

TASK FORCE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Context

Recognized as one of Canada's most innovative and most research intensive universities, McMaster has a long standing record of excellence in teaching and learning. The "McMaster model", a student-centred, problem-based, interdisciplinary approach to learning has been adopted by universities around the world. As one of the top 100 universities in the world McMaster University is graduating students who will become the leaders of tomorrow.

However, we cannot afford to rest on our past success, hoping that the McMaster name alone will propel us into the future. McMaster is not unique among Canadian universities in the challenges it faces including competition: for students, for faculty and for the financial resources needed to excel.

It is therefore timely that we re-examine the effectiveness of teaching and learning practices across the university as a whole. We must take stock of our current strengths and weaknesses, identify the 'ideal' teaching and learning environment we would like to develop at McMaster, and devise strategies and directions to help us achieve that ideal.

Our current environment offers many opportunities for such self-examination and growth – we have many new leaders to help direct and implement change including a new Provost, new Deans of Engineering and Graduate Studies, a new VP research, new Teaching Professors and new directions for our library system. We also face many challenges at McMaster including the enhancement of effective teaching and learning practices during a period of growing student enrollments and severe budget constraints. The Provost's Task Force on Teaching and Learning (TOTAL) will explore and develop new strategies and approaches to teaching and learning that will enable McMaster to "move beyond its current position among the more innovative universities in Canada and take its place on the world stage as one of the most important centers for the creation of new knowledge"

Terms of Reference

The Task Force on Teaching and Learning has been charged by the Provost with the following four goals:

1) Documentation of the Current State: Where are we now?

- a. Gather data and analyze current factors that have an impact on effective teaching and learning at McMaster
- b. Identify current and emerging best practices and strategies that support student and instructor success

2) Identification of the Ideal Future State: Where should we be?

- a. Analyze emerging issues and explore desired future state

3) Design Strategies: How do we get there?

- a. Recommend ways in which we can enhance the quality of teaching and learning at the undergraduate and graduate levels
- b. Develop a culture of scholarship in teaching and learning
- c. Develop a culture of innovation

4) Implement, Evaluate and Disseminate

Themes

Throughout this process the task force will organize along the following cross-cutting themes:

Theme 1: The Student Focused Organization (defined learning outcomes, policies on teaching excellence, technology, advising/writing/tutors, disability services, honors, internships, international)

Theme 2: Effective Teaching Organization (rewards, recognition, support for teaching, integration of research/teaching, etc)

Theme 3: The Supportive Organization (administrative structure, budget reflects teaching/learning priorities, data collection/access, policies/procedures that support teaching/learning, governance, etc)

Theme 4: The Engaged Organization (partnerships, Hamilton/Burlington community, etc)

Theme 5: The Future Focused Organization (planning for the future, assessment/evaluation, IT planning, physical campus, development – this will be integrated into the 4 themes above)

Timeline

Our timeline includes both short-term and long-term goals and deliverables. Throughout the process the task force will communicate with the campus through interviews, surveys and focus groups. A task force website will provide up-to-the-minute information regarding the process. The task force will also communicate updates through the Daily News.

November 2007 – Provost commissions task force November – December 2007 – Task force members meet to plan process

Phase I: Current State: Part one, structural/organizational: January – February 2008 – Identify data needs, barriers and facilitators, March – April 2008 - Gather data (including SWOT analysis) including - Structure/organization - Physical (classrooms, IT)

Phase II: Current State: Part two, strategies/best practices (at McMaster) March - May 2008 – gather data on best practices and strategies at McMaster, May – June 2008 – Summarize data and draft first interim report for Provost

Phase III: Future State: June - August 2008 – Committee conducts audit of best practices, June – August 2008 - Site visits, on campus consultants/speakers, August - September 2008 – Summarize data and draft second interim report for Provost, September 2008 – First town hall – release findings of current state

Phase IV: Strategies and best practices: September - December 2008 – draft recommendations for strategies to address gaps/needs/new initiatives, January – February 2009 – Summarize data and draft third interim report for Provost

Phase V: Implementation, evaluation and dissemination: Implementation, evaluation and dissemination will occur at different stages throughout the review. The task force will make some recommendations quickly to address immediate needs. Other recommendations will require longer term planning and implementation.

Membership

The **Task Force on Teaching and Learning** consists of faculty representatives from each of the faculties, the libraries, Centre for Student Development, Center for Leadership in Learning, graduate students, and undergraduate students.

1. Co-chairs:
 - a. Dr. Carolyn Eyles, Faculty of Science
 - b. Jeffrey Trzeciak, University Librarian
2. One full-time faculty member from each of the six faculties at McMaster including a minimum of one of the new teaching professor positions:
 - a. Social Sciences: Sue Vajoczki
 - b. Humanities: Alexandre Sevigny
 - c. Health Sciences: Geoff Norman
 - d. Engineering: Yaser Haddara
 - e. Business: Milena Head
 - f. Science: Miroslav Lovric
3. Partners in teaching & learning
 - a. University Library: Karen Nicholson

- b. CLL: Erika Kustra
 - c. CSD: Peter Walsh
4. Two students representing undergraduate and graduates:
- a. Arati Sharma, VP MSU
 - b. Ryan Kealey, Graduate student (Psychology)