

## **FINDINGS FROM THE PROCESS: STRENGTHS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Data from the Discussion Paper, consultation sessions, Advisory Committee Reports and 2 writing sessions were compiled to: (1) commence development of an inventory of current strengths at Memorial University with respect to teaching and learning; and (2) summarize the main suggestions for improving teaching and learning environment that were made by participants during the process of developing the Teaching and Learning Framework.

Once a Teaching and Learning Framework is in place, it is anticipated that a process will be developed which will prioritize key goals and objectives and areas for follow-up action. The suggestions for improvements noted below provide a menu of options which can be explored in this planning process.

### **Institutional Commitment to Teaching and Learning**

#### *Strengths*

- Excellent library facilities
- Other learning resources including but not limited to: Computing and Communications Help Desk and Digital Media Centre, Distance Education and Learning Technologies, The Writing Centre, The Blundon Centre, The Curriculum Materials Centre, Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archives, Centre for Music Media and Place, The Maritime History Archive, The Math Learning Centre, Native Liaison Office, and Grenfell Learning Centre
- Collective agreement permits tenure and promotion on the basis of teaching or research
- Distinguished Teaching Award
- Instructional Design Grants

#### *Suggestions*

- Identify a person/position with leadership responsibility and resources for coordinating the institutional response to the Teaching and Learning Framework.
- Increase recognition of teaching activities in the promotion and tenure process so that teaching is actually valued as much as research.
- Grow the role of the Instructional Design Office (IDO) so that more support can be provided to educators.
- Develop more teaching and learning awards, for educators and staff, including a specific award that rewards student engagement.
- Establish a Chair of Teaching and Learning for the university.
- Establish Chairs for Teaching and Learning within each Faculty and School.
- Provide more money for instructional grants.
- Streamline organization processes and policies that negatively effect educational programming such as risk management processes for field trips and paperwork required for classroom renovations.

## **Community Building**

### *Strengths*

- Strong sense of community in the residences
- Citizens, community groups and agencies help define the needs of the province that in turn shape our mission and our approach to meeting our mandate. For example, a need for accessibility to post-secondary education has driven the growth in the number of courses and programs offered through distance delivery technologies.
- Communities and agencies provide experiential learning opportunities for our students through provision of internships, residences, co-op placements, service learning and volunteer positions.
- Research (including scholarship and creative activity) conducted in and with the community informs our curriculum development and teaching practices.
- Many administrative programs at Memorial offer learning opportunities for students, such as MUCEP placements.

### *Suggestions*

- Create learning communities of special interest (research, teaching, or personal) that students, educators and staff can participate in.
- Offer activities that are directed toward the inclusion of commuter students, non-credit and distance students.
- Offer more student/educator/staff spirit and sporting activities for socializing and sharing time.
- Increase the number and type of opportunities for connections to the wider community for students, faculty and staff.
- Develop a strong transition program for first year students and generate creative approaches to high school students becoming engaged in early exposures to university through Summer U and other short programs.
- Develop opportunities for relationship building experiences among students of diverse backgrounds.
- Break down silos that currently exist between different groups of educators, educators and staff, employees under different portfolios in the university, educators, staff and students in the different faculties and schools.
- Enhance orientation for educators and include provisions for programs that include family members where appropriate.

## **Communications**

### *Strengths*

- Revamped Memorial University web site underway
- Division of Marketing and Communications
- Marketing and Communications Coordinators within the units
- Award winning externally focused communications strategies
- Award winning students communications strategies for distance education students

### *Suggestions*

- Improve internal communications processes to increase overall awareness among student, faculty and staff of the services provided by the various units in different portfolios (VPA, VPFA, VPR, 3 campuses).
- Create a general MUN app that will allow the user to self-select options and information; app would facilitate direct information transfer to students.
- Develop a virtual community on an enhanced MUN web site.
- Create a policy network, centralized on a server, with search engines that allow easy and direct access to all policies and procedures that impact on teaching and learning.

### **Teaching and Learning Culture**

#### *Strengths*

- Long history of teaching excellence at Memorial – eight 3M award winners
- Extensive experience and expertise in technology enabled curriculum, including the use of technology in online and on-campus courses
- Many professional schools maintain accreditation
- Quality assurance process is in place for distance education course development (Quality Matters)
- Strong teaching support unit – DELTS
- Existing academic program review processes supports program review and renewal

#### *Suggestions*

- Incorporate identification of learning outcomes, alignment of the curriculum and evaluation processes with these outcomes, into the academic program review process.
- Insure that calendar regulations specify the requirement of educators to provide evaluative feedback to students in a timely and meaningful manner.
- Increase the focus on student engagement and leadership in the various disciplines/faculties/schools through student associations, development of undergraduate colloquia, and inclusion of undergraduate students in graduate student colloquia.
- Promote incorporation of experiential learning activities, including links to career education, into the curriculum where appropriate.
- Promote flexibility in program delivery and evaluation, scheduling use of technology, alternatives to the 3 credit course and 13 week term, flexible pathways to program completion.
- Promote educator and student engagement.
- Expand prior learning assessment and recognition to support the diverse background of learners attending Memorial in degree and non degree programs.

## **Engagement**

### *Strengths*

- Co-curricular record
- CO-OP and other forms of experiential learning, such as MUCEP programs, clinical placements and internships
- Strong connections to community agencies in some programs.
- Strong residence community

### *Suggestions*

- Introduce experiences explicitly designed to increase student and educator engagement in the academic community within the first year of the undergraduate and graduate programs and throughout the student's program of study (cornerstone courses, capstone courses).
- Increase opportunities for student engagement through small group break-out sessions with graduate student tutors, lower student to faculty ratio, class size maximums, blended learning experiences (online discussions), attendance expectations in first year.
- Increase awareness among educators, students and staff in the Co-Curricular record and e-portfolio programs available at Memorial.
- Design and create teaching and learning spaces that support student engagement.
- Develop informal gathering spaces that support student, educator and staff interaction.
- Provide instructional design support to educators to help them enhance engagement experiences within the learning environment.

## **Educator Support**

### *Strengths*

- DELTS
- Instructional design grants
- Teaching support at the Marine Institute
- Teaching support in the Faculty of Medicine – Health Sciences Imaging and Media Services and the Center for Scholarship in Medical Education
- Metakettle Project

### *Suggestions*

- Create a drop in centre for educators to learn about technological enhancement for course delivery and senior instructional design support.
- Expand the resources in the IDO so that there is a distributed model (i.e., course designers assigned to a specific faculty or school).
- Enhance orientation for educators.

- Increase professional development opportunities and access to technology support in the classroom.
- Develop alternatives to teaching remissions such as assignments of extra research assistants and teaching assistants, which faculty can avail of if they choose.
- Create smaller class sizes.
- Support innovation in teaching practice.
- Increase recognition of teaching activities in the Promotion and Tenure Process so that teaching is valued as much as research.
- Increase institutional recognition of excellence in teaching through creation of additional teaching awards and Chairs in Teaching.
- Broaden institutional perspectives to acknowledge and include the contributions of many professionals in the Teaching and Learning enterprise (such as librarians, CO-OP Coordinators and coordinators of other types of other experiential learning activities, laboratory instructors, research officers and administrative support staff).
- Establish mandatory professional development in teaching for new instructors.
- Expand IDO support and services for per course instructors and new faculty.
- Create a Desire to Learn (D2L) shell on teaching and learning.
- Offer a teaching program or certificate for new faculty.

## **Student Support**

### *Strengths*

- Wide range of student support services offered under the different portfolios at MUN (Academic, Student Affairs and Services, Research, Finance and Administration)
- Support for on-line students through DELTS

### *Suggestions*

- Compile a review of all support services on campus to determine the overlaps and gaps.
- Break down existing silos between the academic and student affairs and services portfolios and improve service integration, so that from a student perspective, access to a wide range of support services is simple and seamless.
- Increase student, educator and staff awareness of student support services which exist
- Improve ease of access to all student services through a centralized location, the provision of adequate physical space and a virtual component to the marketing and delivery of services, e.g., MUNLive.
- Establish a First Year Centre/First Year Experience Office, both virtual and on campus, so that students have one-stop shopping for student support.
- Expand services that contribute to the holistic development of the individual.
- Extend services currently available in the Commons to other locations.
- Encourage a sense of belonging by creating spaces that encourage staff/faculty and student to mix – one area per building to start.
- Review current system of academic advising to insure continuity of the advising relationship and student access to advisors who are:
  - Knowledgeable about their program options; and
  - Engaged in helping students navigate the university program options.

- Establish a Student Support Advisory Committee.
- Introduce mandatory orientation.
- Extend orientation, including 4<sup>th</sup> credit hour and extension of summer orientation processes.
- Introduce required 4<sup>th</sup> credit hour to all sections of English 1080, offered on a rotating basis by appropriate instructors which would:
  - Offer information on supports available as well as instruction in time management and study skills;
  - Reinforce student responsibility, and the importance of seeking advice early and planning a program of study;
  - Reinforce student understanding of academic integrity issues;
  - Increase our understanding of why students are staying or leaving through targeted research activities.
- Implement strategies for early identification of students who are experiencing significant academic challenges.
- Review existing approaches to providing support to students who are experiencing academic challenges and revise where necessary existing practices to ensure effective and appropriately resourced mechanisms are in place to support students who are experiencing academic challenges, particularly in the areas of math and English.
- Establish a first year course for elective credits; offer a variety of formats and topics such as math basics, writing basics (English grammar), computer skills, academic success, communications in higher education, career planning, research essentials, “me” in university community; assessment via portfolio or projects.
- Create a cornerstone course that would provide first year students with information on university expectations for academic performance, an engaging experience with a faculty member in a small group format, exposure to excellent research underway at Memorial and an experiential component.
- Create a compulsory year long multi-disciplinary course
  - first term would concentrate on critical reading, writing and thinking; second term would embrace research skills and experiential learning
  - course would be taught by instructors who embrace this new paradigm and receive appropriate professional development in advance and support throughout the course.
- Provide better access to help center support after first year.
- Increase the number of renewable scholarships.
- Facilitate student connections to the career opportunities that follow degree programs.
- Promote in students a sense of ethical behavior and academic integrity.
- Promote student acceptance of self-responsibility for learning.
- Create smaller class sizes

## **Experiential Learning**

### *Strengths*

- Many programs have a national reputation due in part to the CO-OP option.
- Laboratory experiences
- Internship experiences

- MUCEP placements
- Community engagement of faculty, staff and students

### *Suggestions*

- Enrich teaching and learning with experiential learning opportunities embedded in the curriculum of every faculty. This approach would result in clearer student expectations of what disciplinary professionals do in “real life” and assist them to develop a skill set specific to their discipline.
- Create flexibility in the university timetable to allow for a variety of non-traditional formats for course delivery.
- Organize community partnerships that provide students with practical hands-on opportunities for learning.
- Expand and fully implement e-portfolio and co-curricular records initiatives.
- Expand the range of activities that can be considered for academic credit in the CO-OP programs.
- Expand student access to internships and community placements.
- Expand experiential components in courses – labs, fieldwork, community engagement exercises.
- Coordinate the activities of different experiential programs offered to avoid duplication of efforts or competition for placements
- Recognize practitioners of experiential learning:
  - Value their contribution to innovation through their involvement in community engagement initiatives;
  - Strengthen the linkage between experiential learning and the in-class curriculum;
  - Develop a parallel tenure and promotion process for experiential learning practitioners.
- Explore the technological capacities of DELTS to support, reinforce and record experiential learning.
- Reduce content currently found in labs to increase time available to maximize the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills, master practical skills and reinforce content learned in lectures.
- Recognize laboratory instructors as independent faculty teaching positions, not as staff or support positions as currently classified, so that instructors have access to time and resources to improve the delivery of the lab-based curriculum.
- Lower the number of first year students in each laboratory section and provide increased support in terms of teaching aids and instructional staff.
- Introduce professional development opportunities and recognition for teaching staff, including remuneration.

### **Program Quality**

#### *Strengths*

- Academic Program Review
- Accreditation of professional schools

- Quality Assurance Program in DELTS
- ISO Designation for DELTS
- SIFE Memorial

### *Suggestions*

- Establish an institutional commitment to the continuous evaluation and improvement of the quality of academic programs.
- Establish an effective course review and development process which:
  - Builds upon the work of the Senate committee on CEQs and the Academic program review process;
  - Includes input from both students and faculty/instructors;
  - Incorporates mechanisms such as peer review and greater use of the teaching dossier;
  - Promotes course content alignment throughout the curriculum.
- Investigate introducing a standardized curriculum development process and support for instructional design for all campuses.
- Develop strategies to ensure more consistency of standards across multi-section courses, such as identifying a course coordinator, offering common exams (with 20% flexibility component), involving senior level faculty, determining course objectives at the departmental level.
- Insure that critical thinking is an integral feature of all courses at all levels and that examination of this component is included in the Academic Program Review Process.
- Define quality; create appropriate measurement tools and conduct research and collect data on what works best in student learning.
- Engage in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.
- Develop professionalization of graduate students as teachers and/or professionals; offer mentorship to Masters' and PhD students; set expectations for professional socialization.

## **Interdisciplinarity**

### *Strengths*

- The Centre for Collaborative Health Professional Education
- Interdisciplinary PhD
- Metakettle Project

### *Suggestions*

- Think beyond “disciplines” of interdisciplinary work to real interdisciplinarity and reaching out into the community; value experiences at the periphery of the traditional academy. Interdisciplinarity would then become recognizable in 3-4 years’ time by students saying, “That’s what I came to university for,” - to develop networks and to learn how to participate in public venues. Community groups would look to the university as a partner and agent of change.



- Create an interdisciplinary collaborative dialogue program or dialogue institute that focuses on process-oriented skills. Start by funding small-scale pilot projects in programs that already have a natural synergy.
- Offer thematically-based courses, e.g. “Cultivating Humanity” or “How to think about Science”; and engage instructors from a variety of disciplines to deliver the course.
- Build supports for interdisciplinary cooperation into structures that focus on community engagement (such as the Harris Centre).
- Establish interdisciplinarity as a core institutional value and recognize it through the Promotion and Tenure process, cross appointments, use of professional associates etc.
- Include interdisciplinary experience as part of the first year cornerstone course.
- Develop mechanisms to evaluate the success in initiatives in interdisciplinary cooperation and review and renew programs over time.
- Build stronger interdisciplinary connections in existing degree programs.
- Develop less cumbersome ways to complete joint degrees.

## **Research and Teaching Nexus**

### *Strengths*

- Yaffle - an online search engine of Memorial’s expertise and community development resources
- Librarians are assigned to specific areas/disciplines

### *Suggestions*

- Create a Memorial-wide research consortium that includes all members of the university community who are doing research: educators, staff and students.
- Engage students in conference involvement at all levels, including first-year.
- Engage students in experiential activities that are research-based.
- Increase funding for student positions.
- Promote use of Yaffle - Yaffle for everyone!
- Conduct research on teaching effectiveness and contribute to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning; offer professional development to assist faculty in this work; organize conferences at Memorial on this topic.
- Emphasize the educational value of research in the intellectual development of both faculty and students.
- Align where possible tenure track ASMs research interests and areas of expertise with their teaching assignments.
- Imbed subject liaison librarians into all academic programs (expand on current strength).
- Create a dialogue about research during teaching activities:
  - include activities that enhance the understanding of research methods through meaningful application – i.e. labs, field experiences etc.;
  - help students learn about library resources through research assignments in courses.
- Involve students in departmental research projects, departmental research culture – seminars.

- Promote and value research on teaching and learning.
- Deploy graduate students more effectively in bridging teaching and learning.

## **Diversity**

### *Strengths*

- International Centre
- International Advising Office
- Blundon Centre
- Student Societies such as GLTG
- Labrador Institute
- DELTS collaboration with Aboriginal communities

### *Suggestions*

- Mandate professional development for students, faculty, and staff in diversity awareness and teaching methods for diverse learners
- Strike academic unit committees to be responsible for curriculum/supports around diversity and to develop supports for students from diverse backgrounds.
- Increase support for the development of innovative programming which celebrates diversity and promotes equity.
- Provide better education for professors around the types of accommodation available for students with disabilities
  - require a module in diversity awareness and teaching methods in teaching professional development courses
- Develop more integrated university policies on working with individuals with disabilities and better coordination among units in policy administration – i.e. reduce the cumbersome processes associated with submitting a request for accommodation.
- Encourage and recognize study/work abroad experiences for both faculty and students
- Develop specific academic courses that address diversity
- Create more distance delivery options - often better for students with disabilities