

# TEACHING + LEARNING CENTRE

## PROGRESS REPORT

September 10th, 2010 (revised October 15, 2010)

As of September 1, SFU has a new Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) <http://www.sfu.ca/tlcentre>. Using the TLC's new mandate as the framework, this report is intended to inform interested parties about the centre's activities during our transitioning, changes and directions, as well as to invite feedback.

### Introduction

In Spring 2010, SFU's VP Academic accepted the recent Task Force on Teaching and Learning's recommendation to "Establish a new, highly-integrated, coordinated and extensive teaching and learning support system that fosters the exchange of ideas and promotion of teaching between teachers within and between programs, between teaching support staff from different venues in the university, and between teachers and teaching support staff". The sub-recommendation to, "Create a Coordinated University Teaching and Learning Support Unit" was also accepted.

From spring to mid-summer, discussions about the functions of a new teaching and learning support unit, its mandate and its placement within SFU's teaching and learning support network occurred. During this time an interim director was appointed to facilitate the realignment, reorganization and restructuring of the Learning and Instructional Development Centre, a Teaching Centre Advisory Group (TCAG) was formed, and September 1, 2010 was set as the launch date for the new centre. In mid-July, the centre's new mandate and name were finalized.

**The mandate of the Teaching and Learning Centre is to enable faculty members and instructional staff to provide high quality learning experiences for SFU students at all three campuses. Our activities include general and discipline-specific approaches and we engage in internal and external partnerships to support institutional strategic priorities.**

**We:**

- **Foster a positive community and culture around teaching and learning as we communicate initiatives and practices by collaborating with academic and administrative departments, instructors, staff, and students;**
- **Enable growth, independence, and a scholarly approach to teaching, for future and current instructors at various points in their career, by responding to the evolving needs and issues regarding teaching and learning at SFU.**
- **Support the design, development, implementation and evaluation of effective teaching and learning experiences; and**
- **Provide creative media services that enhance teaching and learning experiences.**

Staff members have embraced transitioning and the possibilities it can offer. Working around existing commitments and pre-planned schedules, many staff have taken active roles in examining and defining our work based on directions for the new centre. Conversations about the centre and its services with stakeholders have begun and will continue to inform the centre's redefinition over the next several months. During this period of redevelopment we are re-examining our practice, approach, programming and roles. Building on our strengths and our new mandate as our guide, our focus is to align the centre with institutional directions and assist SFU instructors.

As part of the VP Academic's vision for SFU's teaching and learning support system/network, the centre joined Continuing Studies on September 13, 2010. The teaching centre's development will occur organically with strategic planning based on institutional directions, the academic plan and details unfolding by working more closely with Faculties, departments, programs and other service units and as synergies across service units are explored. As of September 1, SFU has a new Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) <http://www.sfu.ca/tlcentre>. Using the TLC's new mandate as the framework, this report is intended to inform interested parties about the centre's activities during our transitioning, changes and directions, as well as to invite feedback.

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### Faculty members and instructional staff at all three campuses

The availability of educational and creative media services currently remains unchanged at the various campuses. The demand for TLC services at the Vancouver and Surrey campuses requires review, and conversations with these campuses have begun. New drop-in and appointment services for one-on-one instructor consultations are being planned for all three campuses, as well as changes to signage to improve the centre's visibility. Renovations are currently being designed for the Burnaby office's front area to provide a more welcoming and open area for informal gatherings and consultation. Specific TLC staff have been designated to explore the needs and interests of the Faculties.

### General and discipline-specific approaches and partnerships

The centre is shifting from the instructional designer and program director model to a consultative role that supports discipline-specific approaches and a networked support model. Starting with existing resources, new "educational consultant" roles have been created to consult in specific faculties or with other units, being liaisons to support the teaching network within the disciplines.

A significant change to the TLC's general approach is to identify and work with teaching specialists and expertise already within the faculties and other units, to connect SFU instructors with each other, to enable faculty-led initiatives, to follow a more consultative and creative approach, and to be cognizant of campus and disciplinary practices and culture. The TLC will also work closely with the University Teaching Fellows and Program Teaching Mentors as these roles are developed institutionally to support the envisioned teaching and learning support system. Partnerships with other service units is being explored and established with many more intended.

Teaching enhancement programming is being reviewed and offerings have been put on hold to establish a new planning and delivery framework. New programming will start this fall and over the next year and will include general and discipline-specific offerings. We are piloting new approaches and welcome community participation and feedback.

### The diversity of learners, learning experiences and instructional roles

SFU offers a broad range of learning experiences ranging from credit, non-credit courses and specialized programs or opportunities through service learning, experiential learning, cooperative learning, peer-based learning, learning in the field, labs, etc. As well, our instructional staff includes faculty and sessional instructors who teach undergraduate, graduate and non-credit courses, in addition to teaching assistants, tutor-markers and staff who instruct. All of whom work with members of SFU's diverse student population. In discussions with the Faculties and other units, the TLC is in the process of identifying priorities and potential collaborations to raise awareness of these opportunities and roles to better support SFU instructors in achieving their goals towards student learning.

### Community and culture around teaching and learning

This is a new focus area for the teaching centre. Integrated, multi-faceted activities are being planned to bring together members of SFU's teaching and learning support network, to facilitate communications and to showcase teaching and learning experiences. Efforts to increase awareness of communications and community activities and to encourage contributions by university community members will be facilitated by a communications coordinator.

Specific activities which are underway include SFU's teaching and learning website <http://www.sfu.ca/teachlearn>. This site has been updated to include more dynamic content and stories from around the university. This is a work in progress with goals towards increased ownership and contributions of content by the university community. In addition, SFU's teaching and learning bulletin is under development and its first issue due out this fall.

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This is an electronic bulletin that is interconnected with the institutional teaching and learning website. The bulletin will contain highlights with institutional-level teaching and learning news, stories from across the three campuses, faculties, and the broad range of student learning experiences at SFU and from instructor, student and staff perspectives. An editorial board and initial process for submissions of teaching and learning articles is being established. Development of SFU's teaching and learning website will be organic and based on community directions. A longer-term goal is to create an interconnected SFU teaching support site based on user (instructor) input.

The TLC will embark on two activities to recognize and celebrate SFU's in-house expertise. The first is a showcase of SFU's Teaching Excellence Award recipients. This fall, the TLC is updating the photo gallery at the SFU Burnaby library, creating a basic virtual gallery of teaching award recipients using existing technologies. A more dynamic gallery will be developed using SFU's new content management system next year. The second is to showcase faculty-led inquiry within teaching and learning. For several years, faculty-led inquiry projects have been funded through the Institute for the Study of Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines. The TLC will now be involved, (see next section) assisting in showcasing the projects, people and its communities through the creation of the Institute's website.

### **Growth, independence, and a scholarly approach to teaching**

The TLC will strive to develop our activities in a manner that focuses on instructors' strengths, is mindful of their workload and time, offers possible solutions and is developmental, responsive and flexible in nature. The centre will be looking at ways to support instructor/faculty-led development opportunities.

In addition to the TLC's existing services to support the design, development, implementation and inquiry into effective teaching and learning experiences, the centre is increasing its role in supporting a scholarly approach to teaching. The TLC is partnering with the Institute for the Study of Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines on a number of fronts. Sponsored by the VP Academic, teaching development research grants will be available to SFU faculty members who are interested in individual projects or larger-scale exploration of interdisciplinary teaching, curriculum development, or innovation. Criteria are being developed and the roles of educational consultants within these projects has yet to be determined. As well, roles for grant recipients in leading teaching development activities, participating in communities of practice or providing input into the TLC's directions and programming are being considered.

### **Evolving teaching and learning needs and issues**

A critical lens is being applied to develop the TLC's directions. In order for planning to be strategic and in alignment with institutional needs, we need to be informed by the teaching and learning community. One example of this is a focus on teaching issues, rather than previous leanings towards techniques, tools and technologies. Secondly, we will be proactive in anticipating our offerings by keeping abreast of institutional directions, raising awareness and encouraging discussion about these directions. Third, we are looking towards offering a continuum of programming which includes conversations and community-building rather than an emphasis on one-off workshops. Existing offerings are being examined for their fit within a broader teaching issue.

As well, to help provide a framework for our continuum of offerings over the next year, we have identified three themes. The three interrelated themes are: Today's SFU Student, Student Diversity in Teaching and Learning, and Teaching Large Classes. Employing themes will help the TLC start to unpack important teaching and learning issues for many SFU instructors, make efficient use of our resources and enable the centre to remain flexible to emerging issues and needs.

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### Effective teaching and learning practices

Many of the previous points also fall under the centre's mandate to support effective teaching and learning practices. The TLC will continue to provide consultation on curriculum and program development, and now offer one-on-one consultations to SFU instructors. Lastly, the TLC will improve support and training for institutionally supported learning technologies and maintaining currency with the learning technology field. This will require leadership and close working relationships with other service units, particularly IT Services.

### Creative media services

The TLC provides creative media services to showcase or enhance teaching and learning, and continues to provide general media services to the SFU community. Our creative professionals can help with promotional media and materials for teaching, learning, research and other purposes. Educational projects that were in progress continue towards completion. Grant applications for educational projects with SFU faculty and local partners are selective and strategic. We will be examining the ways in which our media professionals can contribute to other aspects of the TLC's mandate (i.e. showcasing the teaching and learning community) and the balance of their types of work. The TLC will be working with SFU's new content management system (CMS) as one of its pilot groups. In addition to creating the aforementioned websites, staff will be examining the CMS for its potential for teaching and learning.

### General transitioning

The TLC is working on a new service model based on the notion of "one stop, one step" whereby upon first contact with the TLC, an instructor or client will acquire assistance or be directed to the appropriate person. This requires staff development, changes to operational processes in terms of expectations around responsiveness and professionalism: as well as increased awareness and appreciation of internal staff responsibilities and expertise and those of colleagues across the university. Collaboration and partnership are necessary to meet the TLC's mandate.

Also related to the centre's imaging, consistent branding and messaging for the TLC are being developed over time. Communications with the university community, in terms of process and content are also being examined. Changes are to some extent, pending SFU's teaching and learning communication plan now being developed by a committee under the VP Academic.

### Questions or comments?

- What are some immediate activities that the TLC could immediately partake in that would help SFU instructors?
- Are you interested in working with the TLC in any of its initiatives or directions?
- What advice or suggestions do you have for the centre?

**Please contact Stephanie Chu, Interim Director [stephanie@sfu.ca](mailto:stephanie@sfu.ca) with your thoughts, questions or interest in further discussions.**

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