

CTL Prospectus 2009: Where will we go 'From Here'?

A summary of data gathered from UBC Okanagan Faculty

A Look Back:

The Centre for Teaching & Learning was created in 2004-2005 with the following mission:

UBC Okanagan's Centre for Teaching and Learning promotes and supports excellence in teaching and learning. The Centre provides campus-wide support for all models of teaching and learning, including online learning. UBC Okanagan faculty are provided with a variety of academic growth opportunities including peer mentoring programs, seminar series, training workshops, learning technology support and resources on teaching practices. In addition, the Centre provides graduate students and teaching assistants with professional development opportunities.

The Centre supports:

- the scholarship of teaching and learning,
- new models of teaching and learning, and
- the integration of research and learning.

In 2005 a faculty survey was conducted and major programming initiatives and revisions to existing programs resulted.

Since 2007 we have offered faculty the opportunity to send us feedback at any time through an active link on our website www.ubc.ca/okanagan/ctl and we have kept statistics on faculty use of specific programs. We have also gathered data from Teaching Assistant and Graduate Students through an online survey in 2008 and track usage of programming designed for these populations.

During September and early October of 2009 the Centre asked faculty for feedback on current Centre programming and suggestions for future programming or resources that would assist them in their quest to offer the best teaching and learning environments for UBC Okanagan students. This information was gathered using two methods:

1. All faculty were invited to participate in an online survey which was active on our website for most of September.
2. Specific faculty were invited to participate in one of four Focus Groups during the week of Oct. 5th, 2009. The goal was to choose faculty representative of the various academic programs that exist at UBC Okanagan.

Fall 2009 Results:

A. Online Survey: (A copy of the online survey is provided at the end of this report.)

The online survey produced very little feedback with only 3 surveys completed during the advertised time and one coming in after the deadline had passed. The data gathered from the 4 surveys was fruitful, but unfortunately not representative of all faculties.

The following data was derived from the survey:

Faculties represented:

Management
Engineering
Computer Science

Demographic data:

3 male, 1 female
1 tenured, 3 untenured
Average of 2.5 years spent teaching at UBC Okanagan
Average of 6.25 years of teaching experience

Awareness of Programs:

All respondents indicated that they were aware of most of our programs and services.

Use of Centre Programs:

Respondents participated in an average of 5 of our programs throughout a given year.

Use of website:

1 respondent did not use our website at all, 2 access it monthly and 1 accesses it weekly.

Priorities for programming:

When asked to prioritize 8 items according to their own professional development needs, the following ranking resulted:

1. Student Engagement
2. Assessment of Student Learning
3. Course Design
4. Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
5. Mentoring Programs
6. Peer Review
7. Integrating Technology into Teaching and Learning Settings
8. Dossier Development

Satisfaction with Centre Staff:

3 respondents indicated that the Centre staff exceeded their expectations and one responded that the staff met their expectations.

Suggestions for additional/new workshops:

One respondent requested a workshop on working with international students.

Timing of offerings:

All respondents indicated that they would attend workshops during the February Reading Break and 50% of the respondents would attend workshops/Centre offerings during the non-instructional day in November.

Summary of Online Survey:

Aside from the disappointing participation rate in the online survey, the feedback was useful and positive.

B. Focus Groups:

Four focus groups were held with the average size of 4 faculty and 4 centre staff. Each focus group operated for 45 minutes and used the following guide questions:

1. What is the Centre of Teaching and Learning to you?
2. What do we do well?
3. What resources would assist your teaching?
4. How do you prefer to get notices about our offerings?
5. Do you have any ideas on how to raise awareness of the Centre?

Faculties/Departments Represented:

Anthropology
Biology
Computer Science
Creative Writing
Education
Engineering
English
Management
Performing Arts
Library

Views of the Centre:

All participants viewed the Centre as a positive place that seeks to enhance teaching and learning. Some view the Centre as more useful to first-time faculty.

Programming Favorites:

Stemming from the focus group discussions, two programming choices arose as the favorites for most faculty - The August Teaching, Learning & Technology Fair and the Annual Learning Conference were hi-lighted as important programming to continue. Faculty were also very pleased with the support offered around WebCT Vista.

New Action Items Suggested: (followed by response from CTL)

The following items were suggested by the focus groups and are presented in random order.

1. Workshop for faculty, perhaps done by students, on pop culture – how to connect with this generation of students. (Plans are currently underway to offer this during the February Reading break and again each fall in our August Teaching, Learning & Technology Fair.)
2. Specific training for teaching assistants that will be placed in studio-based classes. (CTL staff have now met with the faculty involved and observed studio-based classes in order to better prepare teaching assistants for September 2010.)
3. Workshop on interpreting Teaching Evaluation Questionnaire results for faculty, heads and deans. (The Centre will offer a workshop Feb. 12th which will assist all parties in better understanding the results and uses of the T.E.Q.)
4. CTL member to attend Senior Appointments Committee meetings to keep up to date with dossier requirements. (CTL staff met with the Okanagan chapter of S.A.C. on Dec. 9th)
5. Workshop series on Teaching Excellence – defining what it is and strategies to achieve it. (CTL has created D.A.T.E., **D**iscussions **A**bout **T**eaching **E**xcellence Series, which will be offered one Friday every month with a guest speaker on teaching excellence and time for discussion/questions.)
6. Workshop for faculty on how to mentor graduate students. (CTL will work with Graduate Studies to offer a workshop in August 2010.)
7. CTL to influence class scheduling to include reference to pedagogy/faculty requests/student learning needs. (CTL has ongoing discussions with the Associate Registrar regarding these matters.)
8. CTL to be more political/proactive in changing the culture of teaching and learning at UBC Okanagan. (CTL staff continue to promote teaching excellence.)
9. CTL to lobby for rewarding teaching. (CTL staff continue to raise awareness of the importance of teaching and our ongoing memberships on various campus committees allows us to continue to influence the teaching culture on this campus.)
10. Workshop on the process of developing a course from proposal to final product. (This is viewed as department-specific, so no real resources are being put toward this suggestion at this time.)
11. Use of customer profiling to advertise specific workshops. (As CTL staff become acquainted with individual faculty preferences, they will continue to invite them to workshops accordingly.)

12. Training for faculty on student needs for media production for course assignments. (CTL staff currently respond to individual faculty requests in this area.)
13. Unit-specific seminars that would count toward merit. (CTL staff currently deliver many unit-specific seminars, but it would be up to the department to devise a merit system.)
14. Revisit policies and practices for the Peer Mentoring program. Mentors to meet and discuss guidelines prior to meeting their protégés. (The mentors will meet as a group prior to meeting their assigned partners in January, 2010.)
15. A monthly global email to advertise programming. (Plans are underway to devise a template that will be used monthly to communicate the Centre's offerings to all faculty and staff.)
16. Workshop on teaching with Vista. (This workshop will be offered in 2010.)
17. Workshop on how to handle classes with various levels of prior learning in the subject, for example, courses with no pre-requisite. (Consultations on how to teach such courses will be done on a one-to-one basis as required.)

Action Items Suggested that the Centre is Already Working on:

1. Teaching in Higher Education Certificate Program – for PhD students.
2. Monthly workshops – some repeats of the August offerings.
3. Peer review system.
4. Large class size teaching strategies.
5. CTL to address/attend department meetings.
6. Use of the Exchange Newsletter to advertise our programming.
7. Procedures for first-time faculty.
8. One-on-one tutoring for faculty using Remark.

Teaching and Learning Issues that Arose from the Discussion:

There was a lot of discussion about the balance of teaching and research and associated reward systems for each. Faculty expressed frustration in dealing with the balance of teaching and research and that the current reward system results in teaching taking a back seat to research for faculty seeking tenure or promotion.

A related discussion point was the emphasis placed on the Teaching Evaluation Questionnaire for tenure and promotion. The Centre supports peer review and teaching portfolio development to diversify the evaluation of teaching excellence. A well-balanced, diversified portfolio may lead to faculty becoming more at ease with trying innovative instructional strategies.

Faculty noted a disappointment in the level of service currently available from ITServices and were inquisitive about the decision making processes around the introduction of new technology like Vista. Clarification was needed a couple of times during the discussions around the different responsibilities between ITServices staff and Centre for Teaching & Learning staff.

Even though we are both part of Learning Services, there was a belief that we were just one body, rather than two different departments.

Programming Priorities:

Participants were asked to rank 8 items related to teaching and learning according to their current priorities. The following ranking resulted:

1. Integrating technology into teaching and learning settings
2. Student engagement
3. Scholarship of teaching and learning
4. Mentoring programs
5. Course design
6. Assessment of student learning
7. Peer review
8. Dossier development

A Look Ahead: New Ventures for 2010 and beyond - Where do we go 'From Here'?

The Centre was extremely pleased with the richness of the information gathered during the focus groups and has responded quickly to many of the action items suggested. Although this is again a small sample, it allows us to program and plan according to the desires and needs of faculty.

Each year the Centre creates a strategic plan and for 2009/2010 we had identified three foci which overlap nicely with the desires of faculty. The three areas that the Centre has chosen for emphasis are:

1. Increasing the awareness and opportunities for the **Scholarship of Teaching and Learning**. (We hope that this could be the bridge that is needed between teaching and research and will continue to lobby for increased use and awareness of research into teaching and learning.)
2. Increasing our capacities through **partnerships**. Many of the suggested action items require working in conjunction with other departments and our annual events in August and May typically involve both internal and external partnerships.
3. Increasing the **awareness and profile** of the Centre for Teaching & Learning. (It is hoped that the operation of the focus groups and the online survey has created a buzz about teaching and learning that will continue to advance our position as an aid to the teaching and learning that takes place on this campus. Many suggestions included workshops, events and advertising that will maintain and increase the Centre's involvement with faculty on campus.

We continue our open door policy and welcome suggestions at all times. The common goal between ourselves and faculty is to maximize the learning experience for students of UBC Okanagan.

