



Task Force on Teaching & Learning: Recommendations Report

January 31, 2010 FINAL

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|---|----|
| I. Executive Summary..... | i |
| II. Introduction | 1 |
| Task Force’s History..... | 2 |
| III. The Themes and Recommendations | 3 |
| 1. Vision, Principles & Directions | 3 |
| 2. Communication and Community..... | 4 |
| 3. Expectations About the Learning Experience | 5 |
| 4. Recognizing, Evaluating & Rewarding Teaching | 8 |
| 5. A Teaching & Learning Support System..... | 11 |
| III. Summary of Recommendations, Challenges and Benefits..... | 17 |
| IV. Proposed Priorities and Timeline | 18 |
| 1. Promoting a Culture of Teaching and Learning | 18 |
| 2. Developing a New Teaching and Learning Support System | 19 |
| Appendix A: Selected Issues, Recommendations and Alignment with the Academic Plan | 20 |
| Appendix B: Task Force on Teaching & Learning and Working Groups | 24 |
| Task Force on Teaching and Learning | 24 |
| Working Groups..... | 25 |
| Appendix C: Documents Reviewed, Referenced & Future Use | 27 |
| SFU Internal Documents (Cited or Reviewed)..... | 27 |
| Cited References..... | 28 |
| External Sources | 29 |
| Notable Documents for Future Use | 31 |

I. Executive Summary

The Task Force on Teaching and Learning (TFTL) engaged the community in a probing, intensive process to develop recommendations on enhancing teaching and learning support at SFU. The teaching and learning environment was found to be complex, comprising several interdependent, integral components that require attention at multiple levels. The TFTL proposes several interrelated recommendations (in bold below) and sub-recommendations.

The TFTL recommends **“establishing and communicating a vision statement and principles to provide direction and common purpose around teaching and learning at SFU”** that should be directly incorporated into the VPA's Academic Plan. This action should promote working towards a shared vision for teaching and learning, provide a basis for strategic planning, and enable support to be organized more effectively. Furthermore, ensuring that learning and teaching-related expectations are articulated institutionally and across all units should facilitate these goals and serve as a basis for planning and prioritization.

SFU enjoys many teaching and learning services and forms of support at its three campuses. Recognizing, celebrating, and communicating our successes enable the university community to benefit from local expertise and develop a stronger culture around teaching and learning. The recommendation to **“develop and implement a phased institutional plan to raise awareness of the broad range of SFU teaching and learning successes, services and support for teaching and learning and to ensure that they are recognized, used, and celebrated at all three campuses in an appropriate manner”** should ameliorate the perceptions of teaching and learning and facilitate a shift in culture at SFU.

Many academic institutions are redoubling their focus on the student experience and student retention by investing in engaging learning environments and integrating classroom and non-classroom experiences. **Expanding student-centered approaches to teaching within a process of ongoing improvement** should clarify expectations for student learning, provide more opportunities for experiential learning and learning that extends beyond the classroom, and build on the synergies among teaching, learning and research.

The TFTL believes that recognizing, evaluating, and rewarding teaching will help to foster a culture that implicitly and explicitly values teaching and consequently enhance students' learning experiences. Valuing teaching in a consistent way will (1) encourage more dialogue and sharing amongst instructors about teaching and learning, (2) ensure processes that recognize and reward teaching, and (3) ensure that ongoing professional development is provided, encouraged and valued. To support these goals, the TFTL proposes **“increasing awareness of policy provisions that address the importance accorded to teaching and learning, promote a consistent interpretation of policy provisions, and implement further initiatives that value the teaching mission of the University.”**

Including the multiple stakeholders and appreciating their roles, perspectives, and experiences are critical to teaching and learning at SFU. The TFTL proposes 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 support system would draw upon instructors, staff, and students in the planning, design, and implementation of support initiatives, and facilitate communication in a collaborative network. The system would also afford faculty members the opportunity to assume leadership and mentorship roles, and identify and voice unit-specific needs for teaching and learning support.

In sum, teaching and learning at SFU are complex activities that require integrating support at many levels. Recommendations focus on increasing the value attributed to teaching, better recognizing and rewarding teaching, and enabling the university community to benefit from existing expertise and experiences. The recommendations in this report constitute the first step of an unfolding process of discussion, refinement, and elaboration that will lead to the development of implementation plans in a phased, transparent manner. Although implementation will require considerable time and commitment, activities to (1) promote a culture of teaching and learning and (2) develop a new teaching and learning support system are identified as immediate priorities.

II. Introduction

The Task Force on Teaching and Learning (TFTL) wishes to express its thanks for the university community's valuable and thoughtful contributions to the task force process over the past year and a half. The Task Force has carefully considered the feedback it received on its discussion paper released in mid-July 2009. Some of the concerns raised by the community resulted in revisions to the summary recommendations which are included in this final report. Other concerns appear to stem from misinterpretations of the original recommendations. An accompanying FAQ will be distributed in an effort to clarify the intent of the recommendations and provide elaborations or updates, where applicable.

The TFTL strongly values teaching excellence and recognizes the generally high quality of teaching at SFU. It supports increasing the value attributed to teaching, better recognizing and rewarding teaching, and enabling the university community to benefit from the experience and expertise of excellent teachers. We propose better support for teaching development, as well as teaching and learning, in response to annual undergraduate surveys and instructors themselves. Regrettably, this call was interpreted by some as implied criticism of the current quality of teaching. Our approach was to focus attention on issues identified by a large number of respondents from a variety of disciplines and support units through analyses of direct surveys or existing SFU documentation. The community participatory events held in January 2009 corroborated the areas of focus identified by the TFTL.

The recommendations, if accepted, will lead to implementation planning and further discussions with stakeholders to develop specific action plans. This process will involve instructor groups, educational and support staff and students, as well as Senate, SFUFA, TSSU, APSA and CUPE, where appropriate. Earlier materials prepared by the TFTL and/or its working groups related to implementation processes and procedures have not been included in this final report. Instead, they will be made available to future implementation groups for their consideration.

A short-term VPA's Advisory Committee on Teaching and Learning (VACTL) has been formed whose first priority is to review the recommendations made by the TFTL and advise the VP, Academic which should be implemented, as-is or amended, and when. This report and the accompanying FAQ, along with VACTL's comments, will be made available to the university community in late February/early March 2010.

Lastly, community members identified a wide range of important issues which were beyond the mandate of the TFTL. It is envisioned that implementation of the Task Force's recommendations will result in a more effective means to communicate, identify, prioritize and resolve specific teaching and learning concerns at SFU.

The Terms of Reference for the Task Force were:

1. Develop a comprehensive vision statement on teaching and learning for SFU which focuses on the aspirations of students, faculty, instructors, teaching assistants, tutor markers, educational staff and the administration, which recognizes the diversity of pedagogies employed at SFU, and contemplates the use of a variety of teaching and learning technologies.
2. Research and evaluate models of support and assessment for teaching and learning that will serve the needs of SFU students, faculty, instructors, teaching assistants, and tutor markers in a coherent and cost effective manner by emphasizing consistency of support and ease of use, and avoiding the duplication of services.
3. Identify mechanisms to encourage faculty and instructor involvement and innovation in educational development programs and teaching and learning initiatives.
4. Suggest an administrative structure which will foster interaction and collaboration among teaching and learning support units and ensure that their strategic planning activities are coordinated and integrated.
5. Develop a strategic planning process for addressing university teaching and learning infrastructure needs.
6. Propose a process for change and a timeline for the implementation of the TFTL recommendations.



See **Appendix A** for a summary of the select issues, the recommendations and their alignment with the academic plan.

Task Force’s History

In June 2008, the Associate VP, Academic established a Task Force on Teaching and Learning. The Task Force was charged with making recommendations *aimed at supporting quality teaching and learning at SFU* (see **Appendix B** for Working Group membership and terms of reference). Early in the committee’s process, it became apparent that its scope needed to encompass many institutional dimensions related to teaching and learning.

The information gathering phase yielded an initial survey of available supports, exemplars, and models of successful support initiatives, teaching excellence and innovation and a variety of learning experiences. These have been documented and will serve as resource material during implementation planning. In addition to the successes, numerous challenges were also identified through reviews of existing SFU documents (e.g. LIDC external review, reports from other initiatives; see **Appendix C**) and input from ~315 university community members in Fall 2008. The Task Force outlined perceived issues in its January interim report. Further input and clarification of these issues and volunteers for working groups (**Appendix B**) were sought through four Community Participatory Events. Thereafter, four working groups were formed to more closely examine Teaching Evaluation & Rewards, The Coordination of Teaching Support, Student Learning, and Community & Policy. External documents and academic literature were also consulted (see **Appendix C**).

The recommendations in the Task Force’s July document were in draft form and were meant to stimulate discussion. University community members were invited to provide critical feedback and refine or propose alternate solutions to the identified issues. In late October 2009, after receiving feedback from the University Community, a revised and final set of recommendations was submitted to the VP, Academic. These recommendations link to other SFU initiatives, such as the Faculty Structure Implementation, exploration of the College for Lifelong Experiential Learning, interdisciplinary approaches in research and teaching, strategic plan around First Nations, institutional accreditation with the NWCC, and the 2010-2013 Academic Vision. Fortuitous timing allows for the integration of some of the final recommendations into the 2010-2013 Academic Plan. Table 1 outlines general areas of alignment between the 2010-2013 Academic Vision and the Task Force’s recommendations.

Table 1. General areas of alignment between Academic Planning directions and the Task Force’s recommendations.

| # | Aligned Ideas & Directions |
|---|---|
| 1 | Teaching, research & learning, recognizing the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synergy between teaching & research • Importance of the relationship between teaching, learning, and research activities |
| 2 | High quality teaching & learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifying attributes and skills for graduates: general (critical thinking, learning, analysis & communication) and discipline-specific |
| 3 | Focus on student learning experiences by acknowledging: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That students learn through a wide variety of pedagogies that expand the traditional classroom experience • Graduate students’ interrelated roles in research, teaching & learning; & their work with undergraduates |
| 4 | Support students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand expected learning outcomes • To achieve their goals and potential • To be able to identify the learning purposes & opportunities for each program |
| 5 | Recognize excellence in teaching at the graduate & undergraduate levels |

| # | Aligned Ideas & Directions |
|----|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an award system |
| 6 | Collaboration & community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek opportunities for multi-/interdisciplinarity and collaboration across units Reduce silo culture, improve communication across all areas Build community & partnerships |
| 7 | Employ effective, efficient & innovative approaches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To teaching, learning, research, service & administration To ensure resource levels are sufficient & well managed |
| 8 | Support instructors in developing teaching skills |
| 9 | Review curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To clearly define learning outcomes To incorporate discipline-specific pedagogies & varied learning opportunities |
| 10 | Anticipate and respond <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To higher education demands (i.e. relevance, “skills”) To program & instructor needs |

III. The Themes and Recommendations

Five themes encapsulate the concerns and challenges regarding teaching and learning support as identified through the Task Force process. Teaching and learning are complex activities that require integrated support at many levels and though the recommendations presented here are broad and presented individually, there is considerable overlap. Furthermore, if accepted, the recommendations will require refinement and elaboration during the process of implementation. Some details drafted by working groups which were included as appendices in the Task Force’s draft discussion paper have been summarized and included within this report; while other working group suggestions for implementation will be forwarded to implementation groups for their consideration and continued work, if applicable.

1. Vision, Principles & Directions

Challenges: SFU is well known for the value it places on teaching, learning and research. However, the SFU community would benefit from a more explicit statement of principles that guide teaching and learning processes. SFU does not have an articulated statement of its vision and principles for teaching and learning that is related to an academic plan. This makes it difficult to identify strategic directions, to organize support in effective ways, and to work towards a shared vision. This may affect strategic planning and implementation of academic plans.

Proposed Solutions: In response to this need, the Task Force drafted an initial set of principles (below) to consider for implementation at the institutional level, recognizing that outcomes may assume different forms in different disciplines. The vision statement and principles below are in accord with principles in the 2010 - 2013 academic planning vision that prescribe that SFU should (1) enable students to define and reach their goals, (2) deliver high quality teaching, learning and research, (3) employ innovative approaches, and (4) create an intellectually stimulating and culturally vibrant environment. Though a sub-recommendation on institutional standards is made below, details of this vision still require definition. Subsequent sections of this document may help prepare the way, along with consultation with the university community.

Recommendation #1: Establish and communicate a vision statement and principles to provide direction and common purpose around teaching and learning at SFU.

Draft Vision and Principles

Simon Fraser University creates, values, and supports diverse, meaningful learning experiences. Teaching and learning are central to our culture and practice. We support, develop, and reward effective teaching and learning.

1. Teaching and research are central to the University's mission; both are valued and rewarded as important scholarly activities.
2. Teaching and learning are visible, celebrated and showcased.
3. Our students have access to rich learning experiences and benefit from the relations among research, teaching, and learning.
4. We engage in inquiry about teaching, and support pedagogical innovation to enhance our practices and student learning.
5. Our teaching is continually evaluated to promote and ensure the highest quality of teaching and learning.

1.1. Ensure that appropriate learning and teaching-related standards are articulated institutionally and in all units.

This necessitates involvement by Faculties, departments, instructors and other stakeholders. To recognize and value teaching and learning requires a clear definition and criteria to determine its level of “success”. The University is foremost a “learning enterprise” and just as it sets quality standards for research activities, it should do so for the process and outcomes of teaching and student learning within the operation of program and courses, and at the student recruitment and public relations level.

Benefits: More clarity around SFU’s vision, principles and expectations around teaching and learning may enable more effective planning and support, as well as a cultural shift that highlights the value of teaching and learning both internally and externally. A general institutional framework provides academic units with a shared context and understanding in which to embed their own discipline-specific outcomes and goals. Defining teaching and learning and its uniqueness at SFU compared to other universities, may also aid SFU in student recruitment. This is an important consideration given the current landscape of BC post-secondary.

2. Communication and Community

Challenges: Respondents to the Task Force’s surveys and interviews frequently mentioned that a sense of community around teaching and learning occurs only in pockets at SFU rather than more broadly across the University. There also appears to be limited awareness among both instructors and their support providers of successful teaching and learning initiatives and the existence of support for teaching and learning in areas other than those with which they are directly associated. SFU could more fully showcase, share and celebrate excellent teaching and learning experiences (i.e., award winners, everyday teaching and learning excellence, innovations, non-classroom-based learning, etc.) There is not a communication channel to reach all teaching and learning stakeholders and there are some challenges with recognizing that many roles (instructors, students and staff) are integral in discussions and decision-making about teaching and learning. Lastly, some SFU community members have encountered institutional obstacles and ad hoc practices that impede and discourage their efforts to be good teachers.

Proposed Solutions: SFU has many teaching and learning successes, services and forms of support at its three campuses. Recognizing, celebrating and communicating our assets enables the university community to benefit from in-house expertise and to develop a stronger culture around teaching and learning.

Some other possible solutions are addressed in other recommendations within this document, such as by creating a Teaching and Learning Support System, clarifying expectations for student learning, setting directions for evaluating teaching, developing and revising policies, etc. Although cultural change takes time and is dependent on institutional changes in multiple areas, an initiative aimed at improving communication could begin to foster a stronger university community around teaching and learning.

Recommendation #2: Develop and implement a phased institutional plan to raise awareness of the broad range of SFU teaching and learning successes, services and support for teaching and learning and to ensure that they are recognized, used, and celebrated in all three campuses in an appropriate manner.

This plan should:

- Address some of the challenges with awareness about existing supports, showcasing and celebrating teaching and learning at the institutional level
- Garner community members’ attention, generate interest, encourage community involvement to share knowledge and provide feedback about teaching and learning, thereby building on the Task Force’s momentum
- Recognize the multiple roles necessary for teaching and learning (faculty, staff, students), and model practices of inclusion
- Identify this initiative as a high priority, acknowledging the strong message received during the information gathering phase and in other documents that indicated that communication and community should be significantly improved.

Benefits: Perceptions around teaching and learning may be ameliorated as a cultural shift occurs at SFU: one that recognizes, communicates, celebrates, rewards and makes time for teaching and learning. By knowing what supports are available and where (and being supported in doing so), instructors may make more use of available services and supports. With a better understanding of the teaching and learning landscape, knowledgeable staff may better support instructors and students, find areas of collaboration with other units and with instructors and students, and reduce the duplication of services. Students can benefit indirectly from instructors’ use of teaching supports and through their own increased awareness of resources to support learning. Institutionally, an increased awareness of resources may also enable strategic planning and prioritization that is more strategic, and draws upon resident teaching expertise and supports to serve as exemplars and models in other disciplines and units.

3. Expectations About the Learning Experience

Challenges: Respondents who provided feedback to the Task Force reported several challenges. The most frequent were:

- Absence of clearly-stated expectations for learning or learning processes.
- Inadequate encouragement and opportunity for instructors to experiment with new teaching practices, to learn about successful practices, and to engage in interdisciplinary activities.
- Inconsistencies across programs in opportunities for students to benefit from the relationships between teaching, learning, and research.
- Inadequate formal recognition of experiential learning as an appropriate way to meet degree requirements.
- Inadequate formal recognition of learning that extends beyond the classroom (co-op, field school, etc.)
- Inadequate emphasis on aspects of the VPA’s vision and proposed outcomes pertaining to the value of “a wide variety of learning experiences that develop long-term skills in learning”, the value of research strengths, and the revitalization of curriculum.

The academic literature in higher education is in concert with these views. Learning has been defined as *a change from a naïve and undifferentiated understanding of a phenomenon or idea to a more differentiated and sophisticated understanding* (Marton & Booth, 1998). As one way to accomplish this, Boyer (1996) recommended integrating undergraduate research within formal learning environments. There is also an emerging body of research on student satisfaction and retention that focuses on creating engaging learning environments by integrating classroom and non-classroom experiences, e.g. experiential learning opportunities (Astin, 1993; Gardner, 2001; Kuh, 2003; Tinto, 2007).

Proposed Solutions: The recent SFU academic vision emphasizes the value of ethical, responsible and informed citizenship, and definition of program outcomes by academic units. To aid this process, identifying expectations around learning and the valued qualities of all SFU graduates would be helpful. This would entail a range of interconnected learning expectations from general, high-level institutional, to discipline-specific program-level.

In its academic planning, SFU is recognizing that different educational experiences result in different forms of learning, requiring discussions about the learning goals for such experiences. In line with the recently proposed academic vision, directions suggested by the Task Force include: (1) increased attention to how courses that make up an academic program link to one another and to the totality of student learning in the program, (2) additional opportunities to experiment with innovative learning practices, (3) increased recognition and support of students as active and responsible learners, and (4) the need to better align, grow, accredit and realize the full learning potential of the many and varied experiential programs offered at this university.

Recommendation #3: Expand student-centered approaches to teaching within a process of ongoing improvement.

The following sub-recommendations should be regarded as a starting point.

3.1. Identify and promote a set of attributes that every SFU graduate should possess or be able to demonstrate.

Building upon the 2006 Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents guidelines regarding University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations, the Task Force envisions an ideal set of attributes that all students (undergraduate and graduate), completing a degree at SFU would acquire by graduation. Specific criteria would pertain to: (1) depth and breadth of knowledge, (2) knowledge of methodologies, (3) application of knowledge, (4) communication skills, (5) awareness of limits of knowledge, and (6) autonomy and professional capacity. See **Table 2** for proposed attributes. Additional attributes would be established for specific disciplines and for completing graduate degrees.

Table 2. Proposed attributes acquired by students upon undergraduate and graduate degree completion.

| Attribute | Criteria |
|------------------------------|---|
| Depth & Breadth of Knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate excellence in academic disciplinary knowledge • Know and apply in-depth knowledge and skills about one or more disciplines, as well as understand the connections among the disciplines • Demonstrate a high level of analytical problem solving • Demonstrate the ability to synthesize knowledge |
| Knowledge of Methodologies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate knowledge of when and how to apply and interpret a variety of methods of inquiry (qualitative & quantitative) • Demonstrate the ability to recognize and frame an academic argument • Demonstrate the ability to recognize when information is needed as part of the research process and/or the support of an academic argument, and be able to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information. |
| Application of Knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply technical and information skills appropriate to their discipline or professional area • Have participated in learning in situ, i.e. co-op, research assistant, community-based learning, field school, practicum, etc. • Have participated in “internationalization” experience, i.e. exchange, field school, international research, international co-op, international mentorship, on campus international activities, etc. |
| Communication Skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate effective oral and written communication skills in a variety of settings (academic, professional, community) • Demonstrate exemplary leadership and team skills through both academic projects and extracurricular activities • Present well-reasoned arguments, using technology as appropriate |

| Attribute | Criteria |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Awareness of Limits of Knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate an understanding of the value of their university experience as more than the acquisition of specific content and skills but rather as an experience that has taught them how to learn, question, evaluate, and apply new ideas and concepts to an ever-changing world • Understand that a university degree is one stage in a life-long process of learning |
| Autonomy & Professional Capacity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute effectively and appropriately to their discipline and their diverse communities as an engaged citizen with a sense of social responsibility • Understand their personal values and how these apply to their goals and aspirations • Use technology effectively and appropriately, and make informed conclusions and recommendations about its social impact |

3.2. Ensure a student-centered focus in the curriculum (1) by identifying learning expectations across all levels of the curriculum (in class and out of class) with consideration of the more general SFU graduate attributes, (2) by ensuring that the curriculum is well structured from the perspective of developing learning and (3) by providing clearly stated information about expectations and responsibilities of instructors and students in syllabi for all courses.

Details of this recommendation suggest (1) identifying program learning expectations well in advance of course registration, (2) ensuring that appropriate policies and practices pertaining to curriculum review are in place, (3) developing processes that provide instructors with opportunities to learning new instructional strategies, and (4) developing strategies to encourage the exploration of new learning experiences and ways for students to advance through their program of study. This student-centered focus would also include clear learning goals for graduate students within their disciplines.

3.3. Determine mechanisms to develop, recognize, and integrate more research, experiential, and international learning opportunities into the formal curriculum and recognize these with integral academic credit.

The recently proposed academic vision recognizes the important interplay among research, teaching and learning, and emphasizes the value of a variety of learning experiences. This recommendation encourages SFU to explore the feasibility of integrating peer-mentored learning opportunities and an explicit research requirement across undergraduate degree programs (in addition to existing honors programs). The sub-recommendation would enable SFU to investigate: (1) the value of a competitive-admission undergraduate research program with the objective of producing a sustainable and internationally recognized undergraduate research training environment, (2) processes that allow a unit to designate a percentage or number of experiential (E) or international (I) opportunities toward minimum degree completion requirements and, (3) mechanisms for quality assurance and regular review of E or I opportunities. Recognizing that graduate students are teachers, researchers, and students, attention would be placed on the development and interrelation of these multiple roles.

3.4. Support the piloting of alternative approaches to interdisciplinary, theme-based, and peer-supported learning opportunities, such as peer-group learning, clustered curriculum groupings across departments on topical issues, team-teaching approaches, first year experiences, mentoring of undergraduates by graduate students, and semester cohort groups.

Activities related to this sub-recommendation include (1) raising the profile of existing projects, (2) creating new opportunities for students and faculty members to engage in interdisciplinary research and teaching, (3) explore sustainable, supplemental instruction for courses having historically difficult content (e.g. opportunities for ‘no-instructor present’ group learning), (4) advertise existing successes in interdisciplinary teaching, and facilitate new initiatives, and (5) regularly, and critically review all extra-curricular programming

(e.g. work study). If this sub-recommendation were implemented, it would help “expose students to different perspectives and complex, real world issues throughout their program” as articulated in the academic vision.

3.5. Review existing curricula and learning opportunities to identify, expand, develop, and celebrate those features that facilitate student engagement, constructive feedback, early investment in learning, and effective mentoring.

In accordance with this sub-recommendation, many features of the extant teaching and learning environment such as experiential learning opportunities (e.g., Co-operative education, Peer Educators Program, LEAD program), foundational academic preparation courses, and technological and e-learning pedagogies, should be made more visible and further incorporated in the curriculum. Furthermore, these features should be celebrated and promoted and regularly reviewed, adapted, and refined to facilitate student engagement and sustainable mentoring platforms. Additional actions may include (1) developing mechanisms for anonymous, constructive, feedback in a timely manner and (2) encouraging each unit to develop their own culture for the support of all stakeholders in meeting university objectives, and invest early in all stakeholders for success.

3.6. Evaluate programs, courses, and instructors regularly, systematically, and appropriately for learning effectiveness.

This would be undertaken by all academic units at the program and course levels.

Benefits: Clarity around learning expectations enables stronger links between program planning, expectations about learning by students and instructors and related supports for both students and instructors. Recognizing a wider variety of learning experiences may provide faculty members with opportunities to more closely tie their teaching with their research and to try new teaching approaches. Meanwhile students may benefit from a more well-rounded educational experience, be more engaged, and more likely to complete and succeed in their program.

4. Recognizing, Evaluating & Rewarding Teaching

Challenges: Respondents to the Task Force's surveys and interviews opined that teaching is undervalued. Key institutional level concerns that were expressed include:

- Teaching excellence and expertise were insufficiently recognized, rewarded, celebrated, and communicated. Until changes are made in these areas, available teaching supports will not be used to their full potential.
- Currently, SFU makes limited use of teaching expertise and successful support models that already exist within individual departments.
- Effective teaching is a complex endeavor that involves skills in planning, motivation, observation and analysis, assessment, persistence, diplomacy, management, and creating engaging lessons out of “content.” Some experienced and novice teachers have little or no exposure to the fundamentals of teaching and learning as a profession. Being a content expert is necessary but not necessarily sufficient to providing excellent teaching. These faculty members would have appreciated the availability of a program offered at SFU, general and discipline-specific fundamentals, institutional and departmental support, and a positive community in which to participate.

Specific departmental level concerns about the recognition, evaluation, and reward for teaching included:

- The pursuit of excellence in teaching is not reflected in policy decisions, or when it is, practice is inconsistent with policy.

- There is inadequate or inconsistent recognition or compensation for course or program development, team-teaching or program coordination; publishing in teaching is not considered to be “research” for purposes of promotion or salary.
- Inadequate recognition and reward for teaching reduces the incentive to devote significant effort to teaching.
- Teaching is not evaluated in an adequate manner.
- Experimentation and innovation in teaching may result in lower teaching evaluations; this is particularly of concern in units where student evaluations are the main or only measure of teaching success.
- Methods used to evaluate teaching, plan workloads, determine promotion and tenure, and support teaching require more attention.
- Better support and more opportunities for development need to be made available to instructors who are not tenure-track professors (e.g., teaching faculty members, sessional instructors, TAs and TMs).
- To improve teaching and learning at SFU, top-level administrators must make a commitment to make it a priority, and to take appropriate actions to support instructors and students.

The findings of the Task Force echo the 2008 Senate Committee on University Teaching & Learning’s (SCUTL) report, which describes issues with teaching evaluations: (1) graduate course evaluations tend to be conducted inconsistently; and (2) course evaluation questionnaire data are only one small indicator of teaching effectiveness. Also of note is that the student course evaluation instruments currently in use are neither means-tested nor validated. As is supported consistently throughout the research literature on teaching and learning, a broader approach with other measures is needed to produce a reliable and valid assessment. Although comprehensive SFU data are lacking, it is apparent that the results of student course evaluations are the primary measure of teaching effectiveness at SFU. Many instructors reported feeling that this evidence is inadequate, and that at the very least, a validated instrument should be adopted and used. Program curricular reviews could provide additional evidence, but customarily, these reviews focus on course content and learning outcomes and not on teaching effectiveness within the program.

The proposed recommendations in this document are interrelated and address mechanisms for recognizing, evaluating, and rewarding instructors. SFU instructors must have a sense that their contributions to teaching are sufficiently recognized, evaluated, and rewarded. Recent recommendations by SCUTL concerning how to review one area of evaluation (student course reviews) have been incorporated into this discussion document. The following recommendations are aimed at reinforcing the value attached to teaching at SFU.

Recommendation #4: Increase awareness of policy provisions that address the importance accorded to teaching and learning, promote a consistent interpretation of policy provisions, and implement further initiatives that value the teaching mission of the University.

4.1. Tenure and Promotion Committees (TPCs) should evaluate teaching in a manner consistent with University policy.

TPCs are mandated by negotiated policies to ensure that: “At a minimum, satisfactory performance in both teaching effectiveness and scholarly effectiveness must be demonstrated. Less than satisfactory performance in either will not meet the expectations of the University” (A11.05). Faculty members must be assessed in three categories of performance: teaching, research, and service. Evaluation criteria and standards should be documented by departments, clearly communicated to faculty members, and consistently applied. Separate evaluations of teaching, research, and service are required for each individual. Merit awards should be based on appropriate weightings of these components of workload. Generally, demonstrably good teaching should be rewarded on par with demonstrably good research. For promotion and tenure, faculty members and other instructors should be required to provide substantial evidence of instructional competency.

4.2. A coherent system to evaluate teaching and learning effectiveness should be developed.

In addition to developing and offering new course and instructor evaluation forms, and providing related support for instructors and departments (e.g. guides, peers, consultation), a more comprehensive approach with multiple inputs is needed to evaluate teaching and learning effectiveness. Features of systems to recognize teaching work would include: (1) definition of a normal teaching load (e.g. Tenure-track faculty members normally teach 4 courses per year over a range of levels (lower level, upper level and graduate) and delivery types (seminar, lectures, workshops); (2) ability to calibrate load (e.g. definition of small, medium, and large classes; relative workload to class size defined; reduced/increased/split credit); (3) ability to give credit for “extra” teaching duties (teaching tutorials, directed studies, student supervision, mentoring faculty members, etc.), and (4) exchange ranges (list of tasks that can be bought out and the point value of each task).

4.3. Each unit must fulfill its obligations regarding the definition of a normal teaching workload and the equitable assignment of teaching responsibilities.

A negotiated Faculty Workload Policy (A30.03) defines a normal teaching workload as four regular courses or their equivalent. A range of activities is set out in the Policy from which equivalent teaching loads may be defined. Each unit is responsible for establishing specific equivalencies among these activities, subject to Faculty-level guidelines where these have been established, and with reference, where and when appropriate, to the norms of particular disciplines. It is the Chair’s/Director’s/Coordinator’s responsibility to promote equity within units. Similarly, it is the Dean’s responsibility to ensure fairness across departments/schools/programs. Finally, the Vice-President, Academic will initiate periodic workload reviews from a university-wide perspective, taking into account unique disciplinary requirements.

4.4. Recognize teaching activities through the online CV system.

Definitions and examples of all categories of SFU’s Online CV system should be elaborated and posted online. For each of the following categories, additional criteria may include: (1) Courses: Other, e.g. summer schools, course innovation, instructional skills workshop; (2) Student training: (a) undergraduate student supervision (e.g. directed studies courses, summer NSERC students, honors theses/projects) and (b) other student training, e.g. competitions, internships; and (3) Professional development: Reflections on teaching development. Furthermore, two new categories are proposed: (1) Significant contributions to teaching and (2) Publications and materials related to teaching: (a) Publications and materials related to teaching: Journal articles, monographs, conference and workshop publications; (b) Textbooks, curriculum, and lecture notes, (c) Other, e.g. creation of software, exhibits, devices, models, and (d) Talks, e.g. at conferences and workshops.

4.5. Teaching and learning excellence and innovation, whether demonstrated by an individual or program, should be publicly recognized with awards, special recognitions and incentives.

A broader range of teaching awards should be offered that target different stages of an academic career (early, mid, late) and different instructor groups (faculty members, sessional instructors, TAs, TMs). Additional ways should be sought to reward and celebrate quality teaching (e.g., reduced service, one-time monetary awards, funds transferred to a faculty member’s grant account to support pedagogy or research enhancement, extra TA/TM help).

4.6. Teaching, learning, and scholarship should be respected and celebrated across the University.

The University should foster a culture that values both learning and scholarship within and among all its departments. Research on teaching should be acknowledged as a scholarly endeavour. Recognizing and celebrating teaching excellence should increase the value placed on it in SFU’s culture, and increase awareness of successful practices.

4.7. The importance of teaching and learning should be emphasized by example.

All faculty administrators should be seen as advocates of teaching and learning and model its value by engaging in teaching (e.g., team teaching, guest lecturer, graduate supervision).

4.8. Teaching as a profession should continue to be supported.

SFU should provide sufficient support and professional development to ensure that new and continuing teachers possess the knowledge and skills necessary to teach effectively. More needs to be done to encourage departments and units across campus to articulate their intentions and goals with respect to teaching within their academic plans.

Benefits: Effectively recognizing, evaluating, and rewarding teaching helps to foster a culture that demonstrates both implicit and explicit value for teaching. Further, it indicates to those who are learning that the entire learning process is valued. There could be many potential benefits for SFU instructors and in particular faculty members. Exemplary teachers would be recognized and rewarded. They would be supported in taking leadership and mentor roles. Instructors who are evaluated more equitably may feel less of a pull between research and teaching. Teaching that has a more consistent value at SFU can (1) provide opportunities for ongoing professional development by instructors who wish to pursue this, (2) encourage and reward participation, and (c) ensure that systems (e.g. online CV system) and processes are available to support the recognition and valuing of teaching. Finally, positive changes towards better recognizing, evaluating, and supporting teaching excellence can positively affect SFU's culture and sense of community, and benefit students' learning experiences.

5. A Teaching & Learning Support System

For academic units and instructors to foster learning in an effective manner, they need a well-integrated, responsive and dedicated support system.

Challenges: Currently, individuals and units with varying priorities and approaches are providing limited support to instructors throughout the university. Existing committees (i.e. SCUTL, LTCC, IDG) have limited functions, representation and linkages. Although central and local support for teaching is available, many community members who responded to the Task Force's information gathering provided feedback that we should offer more extensive and better-organized support. Particular challenges:

- Instructors have few opportunities for support such as one-on-one consultation with peers, peer mentors, or peer networks; there is little mentoring.
- Many faculty members do not participate in centralized teaching and learning-related activities provided by the current LIDC, such as working groups intended to address faculty members' needs; the implication being that these activities are not perceived to be meaningful to individual needs or interests.
- There appears to be a discrepancy in teaching and learning support between what administrators and support providers believe is being offered and what instructors perceive is available reflecting not only a lack of communication, but a lack of agreement about what constitutes meaningful and relevant support.
- Communication and collaboration between the Faculties and the current LIDC, other support units, learning and instructional specialists, the Institute for the Study of Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines could be significantly improved. Educational and support staff may be at risk of becoming isolated, less engaged and less informed.
- In some cases, existing linkages across support units require better planning and coordination.
- The ongoing implementation of a desirable diverse curriculum and variety of learning experiences and teaching approaches will require additional teaching support.
- More discipline-based, and locally offered support and opportunities to collaborate with colleagues about teaching would be beneficial.



- It is important to ensure that sufficient well-functioning equipment, tools, resources, as well as appropriate physical spaces and access to technological innovations, are available to support teaching.

Proposed Solutions: Although some support components and processes exist, SFU would benefit from a coordinated and extensive teaching and learning support system that encompasses instructors, staff and students' experiences in the planning, design and implementation of support initiatives.

Recommendation #5: 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.

A new support system would include, but not be limited to specific elements identified in the sub-recommendations below and would achieve the following goals:

- Promote initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning at SFU, seeking funding when needed.
- Encourage collaboration between teachers and teaching support staff.
- Foster the integration of discipline-based and centralized support for teaching and learning in the context of existing institutional structures by: (1) coordinating and integrating the instructional support services that are working well, (2) determining which instructional support services to retain in their present form, to discontinue, or to build upon and refine, and (3) determining what additional forms of instructional support are required.
- Determine how best to accommodate change in student populations, budgetary constraints, pedagogy, digital media, and institutional initiatives.
- Improve the instructional/learning processes and environment at SFU (e.g., spaces, tools, equipment).
- Ensure that curricula are appropriately revised and evaluated on an ongoing basis.

The main purpose of the proposed teaching and learning support system is to facilitate a communication network focused on teaching and learning. In this case University Teaching Fellows (one from each Faculty), local Program mentors and educational staff work together to assure that teaching expertise is shared and needs are addressed through both formal and informal activities and central and decentralized processes. A Council for Teaching and Learning brings together University Teaching Fellows and heads of support units, thus connecting academic staff and educational staff in the common activity of supporting teaching and learning. University Teaching Fellows work through the academic network of Program mentors to reach teaching staff and students, and heads of support units work with relevant staff groups to realize agreed upon directions in support of teaching and learning. In this system, a centralized teaching and learning support unit would provide two types of services: (1) general services addressing needs that overlap faculties and disciplines and providing opportunities for interdisciplinary interactions, and (2) customized services addressing discipline-specific needs.

Through formalized roles, processes and structures that bring together academic and operational units, the new system would improve coordination among different support units, formalize communication channels, foster collaboration, support teaching and learning at all campuses, and establish a process for determining support priorities. In addition, it would increase the visibility of support, enable referral, and ensure a point-of-presence.

Currently, the educational and support staff components of the proposed teaching and learning support system exist and have representation on administrative committees. However, greater participation from a broader range of support units and improvements to communications among the units are desirable. Meanwhile academic departments, Faculties, and students do not have a forum or a process for discussing issues related to teaching and learning. Indeed, a key challenge in identifying and providing appropriate teaching and learning support to date has been the limited consideration of students' learning experiences and the voice of instructors (faculty members, sessionals, TAs, TMs) from the Faculties. Issues such as support for specific instructor groups (e.g., international TAs) and gaining a better understanding of today's students are important, as are input and involvement by



instructors in identifying, designing and implementing initiatives by support units and examining data on student experiences (e.g., NSSE, annual undergraduate surveys) to inform priorities and directions.

The following sub-recommendations pertain to each component of the proposed system.

Proposed New Components

5.1. Create a University Council on Teaching and Learning.

As implied above, part of the reason that such issues have not been sufficiently addressed is the lack of (1) representation from departments and Faculties to bring forward important teaching and learning support concerns at the institutional level, and (2) a forum for discussion and planning among departments, Faculties and support units. The Task Force proposes the establishment of a University Council on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) in which each Faculty would be represented by a University Teaching Fellow (UTF) (see below).

The purpose of the University Council on Teaching and Learning is to address the existing gap in communications, collaboration and planning of teaching and learning support between academic and operational units. As a communication channel and working group, members of the Council would bring forward needs and issues related to teaching and learning for review and consideration. The Council would work in concert with the University Teaching and Learning Support Unit and others, where applicable. Members would collaborate to plan, develop, and review institutional initiatives that support the academic purpose and vision of the University in relation to teaching and learning. It would be advisory to the VP Academic. The group will engage primarily in operational matters and will bring forward ideas and issues (e.g. related to policy) to Senate for review and approval, where appropriate. The Council would be chaired by the VP Academic and be comprised of the University Teaching Fellows, the heads of teaching support units, an undergraduate and a graduate student representative, and two Senior Administrators. One of the University Teaching Fellows and the head of the University Teaching and Learning Support Unit would serve as vice-chairs.

Table 3. Proposed terms of reference for the University Council on Teaching and Learning

| Proposed Term of Reference |
|--|
| <p>Enhancement of network/community functions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitate the flow of ideas and expertise about teaching between and within academic units. 2. Foster (interdisciplinary) opportunities for showcasing successes and sharing experiences related to teaching and learning. 3. Provide support to academic units in the design, development, delivery, and evaluation of quality learning experiences. 4. Support academic units in the implementation of learning and teaching policies, procedures, academic plans, and other institutional directions. 5. Consider and evaluate models and processes for improving the quality of teaching, learning, learning environments, and learning experiences. 6. Work with academic units in the design of opportunities for the development of teaching. 7. Plan, develop, recommend to the VPA, and regularly review policies, procedures, academic plans, and other institutional directions that support the academic purpose and vision of the University in relation to learning and teaching. 8. Plan, develop, recommend to the VPA, and regularly review strategic planning initiatives for effective and meaningful integration of learning technologies. |
| <p>Administrative functions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Identify and monitor broad issues related to the quality of teaching and learning and make recommendations as |

appropriate.

10. Provide support to Faculties and departments in the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of Faculty- and department-level academic plans for improving the quality of teaching and learning.
11. Receive reports from other committees or bodies, including working groups commissioned by the Council, on issues of relevance to the enhancement of learning and teaching.
12. Provide reports to the VPA on activities of the Council as identified in the terms of reference.

5.2. Create a Group of University Teaching Fellows.

Selected from highly recognized and accomplished teachers in each of the eight Faculties, University Teaching Fellows (UTFs) are positions that recognize excellent teachers and offers them an opportunity to take a leadership role and to share their expertise. UTFs would assume responsibility for improving the quality of learning and teaching in their Faculties and for mediating the allocation of support for learning and teaching on an ongoing basis. All tenure-track and teaching faculty members would be eligible for these positions, which might constitute special Associate Deanships. The group of UTFs would, as appropriate, meet separately from other members of the Council to work on specific issues such as policies.

They will be compensated accordingly, using the same principles for salary adjustments that are awarded to faculty members who receive special recognition as research leaders (e.g., Burnaby Mountain professors, Canada Research Chairs). Faculty members holding such positions are not rewarded for their research activity per se, but for their active participation and leadership in developing research clusters and concentrations. Likewise, UTFs will receive awards for their contributions in improving and diversifying teaching and learning. Or UTFs may negotiate a reduction in service load whereby the work as a UTF would count as the faculty member's primary service contribution (subject to approval by his/her Chair/Director and Dean). Rewarding UTFs with course releases is not an appropriate option since removing excellent teachers from instructional activity is inconsistent with the recognition and value that attaches to their contributions in teaching and learning

5.3. Create a Network of Program Teaching Mentors.

Program Teaching Mentors (PTM) are also positions that recognize excellent teachers and offers them an opportunity to take a leadership role and to share their expertise within their departments. A network of PTMs would serve as an extension of the University Teaching Fellows component of the Council, reaching into all programs at SFU. It would include one PTM from each major Department, School, Program, or set of Programs. Core responsibilities would include meeting regularly with the UTF in their Faculties and with the teachers and administrators in their programs to gain and convey information relevant to the ongoing improvement of teaching and learning in their units. The PTMs would provide discipline-specific, localized support -- a frequently expressed need of respondents. This position would be proffered to individuals renowned for excellence in teaching who have served, at least informally as teaching mentors in their academic units. Specific responsibilities and compensation would require further discussion with stakeholders.

Proposed Changes to Existing Units and Processes

5.4. Create a Coordinated University Teaching & Learning Support Unit.

A new University Teaching and Learning Support Unit would replace the LIDC. The new unit would be mandated and have the resources necessary to support and coordinate the initiatives of the Council and the needs of individual instructors in departments, as identified by University Teaching Fellows and Program Teaching Mentors. Responsibilities would include ongoing, long-term support for learning and teaching, as well as time-limited, project-based support. This unit would be headed by a continuing Director who would serve as one of the Vice-chairs of the University Council on Teaching and Learning. The unit would include a

number of full time continuing staff and possibly a few faculty members who would be appointed for specific terms and have expertise and experience with innovative approaches to teaching.

Table 4 below is a preliminary and incomplete list of proposed teaching support functions. These require further examination and fleshing out during implementation planning. It is intended that all functions will be planned and carried out in close collaboration with the Council, academic units and other support units.

Table 4. Preliminary, incomplete list of proposed teaching support functions.

| Foci | Support Functions (mainly in Collaboration with Others e.g. UTFs, PTMs, other professional staff) |
|---|---|
| Academic development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide formal academic development in teaching • Provide informal academic development in teaching • Provide discipline-specific consultations on teaching and learning • Provide consultation to instructors desiring general or confidential teaching support • Consult on & plan initiatives toward improving teaching within department/Faculty |
| Community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan & offer general events/exchanges/ dialogue to inquire about teaching • Plan and offer discipline-specific events/exchanges/ dialogue to inquire about teaching • Collaborate in fostering a community and communication around T&L • Plan, organize, and offer general events/exchanges/dialogue to learn about, showcase and celebrate teaching & learning (e.g. institutional showcase events, guest speakers, conferences) • Keep abreast of Faculty, department and support unit happenings, and assist with communicating this information across the university |
| Curriculum and Course Support (f2f, online, hybrid) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aid departments and programs with curriculum planning and development and/or evaluation and revisions • Assist departments and/or instructors with general course development and delivery • Assist departments and/or instructors with discipline-specific course development • Assist with general teaching skill development (e.g. course design basics, presentation & voice) • Provide instruments, methods, procedures, and resources for instructors in their teaching • Assist with integrating “Classroom” technology (overheads, computers in classes, clickers, WebCT): how to use it (pedagogically) & developing skills • Provide & maintain accessible resources: examples, cases, & tips (general & discipline-specific) • Consult on accreditation & curriculum planning & renewal (Faculty) • Consult on program evaluations & revisions |
| Evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the assessment of W, Q, B and determine areas for teaching development • Aid instructors in preparing for promotion/evaluation (portfolio development, understanding what’s required) • Gather and analyze data on a course or program & work with instructor/program on revisions |
| Communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate current information about teaching models, technologies, etc. to Faculties/instructors/other educational support staff • Communicate T&L trends (e.g. models & technologies) to support providers |
| Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform instructors about institutional-level expectations: policies, copyright, FOIPOP • Inform instructors about institutional-level supports for students (to refer them to) • **Inform instructors about how to integrate institutional-supported learning: distance education, co-op, service learning, & non-academic with one’s course |
| Skill Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan, organize and offer general teaching skill development opportunities (e.g. presentation & voice, course design basics). |
| T&L Support System, specifically | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer orientations and professional development on mentoring for new University Teaching Fellows and Program Teaching Mentors • Operationalize initiatives from the Council, including discipline-specific initiatives in collaboration with Faculties, departments and programs • Inform Council about new perspectives, developments and different ways to support teaching and learning • Serve as a source of information for University Teaching Fellows and Program Teaching Mentors |

** Specialized Support from Support Units. However, members in the T&L Support Unit should be able to describe current SFU supports to initially consult and connect people.

5.5. Establish stronger links between administrators and staff within the teaching and learning support system and between members of the support unit and the University Teaching Fellows.

In the new teaching and learning support system two existing administrative groups, the Learning Technologies Coordinating Committee (LTCC) and Instructional Development Group (IDG) would be refocused. The LTCC would be broadened to include all heads of teaching support units and from the three campuses, become a “Learning and Teaching Coordinating Committee”. This group parallels the University Teaching Fellows though it would discuss specific operational matters (in contrast to teachers’ matters) to do with teaching and learning support.

To recognize the importance of staff communications and collaboration, and to provide a forum for educational and support staff from major support units, the Task Force proposes formalizing the IDG as part of the teaching and learning support system for staff “on the ground” to communicate and collaborate on matters related to teaching and learning support. It would have broad representation from teaching and learning support units. The IDG will report to the LTCC and will operationalize initiatives from the LTCC. The IDG would contain designated representatives from each support unit and report to the LTCC. It serves as a communication forum and community and provides “on the ground” support for the LTCC and Council’s initiatives.

5.6. Incorporate the Institute for the Study of Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines into the teaching and learning support system.

The overall purpose of the Institute is to inspire, support, and enhance collaborative, faculty member-led inquiry into all aspects of teaching and learning at SFU. Its principle activity is to support teaching inquiry projects and processes, conducted by individuals or groups of faculty members, including the assessment of the effectiveness of new approaches and methods. Although the Institute has a specific focus, it could work closely with the University Teaching Fellows and collaborate with support units as part of the overall teaching and learning support system. It also could help sustain the benefits of the Undergraduate Curriculum Initiative through ongoing inquiry into the effectiveness of W, Q and B courses.

5.7. Provide formal mechanisms for Faculty-based W coordinators to connect to a community of colleagues and other learning and instructional specialists.

Currently, there is considerable expertise to support W courses distributed within the SFU community pertaining. Feedback from the Task Force’s information-gathering phase suggested the need to bring faculty members together who support a writing-intensive learning approach. Increased collaboration could increase the visibility of W coordinators, connect them to a community of colleagues and instructional specialists, and provide a regular forum to participate in ongoing refinement of W courses.

5.8. Re-examine the role and purpose of the Senate Committee on University Teaching and Learning (SCUTL) in light of the overall teaching and learning support system.

The Council is envisioned to be an active working group that will plan and engage in operational matters and liaise with members of their constituencies. This type of operational work is not part of a Senate Committee’s responsibilities. However, the roles and relationships between SCUTL and Council require further examination for synergies. Some redefinition of purpose may be needed, as historically, SCUTL has had challenges with any empowerment.

Proposed Priorities

Specific issues that need to be addressed were revealed through recent public forums on the draft recommendations and through the initial information gathering phase. It is envisioned that the proposed system would provide a means for stakeholder groups (Faculties, departments, support units, and students) to bring forward ideas and concerns related to teaching and learning support. The Council would be a forum for members of these stakeholder groups to work together toward viable solutions for the stakeholder groups and the institution as a whole. In addition to issues brought forward through the proposed system, it is proposed that the following be priorities for the Teaching and Learning Support System to examine: (1) the student population and their changing demographics, expectations and needs in relation to teaching and learning; and (2) the support needs of specific instructor groups (e.g., sessional instructors, TAs, TMs), including international Teaching Assistants.

Benefits: In general the proposed system recognizes the diversity of roles involved in teaching and learning and provides a means for the exchange of ideas and information. The day-to-day challenges faced by instructors in the classroom may now be brought forward and considered when prioritizing teaching and learning support at the institutional-level. The system also addresses an existing gap by including faculty members’ and students’ input during planning and enabling instructors, students and staff to collaborate. Inter-departmental teams, as well as, strategic institutional-level initiatives may develop to better support instructors and students. The planning and priorities of support units may also be augmented as a result of instructor and student input gained in a more representative and systematic manner. The needs of instructors will be better met, which in turn will positively impact students’ learning experiences.

Teaching excellence and successful models in supporting teaching within some departments are more likely to be recognized, celebrated and shared – to the benefit of all instructors at SFU. Furthermore, not only will instructors benefit from the knowledge and experience of recognized teachers, but these individuals will also be formally recognized for their mentoring and offered an opportunity to take on leadership roles. This is a step forward in valuing teaching and learning. Meanwhile on the administrative and operations side, specific forums will be developed to include a wider range of stakeholders and to recognize the experiences of staff at many levels.

Several of the system’s components already exist and are proposed to either be included in this new system or to undergo changes to better address teaching and learning support. The proposed system is subject to changes during implementation planning. Some initial costs such as the creation of UTFs are immediate investments into teaching with longer term benefits such as planning that is better informed by stakeholder input, the development of specific supports (e.g. localized, discipline-specific) and reducing duplicate or ineffective support efforts. The different levels of input and participation may enable grassroots efforts as well as better alignment with academic plans and institutional directions.

III. Summary of Recommendations, Challenges and Benefits

Input to the Task Force suggests that teaching and learning at SFU are complex activities that require integrated support at many levels. Each recommendation does not necessarily entail a simple solution. For example, “rewarding teaching excellence” is not simply about creating more awards, because this neither addresses issues related to the methods and criteria used to evaluate teaching nor perceptions about the value of teaching awards. Similarly, a need for discipline-based support for instructors cannot be satisfied simply by assigning a support person to a department or Faculty. Rather, the academic unit must engage in a planning process to identify goals relevant to teaching and learning and develop workable processes to actualize these goals, drawing on expertise both internal and external to the unit to accomplish this. Details in this document demonstrate the complexity and interdependencies of its recommendations. As mentioned earlier, **Appendix A** provides a summary of select issues, the related recommendations and their alignment with the academic plan. **Table 5** below summarizes general benefits for different stakeholder groups.

Table 5. Summary of General Benefits for Different Stakeholder Groups

| Group | Benefit |
|-------------------------------|--|
| For Students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly defined outcomes acquired by graduation Fully developed, recognized and integrated research, experiential, and international learning opportunities Quality instruction and learning opportunities Teaching that takes into account the changing landscape of various student needs A learning environment that inspires excellence Changes that continually take into account constructive feedback from the students |
| All Instructors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support based on different instructor groups' needs Ongoing professional development opportunities Changes to awards and incentives for teaching excellence and innovation Faculty and program representation when identifying support priorities Discipline-specific, in-house support and mentors Supported piloting of alternative teaching approaches Opportunities for interdisciplinary interactions. |
| Faculty Members in particular | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased opportunities to bring research into teaching Recognition as accomplished teachers and leadership opportunities as Fellows and Mentors More consistent practices in evaluating teaching |
| Educational and Support Staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal mechanisms for meeting, sharing knowledge and resources and for interdepartmental collaboration Recognition of support service as a key component within a teaching and learning support system Coordinated priorities and efforts in providing support |
| Administrators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better alignment and support across SFU initiatives Clearer expectations for T&L and stakeholders Competitive edge, student recruitment and retention Framework for a system that recognizes, supports and rewards T&L across Faculties and at all levels |
| The University Community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared vision, direction and common purpose around teaching and learning (SFU identity) Visible recognition and rewarding of teachers and learners Increased awareness of available supports and contacts Stronger ties between faculties and support units Clearer expectations around curricular coherence, connectivity and instructor and student responsibilities Linkages with other SFU initiatives Steps towards recognizing all stakeholder roles and enabling a community around teaching and learning |

IV. Proposed Priorities and Timeline

The recommendations in this report constitute the first step of an ongoing process that will transparently discuss, refine, elaborate, and implement the recommendations in a phased manner. To support the VP Academic's academic plan for 2010 - 2013, suggested immediate priorities include:

1. Promoting a Culture of Teaching and Learning

Specifically, launch initiatives that are aimed at promoting a culture in which teaching and learning are more salient and accorded greater value and are in keeping with University policy and priorities. Increased attention and involvement by university community members are needed for institutional change to occur. Thus, implementation of recommendations #1 (vision and principles) and #2 (communication and community) should be



accorded the highest priorities in order to build on existing momentum from the Task Force and the Academic Planning process.

2. Developing a New Teaching and Learning Support System

Begin the process of developing a new teaching and learning support system. This process would entail:

- (1) Establishing formal processes and mechanisms to organize communication, collaboration and decision-making among existing teaching support services, and, where necessary, creating new roles (immediate).
- (2) Refining the terms of reference of University Teaching Fellows and selecting a representative from each Faculty to participate on the University Council on Teaching and Learning (immediate).

Convening the University Council on Teaching and Learning and charging it, as a first priority, with overseeing the creation of the new Teaching and Learning Support Unit. This will require identifying functions, roles, positions and monitoring the related HR process to establish the new unit (an evolved version of the LIDC) with a director by September 2010.

Appendix A: Selected Issues, Recommendations and Alignment with the Academic Plan

These key issues were derived from the Task Force’s information gathering phase (interviews, surveys, existing documents). Though each recommendation may address multiple issues, only a few are identified to maintain a document of reasonable length.

Table A1: Institutional issues, related recommendations and alignment with the academic plan.

| Selected Issues | Recommendation # | Alignment with Academic Plan |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Lack of an articulated statement of SFU’s vision and principles for teaching and learning that is related to an academic plan: a) makes it difficult to identify strategic directions, to organize support in effective ways, and to work towards a shared vision; and b) may impact strategic planning and implementation of academic plans.</p> | <p>1: Establish and communicate a vision statement and principles to provide directions and common purpose around teaching and learning...</p> <p>1.1: Ensure that appropriate learning and teaching-related standards are articulated institutionally and in all units.</p> | <p>High quality teaching & learning {implicit: having expectations about teaching}</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of institutional mechanisms aimed at fostering a community for teaching and learning; that a sense of community around teaching and learning occurs in pockets at SFU. • Limited awareness among both instructors and their support providers of successful teaching and learning initiatives, resident expertise and the existence of support in areas other than those with which they are directly associated. • SFU could more fully showcase, share and celebrate excellent teaching and learning experiences • No communication channel to reach all teaching and learning stakeholders. • Some challenges with recognizing that many roles (instructors, students and staff) are integral in discussions and decision-making about teaching and learning. | <p>2: Develop and implement a phased institutional plan to raise awareness of the broad range of SFU teaching and learning successes services and support for teaching and learning and to ensure that they are recognized, used, and celebrated in all three campuses in an appropriate manner.</p> <p><i>Recommendation #5 also addresses some of these issues.</i></p> | <p>Recognize excellence in teaching at the graduate & undergraduate levels</p> <p>Collaboration & community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek opportunities for multi-/interdisciplinarity and collaboration across units • Reduce silo culture, improve communication across all areas <p>Build community & partnerships</p> |

Table A2: Graduands, curriculum and learning environment issues, related recommendations and alignment with the academic plan.

| Focus | Selected Issue(s) | Recommendation # | Alignment with Academic Plan |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Graduands | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expectations about student learning could be clearer, particularly at the institutional level. | <p>3: Expand student-centered approaches to teaching within a process of ongoing improvement.</p> <p>3.1: Identify and promote a set of attributes that every SFU graduate should possess or be able to demonstrate.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High quality teaching & learning Specifying attributes and skills for graduates: general (critical thinking, learning, analysis & communication) and discipline-specific Support students to understand expected learning outcomes |
| Curriculum & Learning Environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inconsistencies across programs in terms of time to completion, intensity, standards, approaches, and expectations. Absence of a clearly-stated set of expectations for learning outcomes. Inadequate encouragement and opportunity for instructors to experiment with new teaching practices, to learn about successful practices, and to engage in interdisciplinary activities. Inconsistencies across programs in opportunities for students to benefit from the relationships between teaching, learning, and research. Inadequate formal recognition of experiential learning as an appropriate way to meet degree requirements. Inadequate formal recognition of learning that extends beyond the classroom (co-op, field school, etc.) Inadequate emphasis on aspects of the VPA’s vision and proposed outcomes pertaining to the value of “a wide variety of learning experiences that develop long-term skills in learning”, the value of research strengths, and the revitalization of curriculum. | <p>3.2: Ensure a student-centered focus in the curriculum (a) by identifying learning expectations across all levels of the curriculum (in class and out of class) with consideration of the more general SFU graduate attributes, (b) by ensuring that the curriculum well structured from the perspective of developing learning and (c) by providing clearly stated information about expectations and responsibilities of instructors and students in syllabi for all courses.</p> <p>3.3: Determine mechanisms to develop, recognize, and integrate more research, experiential, and international learning opportunities into the formal curriculum and recognize these with integral academic credit.</p> <p>3.4: Support the piloting of alternative approaches to interdisciplinary, theme-based, and peer-supported learning opportunities, such as peer-group learning, clustered curriculum groupings across departments on topical issues, team-teaching approaches, first year experiences, mentoring of undergraduates by graduate students, and semester cohort groups.</p> <p>3.5: Review existing curricula and learning opportunities to identify, expand, develop, and celebrate those features that facilitate student engagement, constructive feedback, early investment in learning, and effective mentoring</p> <p>3.6: Evaluate programs, courses, and instructors regularly, systematically, and appropriately for learning effectiveness.</p> | <p>Focus on Student Learning Experiences by acknowledging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That students learn through a wide variety of pedagogies that expand the traditional classroom experience <p>Graduate students’ interrelated roles in research, teaching & learning; & their work with undergraduates</p> <p>Support Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand expected learning outcomes To achieve their goals and potential To know the learning purposes & opportunities for each program, find straightforward information <p>Teaching, research & learning, recognizing the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synergy between teaching & research Importance of the relationship between teaching, learning, and research activities <p>Review curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To clearly define learning outcomes To incorporate discipline-specific pedagogies & varied learning opportunities |

Table A3: Recognizing, evaluating and rewarding teaching issues, related recommendations and alignment with the academic plan.

| Selected Issue(s) | Recommendation # | Alignment with Academic Plan |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching is undervalued: institutionally, teaching excellence and expertise were insufficiently recognized, rewarded, celebrated and communicated. • SFU makes limited use of teaching expertise and successful support models that already exist within individual departments. Some instructors should pursue/would like formal professional development in the fundamentals of teaching and learning. • The pursuit of excellence in teaching is not reflected in policy decisions, or when it is, practice is inconsistent with policy. • Inadequate or inconsistent recognition or compensation for course or program development, team-teaching or program coordination; publishing in teaching is not considered to be “research” for purposes of promotion or salary. • Inadequate recognition and reward for teaching reduces the incentive to devote significant effort to teaching. • Teaching is not evaluated in an adequate manner. • Experimentation and innovation in teaching may result in lower teaching evaluations; this is particularly of concern in units where student evaluations are the main or only measure of teaching success. • Methods used to evaluate teaching, plan workloads, determine promotion and tenure, and support teaching require more attention. • Better support and more opportunities for development need to be made available to instructors who are not tenure-track professors (e.g., teaching faculty members, sessional instructors, TAs and TMs). • To improve teaching and learning at SFU, top-level administrators must make a commitment to make it a priority, and to take appropriate actions to support instructors and students. | <p>4: Increase awareness of policy provisions that address the importance accorded to teaching and learning, promote a consistent interpretation of policy provisions, and implement further initiatives that value the teaching mission of the University.</p> <p>4.1: Tenure and Promotion Committees (TPCs) should evaluate teaching in a manner consistent with University policy.</p> <p>4.2: A coherent system to evaluate teaching and learning effectiveness should be developed.</p> <p>4.3: Each unit must fulfill its obligations regarding the definition of a normal teaching workload and the equitable assignment of teaching responsibilities.</p> <p>4.4: Recognize teaching activities through the online CV system.</p> <p>4.5: Teaching and learning excellence and innovation, whether demonstrated by an individual or program, should be publicly recognized with awards, special recognitions and incentives.</p> <p>4.6: Teaching, learning, and scholarship should continue to be respected and celebrated across the University.</p> <p>4.7: The importance of teaching and learning should be emphasized by example.</p> <p>4.8: Teaching as a profession should continue to be supported.</p> <p><i>Recommendation #5 also addresses some of these issues.</i></p> | <p>Recognize excellence in teaching at the graduate & undergraduate levels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an award system <p>Teaching, research & learning, recognizing the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synergy between teaching & research • Importance of the relationship between teaching, learning, and research activities <p>Support instructors in developing teaching skills</p> |

Table A4: Teaching and learning support system issues, related recommendations and alignment with the academic plan.

| Selected Issue(s) | Recommendation # | Alignment with Academic Plan |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, individuals and units with varying priorities and approaches are providing limited support to instructors throughout the university. • Existing committees (i.e. SCUTL, LTCC, IDG) have limited functions, representation and linkages. <p>Although central and local support for teaching is available, we should offer more extensive and better-organized support. Particular challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructors have few opportunities or support for one-on-one consultation with peers, peer mentors, or peer networks; there is little mentoring, and few available specialists at SFU. • Many faculty members do not participate in teaching and learning-related activities provided by LIDC, such as working groups intended to address faculty members' needs; the implication being that these activities are not perceived by those faculty to meet a sufficiently pressing need. • A thorough needs-assessment of instructor requirements does not exist that is consistent with an institutional vision for teaching and learning. • Support for faculty development has not been given sufficient priority. • There appears to be a discrepancy in teaching and learning support between what administrators and support providers believe is being offered and what instructors perceive is available. • Communication and collaboration between the Faculties and LIDC, other support units, learning and instructional specialists, the Institute for the Study of Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines could be significantly improved. Staff may be at risk of becoming isolated, less engaged and less informed. • In some cases, existing linkages across support units require better planning and coordination. • The ongoing implementation of a desirable diverse curriculum and variety of learning experiences and teaching approaches will require additional teaching support. • More discipline-based, and locally offered support and opportunities to collaborate with colleagues about teaching would be beneficial. • It is important to ensure that sufficient well-functioning equipment, tools, resources, as well as appropriate physical spaces and access to technological innovations, are available to support teaching. | <p>5: 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.</p> <p>5.1: Create a University Council on Teaching and Learning.</p> <p>5.2: Create a Group of University Teaching Fellows.</p> <p>5.3: Create a Network of Program Teaching Mentors.</p> <p>5.4: Create a Coordinated University Teaching & Learning Support Unit.</p> <p>5.5: Establish stronger links between administrators and staff within the teaching and learning support system and between members of the support unit and the University Teaching Fellows.</p> <p>5.6: Incorporate the Institute for the Study of Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines into the teaching and learning support system.</p> <p>5.7: Provide formal mechanisms for Faculty-based W coordinators to connect to a community of colleagues and other learning and instructional specialists.</p> <p>5.8: Re-examine the role and purpose of the Senate Committee on University Teaching and Learning (SCUTL) in light of the overall teaching and learning support system.</p> | <p>Collaboration & community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek opportunities for multi-/interdisciplinarity and collaboration across units • Reduce silo culture, improve communication across all areas <p>Build community & partnerships</p> <p>Support instructors in developing teaching skills</p> <p>Employ effective, efficient & innovative approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To teaching, learning, research, service & administration • To ensure resource levels are sufficient & well managed <p>Anticipate and respond</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To higher education demands (i.e. relevance, "skills") • To program & instructor needs |

Appendix B: Task Force on Teaching & Learning and Working Groups

This document provides supporting details for the Introduction section of the Task Force's draft recommendations report.

Task Force on Teaching and Learning

In June 2008, as part of the University's commitment to developing our strategic goals in the areas of teaching and learning, the Associate VP, Academic established a Task Force on Teaching and Learning. The Task Force was charged with obtaining input about teaching and learning at SFU and making recommendations about how it can be enhanced.

- Task Force's Public Site: <http://www.sfu.ca/tftl>
- Email for comments and queries: teachinglearning-tf@sfu.ca
- Maillist to join for news updates: [teachlearntf-news](#) (instructions on our website)

Membership

Associate VP, Academic (Chair) – Bill Krane

6 faculty representatives (one from each Faculty)

- FAS – Chantal Gibson (resigned February 2009)
- FASS – Dennis Krebs
- FBA – Maureen Fizzell / Colleen Collins
- FOE – Michelle Nilson
- FHS – Nicole Berry
- FSC – Petra Menz

Dean, Graduate Studies (or designate) – George Agnes / Wade Parkhouse

Chair, SCUTL (or designate) – Stephen Spector (FBA as well)

Director, LIDC (or designate) – Bill Glackman

Director, Institute for the Study of Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines – Cheryl Amundsen

Director, University Curriculum (or designate) – Sarah Dench

University Librarian (or designate) – Lynn Copeland

Dean, Continuing Studies (or designate) – Joan Collinge

Senior Director, Student Learning and Retention – Nancy Johnston

Chief Information Officer (or designate) – Frances Atkinson

Undergraduate Student Rep – Reema Jayakar from Fall 2008 (Kevin Harding for Summer 2008)

Graduate Student Rep – Lorna Boschman

Support for the Task Force

Stephanie Chu – Special Projects Advisor to the Associate VP, Academic

Gwen English – Executive Secretary to the Associate VP, Academic

Annique Boelryk, Chris Groeneboer & Maria Davis – Research Assistants

Working Groups

This is a point-in-time document: After the Community Participatory Events, four working groups were formed to examine key issues. The groups' proposed foci, membership and terms of reference follow. This document was developed at the start and refined partway through the Working Group phase. It was released when details from all groups were received, as they differed in their process and progression. The intent was to document proposed ideas and directions and to inform the university community. As the groups worked more closely with issues, some directions and outcomes were amended accordingly and as reflected in the Task Force's Draft Recommendations document.

I. Student learning

George Agnes (chair), Sarah Dench, Nancy Johnston, Reema Jayakar, Elaine Fairey, Candy Ho, Malgorzata Dubiel, Trina Isakson, Janet McCracken

1. Define an attribute set that all SFU graduates should possess.
2. Identify what the University (curriculum, content & delivery, within & outside classroom, learning support) offers now, and needs, that leads to these outcomes.
3. Research strategies, old and innovative, that will result in SFU curriculum evolution with respect to these attributes, and identify how to implement processes to improve learning, and who is involved.

II. Teaching evaluation, rewards, expectations & obligations

Michelle Nilson (co-chair), Nicole Berry (co-chair), Stephen Spector, Russell Day, Tom Grieve, Petra Menz, Alistair Lachlan, Paul Budra, Michael Monagan

1. Determine if there is an improved system for student evaluation of teaching that could serve across campuses, informed by the current SCUTL report, and make recommendations accordingly
2. Research the approaches that various units across campus and other universities are implementing to recognize and improve teaching practices among individual faculty members
3. Recommend standardized mechanism for review and reporting of all teaching which could include documentation for a teaching portfolio that could be implemented campus wide or an arm's length third party assessment system
4. Identify particular mechanisms through which the evaluation of teaching and learning, both campus wide and at the individual department/faculty level, can be strengthened
5. Identify particular mechanisms, both campus wide and at the individual department/faculty level, to strengthen the reward for excellent teaching
6. Recommend a comprehensive system to improve the evaluation and reward of all teaching activities
7. Looking forward, identify and suggest long-term, step-wise processes to strengthen the evaluation of overall departmental/faculty curricula based on student learning outcomes

III. Coordination & representation

Cheryl Amundsen (co-chair), Dennis Krebs (co-chair), Bill Glackman, Frances Atkinson, Annique Boelryk, Gerald Thomas, Danielle Deveau, Adrienne Burk, Chris Groeneboer, Sophie Lavieri, Stephanie Chu (roamer)

Recommendations on the following issues:

1. What kind of structure or system is best equipped to ensure that initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning at SFU are developed and supported on an ongoing basis?

2. What is the best way of integrating central and discipline-based/local support for teaching and learning in the context of existing institutional structures?
3. What implications for effective forms of instruction and teaching and learning methods do changes in student populations, budgetary constraints, digital media, and academic initiatives have, and how can we best accommodate them?
4. How can we most effectively improve the instructional/learning processes and environment at SFU (e.g. spaces, tools, equipment)?
5. How can we ensure that curricula are appropriately revised and evaluated on an ongoing basis?
6. What are the best ways to evaluate the extent to which existing supports and services for teaching and learning are meeting instructor needs and institutional goals, in the short and long term?

IV. Community & policy

Stephanie Chu (chair), Joan Collinge, John Moore, Lynn Copeland, Karen Marotz, Lorna Boschman, Steve Whitmore (up to March 31)

1. Review the detailed information gathering document created for this working group to extract ideas relevant to the working group's activities.
2. Liaise with the three other working groups to identify and align policy and community recommendations.
3. Examine select examples from comparable other institutions and at SFU for best practices in celebrating and communicating the importance of teaching and learning.
4. Prioritize key areas for changes to communications, valuing, expectations, and showcasing teaching and learning at SFU.
5. Identify and review existing policies related to teaching and learning and make change recommendations where appropriate.
6. Prioritize key areas for policy and procedural changes, and identify potential challenges with policy changes and implementation.

Appendix C: Documents Reviewed, Referenced & Future Use

The following lists key SFU documents reviewed by the Teaching and Learning Task Force, references cited in the discussion document and resources.

SFU Internal Documents (Cited or Reviewed)

Excludes the numerous documents created by task force members for internal or working group use, informal documents and websites for departments, Faculties and units.

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Notable Documents for Future Use

In addition to the above.

- *Academic Board Resolutions: The Management and Evaluation of Coursework Teaching*
http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/programs/P&P/usyd_coursework.pdf
- *Guidelines for Good Practice in Teaching & Learning*
http://www.usyd.edu.au/ab/policies/Good_Prac_T&L.pdf
- <http://www2.nea.org/he/heta95/images/f95pg5.pdf>
- Washington State University- critical thinking project (in the disciplines): <http://wsuctproject.wsu.edu/fa.htm>
- Weinberg, B. A., Fleisher, B. M., & Hashimoto, M. (2007). Evaluating methods for evaluating instruction: The case of higher education (Working paper No. 12844).
- York University teaching award: <http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate/committees/scotl/UWTFiles2008-09/UWTACriteria2009.pdf>