

Centre for Learning and Teaching

focus

on university teaching and learning



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Note From the Director

As we consider how we want to innovate in our teaching to enhance student learning, we inevitably want to know how we might assess the impact of the changes we have made. Drawing on the existing scholarship of teaching and learning literature to frame our thinking and, in turn, contributing to that literature to share our teaching and learning discoveries with other educators, builds a community of scholars engaged in evidence-based practice. In this issue, colleagues share the results of their scholarly approaches to teaching and learning in their disciplines.



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**DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY**

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)



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What is SoTL?

“SoTL involves systematic study of teaching and/or learning and the public sharing and review of such work through presentations, performance or publications” (McKinney, 2006).

“This work can then inform teaching practice and also contribute to the broader development of scholarly teaching and learning knowledge.” (Simmons, 2016, p.7)

Background

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) has been part of the discipline of education for decades, albeit called by various names over the span of 20th century educational history. However, teachers, educational developers, administrators, and students still grapple with what constitutes excellence in teaching and question how to enhance the teaching and learning environment to facilitate student success. What have been the instigators that have facilitated universities and colleges to focus on the importance of ‘excellence’ in teaching and learning in higher education? A quick historical glance may put in perspective the events.

In 1990, Donald Kennedy, President of Stanford University, and author of the book *Academic Duty* (1997) made a presentation to the Academic Council because he felt that it was time to send a clear message to the institution about teaching expectations. In his speech he stated:

I believe we can have superb research and superb teaching too; and in support of that proposition I offer the example of departments, programs, and countless individual colleagues who have excelled at both. We need to talk about teaching more, respect and reward those who do it well, and make it first among our labors. It should be our labor of love and the personal responsibility of each one of us (1990, p.11).

The talk drew nationwide attention so much so that Stanford Trustee Peter Bing announced a considerable donation of \$7M “that has been successfully raised to reward teaching and support pedagogical

innovation” (Campus Report, 1991, p.1). This was one of the first instances where funding was provided to examine teaching and learning research. Also adding to the discourse in the 1990s, Ernest Boyer created his vision of different kinds of scholarship that included the scholarship of teaching (Boyer, 1990). His view of scholarship encompassed four functions of the professoriate, which were discovery, integration, application, and teaching. According to Boyer, within each of these functions there is a defined purpose, and measures of performance so that all forms of scholarship, including teaching, can be rewarded (ibid). Later, other universities and foundations followed Kennedy’s lead by making pedagogy and innovation part of their institutional values. In 1998 the Carnegie Foundation launched the CASTL program, which built on the conception of teaching as scholarly work; and the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) was formed in 2004. Through these institutions and programs, the idea that SoTL could not only contribute to the dissemination of knowledge surrounding evidenced-based teaching, but also enhance the teaching and learning process was beginning to be recognized.

The Canadian Context

Simmons and Poole (2016) outlined the growth of SoTL in Canada. They point out that “moving SoTL forward in Canada has thus been...somewhat different from other contexts because of jurisdictional and funding structures.” (p. 14). The Society of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) first identified, ‘Advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning’ as one of its four pillars in 2004. Subsequently, the vice-president of the SoTL pillar was responsible for developing a “definition of SoTL, communicating its importance, and developing a rationale and guidelines for post-secondary institutions” (ibid, p. 14). Later, with the support of STLHE and the Centre for Higher Education and Research, the first national Leadership Forum on SoTL was held in Ontario (2002). Between 2004 and 2009 there was much growth in Canada including: the development of a SoTL Advisory Panel in 2006; a partnership agreement between STLHE and ISSOTL acknowledging their similar missions in 2009 a second SoTL Leadership Forum; and the launch of the Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CJ SoTL) in 2010. Finally, in 2012 SoTL Canada was formed as a special interest

group of STLHE and aligned its goals with Poole, Taylor and Thompson’s (2007) call for action for SoTL (ibid). In addition to the national organizations, many universities have developed SoTL units such as Mount Royal University’s Institute for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, and specific workshops aimed at SoTL such as University of Calgary SoTL Project 3-Day Workshop. As one exemplar of many in Canada today, Ryerson’s Centre for the Advancement of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning contends that, “teaching is a dynamic endeavor involving all analogies...that build bridges between the teacher’s understanding and the student’s learning. In this way good teaching means that teachers, as scholars, are also learners” (<http://www.ryerson.ca/castl>).

SoTL Canada Today

In 2016 SoTL Canada (www.sotlcanada.stlhe.ca) became an affiliate of STLHE meaning that, for the first time, its chair is an ex-officio member of the Board of Directors of STLHE. One of the purposes of SoTL Canada is to provide a targeted opportunity for SoTL scholars to form a community to share findings and challenges, to engage in opportunities for broader dissemination of SoTL work, and to consider ways to catalyze SoTL initiatives at the institutional, regional, national, and international levels. This can be accomplished through scholarly work in teaching and learning with the aim to improve teaching and create a knowledge base for the improvement of teaching and learning in Canada and elsewhere. The membership is open to any members-in-good-standing of STLHE.

The goals of SoTL Canada are:

- Engage in a community of practice of SoTL scholars for the purpose of shared resources, research, and problem-solving regarding SoTL issues and questions.
- Create and contribute to multiple approaches to the dissemination of scholarship about teaching and learning in higher education.
- Collaborate on effective approaches to building a SoTL culture at institutional, regional, national, and international levels.
- Serve as a resource and mentoring body for those seeking SoTL information and support.
- To advocate at all levels, based on the above, for the importance and value of SoTL in enhancing post-secondary student learning.

Currently, SoTL Canada is collaborating with other groups to: map SoTL in Canada; develop a national SoTL mentorship program; and, review ethics guidelines in Canada for SoTL work.

SoTL at Dalhousie

The Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT) at Dalhousie has supported funding for teaching and learning projects for several years. Previously, these grants focused on ‘Teaching with Technology’ and provided funding for projects using innovative technology. However, over the last four years the CLT has developed a new ‘Teaching Scholarship Grants’ program focused on funding projects that address the ‘Design and Development’ of new courses and/or programs and the ‘Assessment of Impact on Student Learning’ (dal.ca/clt). Between 2014 and 2016, over 20 projects were funded. The recipients have presented at local and national conferences and more than four publications have been generated from the work carried on through this funding – a sample of these publications is contained in this issue. In addition to the CLT funding program, the Academic Innovation Fund through the Office of the AVP Academic supports projects within three categories ranging in amounts from \$500 to \$50,000 (dal.ca/dept/DALVision). A designated position at the CLT has been created to focus on the promotion and support of SoTL at Dalhousie. In addition to infrastructure and dedicated workshops, Williams and colleagues urge that SoTL must be “woven into the fabric of our institutions” (Williams et al., 2013, p. 50) which, they state, requires shared values across an entire institution through effective network communication. Following this issue of *Focus*, in the coming months SoTL grant recipients and others will be meeting to discuss ideas surrounding the development of SoTL and how best to move forward to generate ways to increase interest in evidenced-based teaching practices and SoTL work at Dalhousie.

We are very excited about this edition of the CLT *Focus* Newsletter that highlights four recipients of the CLT Teaching Scholarship Grant Program. The first article by Shelley Cobbett and Erna Snelgrove-Clarke of the School of Nursing (Yarmouth) examines the differences between two types of clinical simulations in nursing education. In the second article Talan Işcan of the Department of Economics, describes his work on the development of a web-based tool

entitled *EconDesign* that enables students to complete their assignments using a decision-tree approach. Karen Gallant describes her work surrounding implementation of experiential learning in an integrated curriculum in the Leisure Studies Program, School of Health and Human Performance. In the final article Jenny Baechler, Faculty of Management, discusses the collaborative teaching project that was developed through the Management Without Borders program. We hope that by highlighting the work of some of Dalhousie’s teaching scholarship grant recipients it will generate discussion and interest among colleagues about the value and possibilities of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning work.

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Virtual and High-fidelity Manikin Clinical Simulation Research at Dalhousie School of Nursing: Summary Findings from a Randomized Control Trial



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Within professional education programs it is imperative that students have opportunities to apply their theoretical learning within practice settings to assist them in their transformation from student to professional. Recent changes in our health care system models of care including organizational restructuring, decreased clinical placement areas, increased student admission numbers, and the pending projected shortage of registered nurses (Fronda, Liu, & Bauman, 2013; Hayden, 2010), are challenges which nurse educators are facing as they attempt to provide nursing students with high quality and relevant nursing practice placement experiences. Maternal child nursing practice has additional practice placement challenges including a decrease in the birth rate and early hospital postpartum discharge of mother and baby (Sanchez-Birkhead et al., 2012), as well as the eroding of the opportunity for women and their families to give birth at a rural hospital. Feelings of inadequate preparation for new nurses to provide maternal child nursing care have been reported (MacKinnon et al., 2015).

Education and practice challenges collided and sparked conversations as to how we can best prepare nursing students to care for mothers and their infants. We looked to the clinical simulation literature for guidance and found a wealth of information related to the efficacy and efficiency of high-fidelity simulations (Fisher & King, 2013; Garrett, MacPhee, & Jackson, 2011; Kim-Godwin et al., 2013; Lewis, Strachan, & Smith, 2012; Lindsay & Jenkins, 2013). We also found a sparsity of literature related to the advantages or effectiveness of virtual clinical simulations (Cant & Cooper, 2014). As such, we decided to conduct a

randomized control trial (RCT) to see if there were differences between virtual clinical simulation (VCS) and face-to-face (F2F) high fidelity clinical simulation.

Method

A pretest-posttest, randomized experimental design was selected to evaluate the effectiveness of two simulations, VCS (vSim® for Nursing co-developed by Laedral and Wolters Kluwer Health from Lippincott) and a F2F high fidelity manikin clinical simulation, among 56 third year maternal child nursing students. Students were randomized to one of two groups and further randomized within each group to one of 21 student dyads to complete both VCS and F2F simulations. The research question was: What effect does VCS and F2F simulations have on third year undergraduate nursing students' knowledge, anxiety level, self-confidence, and self-reported preference, when caring for pregnant women experiencing preeclampsia or Group B Strep (GBS)?

Following university ethical approval (REB # 2014-3336), data collection was completed with pre/post knowledge tests for GBS and preeclampsia. We developed, for the study, 10 multiple-choice questions per clinical simulation. Student anxiety level and perceived self-confidence data was collected with the Nursing Anxiety and Self-Confidence with Clinical Decision Making Scale (NASC-CDM) (White, 2011). This self-report, six-choice, Likert-type instrument has 27 items in two subscales of self-confidence and anxiety and took 10-15 minutes for students to complete. The NASC-CDM instrument has demonstrated validity ($\alpha = .96$ for anxiety, and $.97$ for self-confidence); higher scores indicating higher perceived self-confidence and anxiety.

Student perceptions about the clinical simulation experiences were collected at the end of the study using the Clinical Simulation Completion Questionnaire; developed specifically for use within this study. Using this questionnaire, we collected demographic information (e.g., age, gender, and previous university degree), self-reported technical competence, and student clinical simulation mode preference.

Results and Discussion

SPSS 22 for Windows was used for data entry and analysis. Differences in baseline characteristics were assessed by direct comparison (i.e., means, SD, and proportions) while differences in level of knowledge (post-tests) were assessed by independent sample t-tests (knowledge, anxiety and self-confidence). We adhered to the intention to treat principles. We used content analysis to summarize student simulation mode preference, and rationale for their choice.

Results from the independent sample t-tests revealed that there were no significant differences in post-simulation preeclampsia test scores [F2F (M = 4.80, SD = 1.19); VCS (M = 4.12, SD = 1.54); $t(48) = 1.75$, $p = .09$] or GBS test scores [F2F (M = 6.82, SD = 1.25); VCS (M = 6.40, SD = 1.73); $t(51) = 1.02$, $p = .31$], between students who did the VCS versus those that completed the F2F simulation. Simulation mode had a statistically significant effect on students' self-reported anxiety levels ($t = -3.2$; $p = .002$) with student anxiety levels significantly higher for the VCS group (M = 73.26) as compared to the F2F group (M = 57.75). Mode of simulation, however, did not have a statistically significant difference ($t = 1.93$; $p = .059$) on students' self-confidence.

The majority of students reported that they preferred the F2F simulation versus the VCS; however almost half of the students indicated their reason for not liking the VCS was related to technological issues, (i.e., "online program was slow", "didn't know where to find things", "platform was confusing"). In future research, it would be important to have an orientation activity built into the study design so that when the study VCS scenario is presented, students will be able to focus on the content of the simulation rather than learning the computer program.

Limitations to this study included: the threat of testing; a small sample size and identified intervening variables of student motivation; and, interest and perceived technological competence. Random assignment to groups helped to mitigate pre-intervention differences.

In conclusion, students' self-confidence and knowledge gain appear to be equivalent whether they participated in a VCS or a F2F high-fidelity manikin clinical simulation in relation to maternal child nursing. With similar student learning outcomes, the cost, benefits and risks of implementing VCS as opposed to F2F

simulation need further investigation to inform curricula planning and development.

The published manuscript for this study is available at <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0260691716301514>

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University-Wide Teaching Awards

Deadline to apply is February 27, 2017

Dalhousie Alumni Association Award of Excellence for Teaching

One award will be presented annually. Nominees for this award will normally have ten or more years of teaching experience. Candidates must be full-time faculty or instructors at Dalhousie University.

Award Includes: \$2,000 towards the professional development of the recipient's teaching

Early Career Faculty Award of Excellence for Teaching

Nominees for this award will be full-time faculty or instructors at Dalhousie with a minimum of three years teaching and fewer than ten years teaching experience in their current role.

Award Includes: \$1,000 towards the professional development of the recipient

Contract and Limited-Term Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching

Candidates must be a full-time contract or limited-term faculty member of the Dalhousie University teaching staff. A teaching record extending more than two years at Dalhousie is expected.

Award Includes: \$500 to the recipient

Sessional and Part-time Instructor Award for Excellence in Teaching

Candidates must be a part-time member of the Dalhousie University teaching staff. A teaching record extending over several years and including the teaching of more than one course is expected.

Award Includes: \$500 to the recipient

Award for Excellence in Graduate Supervision

Excellence in graduate supervision is recognized as the successful mentorship of graduate students through an enriching, supportive and productive learning environment.

Award Includes: \$1,000 towards the professional development of the recipient

2017 Call for Nominations

Award for Excellence in Education for Diversity

This award will be presented to an instructor who has enhanced the Dalhousie teaching and learning environment through excellence in education for diversity.

Award Includes: \$1,000 towards the professional development of the recipient

Academic Innovation Award

This award is for an individual who has developed an innovation that has resulted in a sustained impact on student learning at Dalhousie.

Award Includes: \$2,000 towards either a future innovation project related to teaching and learning, or the ongoing evaluation of their current innovation

Educational Leadership Award for Collaborative Teaching

This award recognizes the collaborative work of a team of colleagues whose leadership has made a significant contribution to student learning at the department, faculty, or institutional level.

Award Includes: \$3,000 to the department or Faculty leading the initiative to continue to assess the impact of their innovation, or to support future innovation related to teaching and learning

President's Graduate Student Teaching Award

This award is open to all qualified graduate student instructors (currently registered Master's and Ph.D. candidates).

Up to *three* awards will be presented annually.

Award Includes: \$500 per recipient

For additional information please contact

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https://www.dal.ca/dept/clt/awards_grants/Awards.html

Helping Students Succeed: Meet this Year's Dal Teaching Award Winners

Originally published in DalNews, Michelle Soucy and Ryan McNutt - May 11, 2016

Whether it's teaching a class or supervising a thesis... whether it's a long-time faculty member, a new recruit or a part-time academic... every day, hundreds of instructors across the university are making a difference in the lives of Dal's students.

Some of those who make the largest impact are being recognized this year with Dalhousie's university-wide teaching awards. Organized through the Centre for Learning and Teaching, the awards cover several different categories — from academic innovation to graduate supervision — and recognize outstanding achievement in teaching and pedagogy across disciplines.

Last year, the awards expanded to include several new categories, and this year marks the first time one of those new awards is being presented: the Educational Leadership Award for Collaborative Teaching.

Dalhousie Alumni Association Award of Excellence for Teaching **Anne Marie Ryan (Department of Earth Sciences)**



This year's top award for teaching is being presented to Anne Marie Ryan. Dr. Ryan has been with Dalhousie since 2001. She is being recognized for her leadership in developing programs for early career faculty within the Faculty of Science and the expansion to a "Community of Teaching Practice, Faculty of Science," as well as her her scholarly contributions to pedagogic research. One student noted that, "Anne Marie is a great prof whose dedication and love for geology is evident through her teaching styles and enthusiasm."

Academic Innovation Award **Brenda Sabo (School of Nursing)**



Brenda Sabo has been with the School of Nursing since 2006 and is the 2016 recipient of the Academic Innovation Award. Dr. Sabo's innovative teaching approach focuses on using arts and performance to connect Nursing students to the actual community in which they will serve in the future. This approach provided a safe and experiential environment for students to foster a deeper understanding of the affective elements related to their coursework.

Early Career Faculty Award of Excellence for Teaching **Cheryl Murphy (Department of Psychiatry)**



Cheryl Murphy has been an assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry since 2005 and has held a cross appointment in the Division of Medical Education since 2009. Dr. Murphy is being recognized in particular for her continued and consistent strive for excellence. She has authored and presented numerous pieces in her field and on teaching and learning in medical education. She serves on several local and national committees dedicated to education and is a highly valued and active member of the Education Management Team in the Department of Psychiatry.

Award for Excellence in Graduate Supervision

Christine Chambers (Department of Psychology and Neuroscience)



Christine Chambers, over the course of 13 years, has supervised 12 outstanding clinical doctoral students. Under Dr. Chambers guidance, her students have achieved a remarkable level of academic success in terms of publications and awards, and many show great leadership potential in clinical psychology and child pain.

Contract and Sessional Instructor Award of Excellence for Teaching

Laura Eramian (Department of Sociology and Anthropology)



Laura Eramian has been with Dalhousie on a limited term basis since 2011. Over that time Dr. Eramian has taught a total of nine distinct undergraduate courses at all levels. She was noted as an inspiration to students, many of whom credited Laura for their undertaking of an honour's or master's degree.

Educational Leadership Award for Collaborative Teaching

Management 5000, Management Without Borders (Faculty of Management)



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FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT

Jenny Baechler (Rowe School of Business)

Scott Comber (Rowe School of Business)

Jeff Fiesen (School of Information Management)

Sandra Toze (School of Information Management)

Becky Field (Marine Affairs Program)

Karen Beazley (School for Resource and Environmental Studies)

Liz Wilson (Faculty of Management)

The Management Without Borders team is the first group to receive this award since the 2014 extension of the university-wide teaching awards. Management 5000 is a required class for all the Faculty of Management's on-site graduate programs (the CRMBA, MLIS, MPA, MES, and MREM) and collaboratively taught by faculty members from each of the schools. The group was recognized in particular for the way in which the course is designed and run, which models what it teaches by mirroring the interdisciplinary and multi-professional collaborative team environment of the modern workplace. The teaching team was also cited for its demonstration of clear evidence of the course's impact on the education of its participants as well as benefit to the community.

EconAssign: A New Online Assignment Tool for Undergraduate Research



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Abstract

EconAssign is a web-based tool that allows instructors to structure assignments using a decision-tree approach. Research invariably involves decisions at critical junctures. Often, these decisions reflect the degree of difficulty in

what comes ahead or are dictated by earlier choices concerning methodology. The tool makes these junctures explicit to students, and requires them to justify their choices. It allows for a diversity of approaches to address an issue, the scope of which is determined by the instructor and allows students to articulate their thought process.

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While undergraduate teaching increasingly emphasizes active learning and independent research (e.g., Research Skill Development, 2014), we as instructors often face practical (e.g., class size), and field- or content-specific challenges in implementing such ideals in our classrooms. Upon some reflection, however, most of these challenges seem to boil down to one tension inherent in undergraduate research projects: scope. Are we going to let the students wander into the wilderness of the unknown and sort things out for themselves, as we do in our own research that pushes the boundaries of knowledge and interpretation? Or, are we going to present them with a 'check list' of guidelines, streamlining every single

step they will be taking—an undoubtedly labour-saving strategy for marking? My own struggle with this tension has led me to rethink my assignments in an advance-level economics course that I have been regularly teaching at Dalhousie. My solution to this tension has been a new online teaching tool, which I call *EconAssign* (after its domain name)—though its actual implementation is not discipline or topic specific.

The main idea behind the *EconAssign* software is that all assignments can be structured as decision trees. A decision tree with a single branch corresponds to a tightly structured lab experiment or interpretation of a predetermined source of evidence (data or text). A decision tree with many branches allows for considerable flexibility in addressing a problem using a variety of sources or methods. With this control over scope in mind, *EconAssign* disciplines the process by explicitly requiring the instructor to specify the number of branches in an assignment. A specific example from my course on International Finance may help. Suppose that to make a persuasive argument, students need to collect data on the exchange rate. In theory, the exchange rate is a simple concept, but in any research design it can be complex because there is a diversity of sources, ranging from official to commercial. They all use different references; such as mid-day exchange rate or the closing rate. They all report these using different frequencies; like daily or monthly. If I choose the International Financial Statistics (IFS) from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), I have a reputable source, but only at monthly or lower frequency. If I choose a commercial source, I may have daily, even hourly rates. Furthermore, if I prefer to use the commercial source over IFS, this will affect my choices later on. Such decision 'nodes' are familiar to seasoned researchers, as we routinely make these types of decisions, and often times we do not even articulate them in our written work as they become a norm. If I do not structure and present a menu of choices to my students, they can easily become overwhelmed by the complexity, and quit. So, at each 'node' along the decision tree, I offer them choices that I think are appropriate for their level. Once the student makes a choice, a box

pops up on the screen, prompting them to reason why they have made this choice; this allows me to have a window on their thought processes, and stimulates purposeful reasoning. As the assignment proceeds, the student does not need to see the path that is not relevant given their choice (unless they are curious, or decide to change their responses midstream). Once the student completes the assignment and pushes the submit button, the entire set of choices they made, and their reasoning for each choice, automatically become part of a document printed in PDF format. In my course, students submit this document as an appendix to their main text, which focuses on their motivation, analysis and conclusion in a concise format. However, this design is not essential; depending on the needs of the course, the decision tree and the ensuing boxes for reasoning can be easily structured towards the final report. Overall, the decision tree allows students to appreciate the plurality in research, articulate their thought processes, gives students some control over the difficulty of their assignment, makes them appreciate the fact that research is not always a linear process, and permits me to have considerable control over the scope, without turning each assignment into either a collection of essays that are “all over the map” or clones of each other.

The implementation of this decision tree approach to assignments takes place on a web-based tool programmed specifically for this purpose. The software has two main interfaces; one for the instructor, and the other for the students. The instructor has privileges such as adding courses, students, and assignments. The main novelty is that the assignments have to be ‘built’ first by editing all the questions and the choices associated with the questions, and then mapping each choice to the subsequent ‘node’ in the decision tree. The student interface is similar to an online survey, whereby questions appear on the screen sequentially, and depending on the choice indicated by the student, the software takes the student to the next question. The software has already been implemented in a course, and has been well-received.

EconAssign is a novel software. It is not a commercial product. It is available to the Dalhousie community. If you wish to explore it further or are interested in implementing *EconAssign*, please contact the author.

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1. Design and/or Development

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These grants are aimed at supporting the following:

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Making Community-based Experiential Learning Meaningful to Everyone



Karen Gallant, PhD, School of Health and Human Performance, Faculty of Health Professions

Project team: Lara Fenton, Melanie Fingold (student), Karen Gallant, Barb Hamilton-Hinch, Susan Hutchinson, Braden Kingdon (student), Laurene Rehman, Jerry Singleton

An integrated curriculum combines formerly independent courses into longer blocks of experiential interdisciplinary learning. Inspired by several other undergraduate Recreation and Leisure programs in North America that have introduced an integrated curriculum, faculty members in Recreation and Leisure Studies embarked on research with students and community organizations to learn about their experiences with current experiential opportunities and to explore together the possibilities of an integrated curriculum. Our hope was that integrated experiential opportunities would be less resource-intensive for faculty, students, and community organizations, while expanding opportunities for reflection, analysis, and critique.

With a Design and Development Grant from the Centre for Learning and Teaching at Dalhousie, we recruited a student in each of our undergraduate programs (Therapeutic Recreation and Recreation Management) to join us to create a research team for the project. Our project addressed the research question: *How do undergraduate Recreation and Leisure Studies university programs facilitate and integrate opportunities for students to engage and reflect on (community-based) experiential learning?* Together, we conducted four focus groups with undergraduate students, four individual interviews with community organizations, and accepted several written submissions from students. (As part of this project, we also conducted 10 interviews with faculty at other universities who use principles of integrated curriculum within their recreation-related programs; these data are not presented here but are described elsewhere (Fenton & Gallant, in press). Overall, the data from the student and community practitioner participants were represented by the themes of value, context, and relationships, which together reflect the

essential components of meaningful experiential education.

Students and community practitioner participants both expressed that there must be value in being involved in an experiential learning opportunity and that all participants (i.e., the community organization, students, and instructor) must recognize the meaningful nature of involvement. For students, feeling that an experience is valuable is associated with a sense of meaningful contribution to an organization. One student said she would ask herself: *“Are we actually contributing? Are we actually being a part of what’s going on here?”*

With respect to the theme of context, the thoughtful design and implementation of experiential education opportunities was identified as fundamental. Logistics, time requirements, intention, and preparedness were sub-themes or key aspects of the context for meaningful experiential opportunities. For example: having an on-site coordinator ensures that experiential opportunities are explicitly linked to learning outcomes; instructors need to provide adequate time for ongoing, structured opportunities for student reflection; course listings should include time for experiential learning in course requirements; and, the program should promote the shared understanding of the purpose, goals, and intended process for experiential learning.

Strong *relationships* were seen as a means of engaging all those involved (students, instructors, community practitioners) as co-learners, and were viewed as foundational to the experience of mutual benefit for all involved. In our research, strong relationships endured for years and facilitated the co-creation of experiential opportunities rather than experiences developed by the instructor and ‘implemented’ in the community. Community practitioners suggested that this relationship should begin as early as possible, so that experiential learning opportunities can be co-created. Further, students could be engaged in a specific community setting in different ways through the course of their degree program, allowing them to develop a sense of comfort and competency in a specific community setting.

Based on the data and emergent themes, we suggest the following recommendations for constructing meaningful community-based experiential opportunities:

1. Ensure ongoing communication between instructors and community organizations. Ideally, this should happen in the context of relationships that endure beyond the end of a single semester or experiential opportunity, and should be formed prior to the design of an experiential opportunity to allow for co-creation.
2. Create meaningful opportunities for authentic engagement; students should have real opportunities to contribute.
3. Ensure that the time and energy required of students in their placements is adequately reflected in the assessment of their grade and in all documentation about the course, including the academic calendar.
4. Create regular, independent written assignments and opportunities for group discussions that allow for reflection on the placement experience.
5. Allow students to have an influence on at least some of the course content that is covered so that they can learn material that is relevant to their current community experience.
6. Support a program coordinator who can organize student placements and coordinate all stakeholders.
7. Consider creating more student-directed engagement opportunities as students return to the same organization as they progress through their degree.

Conclusion

The focus on the nature of experiential education should be equally meaningful for students, community practitioners, instructors and facilitators. To create experiential opportunities that are meaningful to all involved, all stakeholders need to understand their roles within the broader context of service and learning, and to feel part of a long-term relationship and mutually-valuable partnership. Developing an integrated curriculum may make it possible for students and faculty to devote the time necessary to creating such relationships.

We've been able to implement some aspects of our findings—for example, being more systematic in building students' skills and providing progressively more demanding experiential opportunities each year. Limited resources have kept us from acting on our findings as much as we'd like (implementing an integrated curriculum, for example), but we are hopeful that we can continue to make incremental changes each year.

You can learn more about our research through the following publications:

Fenton, L., & Gallant, K. (in press). Integrated experiential education: Definitions and a conceptual model. *Canadian Journal of Teaching and Learning*.

Gallant, K., Fenton, L., Hamilton-Hinch, B., Hutchinson, S., Rehman, L., & Singleton, J. (in press). Community-based experiential education: Making it meaningful to students means making it meaningful for everyone. *Schole: A Journal of Leisure Studies and Recreation Education*.

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Spanning Boundaries: The Many Dimensions of Collaborative Teaching

“Consider any pressing challenge that leaders and organizations face today, and one hallmark is certain—it cuts across vertical, horizontal, stakeholder, demographic, and geographic boundaries. Collective problems, by definition, require collaborative solutions.”, (Yip, Ernst & Campbell, 2016, p. 8).



Jenny Baechler, Ph.D.
Rowe School of Business

Developing skills associated with cross-boundary collaboration is at the heart of the Faculty of Management’s graduate-level course Management Without Borders (MWB). Launched in the fall of 2006, MWB is a decade-long collaborative undertaking between the four¹ Schools of which the Faculty is comprised: the Rowe School of Business; the School of Information Management; the School for Resource and, Environmental Studies and the School of Public Administration. Each fall more than one hundred second-year graduate students participate in MWB and its community-based group project assignment. Through projects that are hosted by partner organizations from across Nova Scotia, students are provided with the opportunity to experience the challenges and opportunities of collaboration.

We believe that the careers they will embark upon after graduation will involve some degree of boundary spanning. Their career paths will require that they navigate organizations characterized by teams that are tasked to work toward a common goal, but bring to the collective, a breadth of technical skills, cultural reference points and professional experiences and assumptions. These cross-boundary teams present a great opportunity for innovative problem solving (Deloitte, 2011; O’Leary & Gerard, 2012); however, they can be challenging for both team members and team leaders. The MWB curriculum has been designed, and continuously refined, to simulate this complex and dynamic team environment. While the cross-boundary team is a common reality in the modern workplace, replicating this environment in a classroom setting is not easily accomplished. The Faculty of Management at Dalhousie University is in a unique position, due to its four Schools, the interdisciplinary composition of its graduate student

body and the Faculty’s focus on experiential learning, to provide this collaborative learning experience

While our students tackle the complexities of this learning environment, another parallel experience in cross-boundary collaboration is occurring at the level of curriculum development and course delivery. Our teaching team comprises a course coordinator, four faculty coaches (one assigned from each of the participating Schools) and a team of teaching assistants. Together the faculty team works to ensure that optimal strategies are in place for student learning, that every effort is made to ensure fairness and consistency in the evaluation of assignments, and that the various perspectives and worldviews of the contributing Schools are woven within the fabric of the course. I have had the privilege of being the MWB Course Coordinator since its inception. This article has provided me with an opportunity to reflect on the evolution of MWB and share a few of my thoughts about the conditions and factors that allow a collaborative teaching model to thrive and advance an innovative approach to management education.

Our collaborative teaching experience has benefited significantly from high levels of institutional support within our Faculty and the individual Schools. The support has come in the way of faculty resources: the course coordinator role; funds for a closing conference to showcase the tremendous work of both students and our partner organizations; and, a faculty-member assigned from each of the participating Schools. These are significant investments. However, in my mind, an equally critical investment has been the conceptual understanding on the part of Faculty and School leadership that the pursuit of innovation in teaching and learning is a long-term commitment. I remember one of our champions telling me sometime around year two that it would take five years for the course to take root. He was right! The consequences of a quick launch (about three months) and a need for the course to fulfill different curriculum objectives to the different programs were two of the major hurdles we faced in the first five years. It took multiple iterations

¹ Until 2016, MWB also included students from the Marine Affairs Program (MAP). As such, its development has benefited greatly from involvement with the students, faculty and staff in MAP.

to achieve a focused, shared mandate, and a sense of purpose to emerge for the course, for the collaborative teaching model to mature. During this time the teaching team worked together with the respective Schools and with detailed student feedback to carve out the MWB's place within the various programmatic curricula.

Collaborative teaching in the context of MWB also required an investment in time by the teaching team. Some weeks our teaching team spent more time in meetings with each other than interacting with our students. This is no small undertaking, but was (and still is) a necessary commitment to ensure our collective understanding of assignments, classroom material, grading and the student experience, is a shared one. Moreover, it was through our regular and deliberate communication that we observed the boundaries that existed within our own team – the small (and sometimes not-so-small) differences in perspective, language, teaching philosophies emerged in this shared space. Navigating these differences better equipped us all to speak with our students about the themes that underpinned the course. We encouraged our students to look to the differences, the tensions and the boundaries as the foundation for innovative problem solving. Our collaborative teaching model

allowed us to know first hand that this sage advice is easier said than done! Yet, we have also experienced what it is like to see a new idea emerge from the collision of different mindsets – an idea that we might not have generated on our own.

MWB is a collaboration amongst a large community of people: faculty, staff, administrators and hundreds of graduate students who have taken the course over the past decade. Our current teaching team² would like to thank all who have been involved for their many contributions! We look forward to its continuous evolution.

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² Dr. Scott Comber, Dr. Sandra Toze, Dr. Karen Beazley, Dr. Stephane Mechoulan, Liz Wilson, Lee Pominville, Elizabeth Edmondson and David Foster.

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