practice to serve the needs of current faculty. The Centre uses a few tools to collect data on future programming needs.

Response to the Report’s Twelve Recommendations

Recommendations for the CTL	Response
<p>13. Continue to support the outstanding service culture that has been nurtured in the Centre.</p> <p>The current excellent support for teaching and learning is greatly appreciated by all stakeholders and is a source of pride for the staff of the Centre. Maintaining this level of exemplary service is encouraged, but attention must be paid to the possibility of staff burnout.</p>	<p>The Centre agrees that the outstanding service must continue. We are aware of the potential for burnout, however still value the importance of a high level of service. The team all love working with faculty, graduate students and teaching assistants. We believe strongly that we can make a positive difference by providing a high level of support. To proactively avoid burnout we agree with recommendation number seven and have asked in the upcoming budget for additional staff.</p>

<p>14. Continue to facilitate effective technology use in the context of teaching and learning.</p> <p>One of the strengths of the CTL is its good understanding of learning technologies and this is bolstered by a high degree of confidence by faculty in the capabilities of Centre staff. This must be continued.</p>	<p>The Centre agrees that technology needs to be used in a pedagogically sound way to enhance learning. When we consult with faculty, and provide workshops the pedagogical use is paramount. All of our Centre Team who consult with faculty have an education and technology background. The e-learning specialists are challenged with keeping up with faculty needs for new e-learning initiatives. We require more staff to support such initiatives while maintaining the high level of support, availability and professional consultations our faculty have come to expect, We would also like to note that a more clearly defined partnership of consultation and collaboration with IT would be most beneficial in the exploration of new technologies that should be experimented with based on their pedagogical effectiveness and potential. We also require an ongoing budget to allow for experimentation with new technologies and to provide faculty with opportunities to 'try' some of these as well.</p>
<p>15. Develop a strategic positioning plan that is well articulated with Centre staff and University administration.</p> <p>The Director is building effective relationships within the University and the Centre's credibility and influence are strong. Focusing this influence in a strategic way will advance the Centre's position further.</p>	<p>The Centre for Teaching and Learning has since repositioned itself within the Provost's Office rather than Learning Services. This repositioning has built a stronger relationship and reputation within the academic community that we support. The Director continues to contribute through a number of academic committees. In addition, we have built strong partnerships with the faculties, student services, the library, research services and IT Services to synergistically enhance teaching and learning excellence on this campus.</p>
<p>16. Engage with the academic community to inform programming; consider establishment of one or more Advisory Councils that include student representation, faculty, and senior academic administration.</p> <p>A more formal advisory structure will help with strategic positioning and will build support for growth of the Centre.</p>	<p>Response: As a first step the Centre for Teaching and Learning has established a CTL Partners program. This program brings together faculty and student representatives for the purpose of providing feedback on current CTL programming/resources, needs assessment to inform CTL planning and offerings and awareness/promotion of CTL programs. Based on the success of this program the CTL will assess whether a more formal advisory council will assist with strategic positioning and build additional support for growth. In addition, a Teaching Assistant Advisory Committee has been established. This committee provides valuable input into</p>

	programming.
<p>17. Expand programs in alignment with Place and Promise: The UBC Plan and UBC Okanagan’s Strategic Action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Graduate student programs (teaching assistants, graduate student professional skills) b. Curriculum design and development (curriculum mapping, enriched educational experiences, integrating the nine commitments of Place & Promise) c. Program assessment facilitation d. Research / Scholarship (Teaching and Learning, Curriculum) <p>The new strategic plans call for the creation of new programs for the CTL and the expansion of existing CTL programming. Expansion will require additional resources.</p>	<p>Response: The Centre for Teaching and Learning fully supports this recommendation and has since implemented many of the specific suggestions. We recognized the importance graduate student programming has on learning at our institution and hired a full time Graduate Student/Teaching Assistant Program Coordinator and a Director for our newly formed Centre for Scholarly Communication, which supports graduate student writing. In addition created and implemented a teaching in higher education course for doctoral students. This course is a full year and contains a mentored teaching practicum. We are now currently creating a teaching assistant certificate program. We continue to expand our support for curriculum design and development. We continue to offer our curriculum design/redesign institute and supporting a department with a self-study model of curriculum review. As our campus instigates a systematic program review we will work closely with the Provost to support a system of program assessment.</p> <p>The reviewers noted immediately when viewing CTL documentation and promotion materials that there was no evidence that the CTL had funds allotted to support the scholarship of teaching and learning. Upon further research (interviews and discussions), they realized that the university culture was not supporting SoTL. Faculty had been hesitant to venture into SoTL projects because of this lack of funding, but also because there was no element of reward or recognition for tenure and promotion purposes, and, in fact, perhaps would put tenure and promotion at risk. The staff at the Centre had been asking for grant monies to support SoTL for some time and received them just before the review process. This has spurred on further activity with creating a larger community of researchers and a plethora of workshops and seminars dedicated to the SoTL movement. The Centre’s annual Learning Conference highlighted SoTL in 2011 which greatly enhanced the visibility and acceptance of SoTL on this campus and has had the benefit of educating more and more academic leaders in the benefits and value of SoTL ventures. The Centre has stepped up</p>

	<p>its contribution in time and consultations given toward scholarly teaching and researching.</p>
<p>18. Diversify the faculty career development programs beyond new faculty to include academic leadership support (e.g., programs for new Heads and Academic Program Directors).</p> <p>The relatively new and growing faculty complement at UBCO indicates that there will be ongoing need for leadership development training. At other Universities units like the CTL are engaged in supporting such development. This is a natural extension of work with new faculty. It does, however, require partnerships with other units and with senior faculty and the support of University administration.</p>	<p>Response: The Centre for Teaching and Learning recognizes the importance of faculty career development. This development is supported by the Provost and human resources. The Centre for Teaching and Learning is open to assisting if needed.</p>
<p>19. Increase staffing complement consistent with projected increase in programmatic activity as above. Consider the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Add a minimum of two new staff positions to support graduate student programming, curriculum (not course) innovation support and scholarship of teaching and learning administration. b. Strategically leverage faculty secondments, faculty cross appointments, visiting faculty, and staff exchanges. c. Support student involvement through undergraduate and graduate academic assistantships (work study, work-learn, co-op placements, internships, summer work study). 	<p>Response: The Centre for Teaching and Learning agrees there needs to be positions added as the responsibilities and programming is expanded. This past year we only were able to secure a Graduate Student/Teaching Assistant Coordinator as a term position. A Communications/Teaching Evaluation Coordinator was added in response to the CTL taking on the administration and coordination of the campus teaching evaluation. However, this position has not fulfilled our communications need as the majority of the position is needed to fulfill the teaching evaluation coordination. The CTL also is expanding its use of work study students. We try to strategically leverage faculty and have seconded one faculty member to direct the Centre for Scholarly Communication and are looking for other ways to provide leadership opportunities to faculty. We are also looking at ways of attracting visiting scholars/Post Docs to work with the CTL. Lastly we recognize the continued expansion of learning technology support needs. We feel it is imperative to hire additional e-Learning Instructional Support Specialists to meet demand and avoid staff burn out.</p>

<p>The current staff levels are barely sufficient to continue with existing CTL activity. Increases in graduate student numbers and expansion in the Centre’s mandate will necessitate additional growth in staff.</p>	
<p>20. In alignment with UBC’s Focus on People Plan, support leadership and scholarly growth of Centre Staff through professional development opportunities, budgeting appropriately to ensure availability (conference, travel, professional visits).</p> <p>Professional development opportunities for staff members are important. Sufficient funds (and time) must be found for staff members to attend conferences, prepare and present papers based on research or innovative practice, and continue to build their professional skills.</p>	<p>Response: The Centre for Teaching and Learning appreciates the importance of professional development. The CTL is expected to take a scholarly approach to their work and lead teaching and learning excellence on the Okanagan campus. In order to properly carry out this mission it is expected that Centre team members participate in teaching and learning conferences. This past year three CTL team members presented a poster and presentation at the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education national conference. To ensure active participation in conferences a budget has been proposed to senior administration for approval.</p>
<p>21. Consider delegation of some of the Centre’s operational/managerial responsibilities (possibly adding an Associate/Assistant Director responsible for program administration, partnerships tracking and human resources).</p> <p>The Director is a strong academic and administrative leader of the unit and is well connected with the stakeholder groups. The demands of the Director are significant and there is danger that the Centre would not function as well if he were, for example, to take a sabbatical or administrative leave. Perhaps more of the administrative management activities could be delegated to experienced staff. Perhaps other faculty members from across the University are interested in participating in or learning about</p>	<p>Response: The Centre for Teaching and Learning recognizes the importance of delegation of some managerial responsibilities from the Director. Some managerial responsibilities such as assistance with student work study supervision have been delegated to other team members. In addition some programming responsibilities such as peer mentoring have been delegated to other members of the CTL team. As the CTL grows it will become increasingly important to delegate responsibilities. The possibility of an Associate Director will be explored.</p>

<p>the academic leadership of the Centre.</p>	
<p>22. Make the Centre easier to find through more central physical positioning and increased visibility, particularly on the Home Page (under Faculty) and Quick Links of the UBC-Okanagan Website.</p> <p>While the work of the Centre seems to be well understood by many individuals from across the campus, there is a benefit to increased visibility. The upcoming move of the Centre's offices will be a positive step. The CTL is urged to continue to work on making known and promoting its activities and services.</p>	<p>Response: The Centre for Teaching and Learning appreciates the importance of visibility. Since the review the Centre has moved to a much more visible and accessible location that has proved to be very beneficial. We continue to work on our web site, blogging, tweeting, brochures, and monthly newsletters to promote visibility and understanding of our activities and services. We realize space is very precious on our campus, however would welcome designated seminar space. This would assist greatly with providing workshops without time limitations.</p>
<p>23. Continue to encourage Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, but clarify expectations of faculty with respect to career progression.</p> <p>Faculty expressed some questions regarding the relative weight placed upon SoTL accomplishments, with a wide range of opinions expressed as to when it is appropriate to engage in this type of research. A clear articulation of the distinction between scholarly approaches to teaching and learning and the scholarship of teaching and learning, with guidelines on how these two activities contribute to career advancement would support improved understanding and enable faculty members to participate appropriately.</p>	<p>Response: As discussed above the Centre for Teaching and Learning continues to expand support for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. We agree that the CTL should assist in clarifying how SoTL contributes to career advancement. This will be done through discourse and partnerships. At the annual Learning Conference SoTL and Scholarly Teaching was discussed and clarified. However, this conversation needs to continue and through a better understanding become part of the campus culture. In addition, the CTL is committed to working with other partners such as human resources in articulating SoTL in relation to tenure and promotion.</p>
<p>24. Continue to leverage the learning technology infrastructure of the UBC system, but develop a formal memorandum of understanding with appropriate units.</p> <p>In order to ensure a long-term healthy relationship between the two campuses,</p>	<p>Response: The Centre for Teaching and Learning appreciates the excellent learning technology partnership with UBC Vancouver.</p>

implement regular meetings regarding current and pending projects, service arrangements and resource requirements with UBC Vancouver Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology and UBC Vancouver Information Technology.	
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