**Teaching Excellence = High Quality Learning**

**Final Report of the Faculty Professional Development Task Force**

# Background

In May 2012, the College released a new Academic Plan, outlining its academic priorities for the next decade. Enabling high quality learning was a key element of the Academic Plan. In October 2012, Vice President Academic Cheryl Jensen assembled a Task Force to develop a robust faculty professional development plan that would align with the College’s new academic plan.

The Task Force was led by Dan McKerrall, Director of Academic Planning and Carol Mushing, Manager, Organizational and Professional Development. Task force members included Valerie Parke (Project Manager), Roberta Burke, Leslie Marshall, Lisa Pegg, Peggy French, Marilyn McDermott and Sonja Christopherson. There were also three Associate Deans: Chris Blackwood, Jane Cooper and Sharon Estok, and a Faculty Member representing each school: Caroline Neufeld, Interdisciplinary Studies; Janice Warren, Business; Carrie Mines, Health Sciences; Sue Prestedge and John Holloway from Engineering Technology; and Shelley Lang from Community and Urban Studies.

The mandate of the Task Force was twofold: First, to consult with constituents to determine the essential components of a professional development plan and secondly, to consider recommendations in three broad areas:

1. Pedagogy – Teaching and Learning Practices for a Quality Learning Environment
2. Future Ready Faculty – Competencies of the 21st Century Teacher
3. Multiple Pathways for Faculty Professional Development at Various Career Stages

# Vision

To ensure the recommendations aligned with Mohawk’s Academic Plan for the future, the Task Force focused on recommendations which would promote a culture of continuous professional development and would support faculty into the next decade through relevant, flexible programs and organizational processes.

While resources already exist in the Centre for Teaching and Learning to provide faculty with teaching and learning support, expanded opportunities are necessary to support faculty to strengthen and expand their teaching proficiencies into the next decade as well as throughout their teaching careers. The vision highlights professional development pathways that would provide expanded opportunities for faculty development while considering: multi campuses, time constraints, technology, resources, organization processes, and instructional design expertise and program variations.

# Pedagogy - The Foundation of Teaching and Learning Practices to Ensure Quality Learning Environments

The educational community is rapidly changing and continues to challenge the delivery of academic excellence. The increasing diversity of the student population, educational technology, differentiated programs, graduates with 21st century fluencies and skills, mandates of provincial program quality and accreditation, budget constraints, increase use of part-time faculty, and intense competition among Colleges is forcing a transformation in teaching and learning. To maintain quality learning environments in this dynamic environment, the College needs to reinforce instructional pedagogy (best practices in teaching and learning) as the foundation for teaching and learning among faculty, staff, administrators and students. *Pedagogy* will be embedded in all professional development programming to ensure a high quality learning environment for our students and inspire teaching excellence.

# Creating a Continuous and Collaborative Culture for Teaching and Learning

In order to position Mohawk for success in this dynamic environment, the Taskforce has embraced the importance of creating a *culture of continuous learning*, a culture which inspires individual growth of faculty throughout their career, provides continuous inspiration for faculty, creates a community for collaborative learning, and a fosters safe environment to research, share, experiment and to take risks.

# Multiple Pathways - Future Ready Faculty

The college educator is a dual profession requiring pathways for professional development that reflect one’s subject expertise, employment status, teaching proficiency and accounts for needs at different career stages. Firstly faculty are recognized for their subject expertise and secondly, as a teacher/facilitator of the learning environment. Their proficiency in these areas is developed over time through an ongoing process with conscious reflection. As context and priorities change, there is a need for reciprocal commitment made to re-establish subject currency and maintain teaching proficiency through continuous learning and development.

Faculty at the beginning stage in their teaching career are presented with a broad range of roles and responsibilities for which they may have little or no formal training. Professional development is supported through formal learning initiatives such as: college orientation and teaching and learning programming. New faculty need the support of peers and of experienced faculty as *mentors* who can bring them into the professional community and share their experience and knowledge.

Faculty in the first few years of teaching benefit from participation in discussion forums, communities of practice, attendance at workshops, conferences and professional groups to give them the opportunity to consider new ideas and strategies and how best to apply these in their own practice.

Faculty with 8 or more years of experience often develop areas of interest and focus in which they become true experts. They develop as reflective practitioners in these areas and value autonomy to act and use their expert knowledge. Experienced faculty continue to develop by participating in workshops, acting as mentors for new faculty, helping make their tacit knowledge explicit and participating in study leaves to pursue their areas of expertise and research opportunities.

Offering various *pathways* for faculty development provides a richer learning environment which will inspire faculty to take ownership of their individual development, resulting in faculty who are capable and confident in their abilities as teachers and result in teaching and learning excellence at the course level, program level, and in the college as a whole.

# Recommendations:

The task force makes the following recommendations to enhance faculty professional development and the corresponding organizational supports.

**A. Faculty Development**

1. **Provide a comprehensive “College Orientation” for all new faculty to familiarize them with college policies, procedures and resources. This includes:**
   1. Providing an “e-Faculty Handbook” that includes key dates, contacts, services, maps, resources and procedures for each Mohawk campus and is customizable by department.
   2. Provide face-to-face orientation sessions, offering multiple dates and times to maximize opportunities for full-time and non full-time faculty to participate.
   3. Hiring one month in advance to allow sufficient paid time for orientation to College policies and procedures, access to accounts, attend CEDP, and allow for course preparation

**Rationale:**

* New faculty are not familiar with the college and where to go for resources such as services for students in need, photocopying, testing, how to use eLearn, booking rooms/technology, how to use library resources, where to get help when you’re in the learning environment (i.e. phoning helpdesk).
* A manual that is easy to navigate and provides an index would make it easier for new faculty to find the resources they need quickly.

**Benefits:**

* Acclimates new faculty to the College policies and procedures and services available
* Provides a consistent and timely approach
* Proactive rather than a reactive strategy for assuming responsibilities

1. **Establish a formal college mentoring program, modelled after an already established and recognized program (e.g. University of Toronto).** 
   * Pairing a “New” faculty member with an “Experienced” faculty member in a mentoring relationship within the department. Both faculty members will be SWF’d to meet over the “New” faculty member’s first year.
   * Establish funding for designated expert Leads by course / by skill set to provide professional development, support, and guidance (i.e. the Health Sciences(Nursing) model - leads for Research, IT, Simulation …)

**Rationale:**

* Increases overall effectiveness by transferring learning from experienced faculty to new faculty
* With an increase in part-time and partial load faculty there is a need to establish a formal mentoring process that recognizes the time and work involved in acclimating new hires
* Provide consistency with course learning plans and achievement of learning outcomes

**Benefits:**

* Faculty will be better prepared for teaching assignments, more confident and less overwhelmed. Students will be better served by more prepared faculty.
* Allows faculty to acclimate more quickly to the college culture
* Mentoring benefits both the mentee and the mentor and increases collaboration and communication among faculty

1. **Establish a comprehensive teacher development in-house course/program designed for newly hired faculty that will provide ongoing support and time to learn and apply effective teaching and learning pedagogy, using a variety of delivery methods. PLAR will be available.**

* New faculty would be given time on their SWF to attend the course as a cohort which would integrate key elements such as :
  + principles of effective teaching and learning
  + instructional design
  + assessment techniques
  + educational technology
  + diversity, accessible learning
* This program would provide ongoing in-house support for faculty while completing the College Educator Development Program (Western Region College Program Partnership)
* College will investigate options to obtain credit towards a Certificate or Master’s program in Education
* The program will offer flexible delivery – i.e. modular, blended formats allowing attendance by full-time and part-time faculty
* Modules would be open to mid and late-career faculty to support continuous development as educators
* Experienced faculty, curriculum developers, instructional technologist will be learning facilitators within the program
* The modular design of the program will allow all faculty to participate in topics of interest as part of an ongoing culture of learning and a desire to provide interdisciplinary collaboration

**Rationale:**

* New faculty need dedicated time to develop teaching and learning proficiency
* Need to integrated, instructional design and educational technology
* Emphasis on “application” of theory

**Benefits:**

* Creates consistent approach to instructional design for faculty
* Inspires a culture of teaching and learning and foster interdisciplinary collaboration
* Builds community of practice/learning
* Models blended learning approach

1. **a) Provide funding that would support opportunities for faculty to strengthen their connections with their professional communities of expertise such as:**
   1. more flexible PD leave options (e.g. modify workload to allow one day a week to work/job shadow in industry or to attend classes) throughout academic year.
   2. funding, in terms of time and money, acquisition of skill needed to stay current in the field
   3. support faculty networking opportunities (i.e. industry committees and events, memberships,) by funding travel expenses to events/meetings and funded release time (allowing time during teaching semester to attend these opportunities).
   4. support departmental “subject specific” PD sessions

**Rationale:**

* Supports the Academic Plan theme Connections to Industry and Community, particularly, “Support faculty in collaborating with industry so they may stay current in their respective fields”
* Networking will allow faculty to maintain relationships to industry which benefits us because a) the Mohawk name is front and center with potential employers for our grads, b) it establishes/maintains collaboration with corporate partners, and c) provides a pathway to current industry information for faculty.

**Benefits**

* Ensure programs are relevant and graduates are prepared to step into the workplace with current skills.

1. **b) Enhance funding; in line with actual costs; to support faculty professional development that recognizes diversity of opportunities and needs.**
   1. Increase the conference funding allocation to better reflect the cost of attending a conference
   2. Establish an efficient, streamlined process for conference approval (5 days) and reimbursement (2 weeks) of Professional Development Conference funding.
   3. Share conference offerings related to teaching and learning via the Centre for Teaching and Learning website.
   4. Expand the scope of professional development funding from conferences to also include subscriptions, software licences, books, and certification or accreditation courses.
   5. Establish a separate fund for travel and accommodation.
   6. Support faculty networking opportunities (i.e. industry committees and events, memberships, conferences) by funding travel expenses to events/meetings and allowing time during teaching semester to attend these opportunities
   7. Encourage Faculty to present at conferences by covering all related expenses

**Rationale:**

* PD admin process is cumbersome and time-consuming which results in faculty missing conference registration dates and carrying costs on personal credit for extended periods of time; therefore, an
* PD conference funding model is not adequate for conferences of more than 3 days in length in cities other than Hamilton
* Presenting at conferences enhances the profile of the College

**Benefits:**

* Increased participation in professional development that will advance the proficiency of the teacher

1. **Provide regularly scheduled offerings/times to participate in professional development offerings which will promote a culture of professional development and lifelong learning as an institutional priority.**

* Dedicated college wide PD days to promote collaboration (e.g. Connections)
* Regularly schedule PD workshops at multiple times and locations throughout the year
* Programming specifically for CE and non full time faculty
* Departmental PD session by request to address topic/discipline

**Rationale:**

* Fall and winter mid-semester break weeks are occupied with program and course related activities and leaves little time for PD
* Teaching schedules/locations often prevent participation in workshops
* Supports several of the Academic Plan strategies, including: 21st Century Skills, Technology Literacy, Differentiated Learning
* Professional growth of faculty takes effort and needs to be purposeful

**Benefits:**

* Establishes a time for delivering PD workshops and maximizes resources
* Encourages collaboration and networking among faculty
* Can respond to faculty/departmental requests as well as advances in teaching and learning
* Establishes “teaching excellence” as an institutional priority
* Dates/workshops established in advance provide for better planning

1. **The Centre for Teaching and Learning will provide onsite (schools/dept) guidance and support and workshops for faculty in the pursuit of pedagogical excellence and professional growth:** 
   1. Academic Dean to direct and coordinate all academic professional initiatives recommended in this report. This position will require substantial teaching experience.
   2. Provide appropriate tools, expertise and resources to support faculty professional development at all campuses

**Rationale:**

* Resources are centered at Fennell campus requiring faculty to seek out support/resources
* Competitor colleges are offering similar professional development resources to ensure their faculty are proficient in teaching and learning
* Faculty need to be able to access support from experts in teaching and learning in their own environment
* Ongoing support from experts in education is essential to provide academic leadership
* Changes in technology creates barriers that can be minimized with support
* Inadequate number of technologist to assist faculty with implementation of educational technology within the College’s timeframe

**Benefits:**

* Teaching and learning presence will inspire teachers throughout their careers and promote growth
* High quality learning environments ultimately contributes to increased student success and student satisfaction
* Provides a stronger relationship for assisting faculty to embrace technology enhanced learning

1. **Establish** [**Principles of Effective Teaching and Learning**](http://www.tss.uogeulph.ca/id/ta/tahb/tah8g.html) **for Mohawk College as the foundation that guides faculty professional development and academic decision making. Adopting these principles will promote a culture of teaching and learning excellence across the college.**
   1. Recommend faculty team be put together to establish principles
   2. The principles will be incorporated into the comprehensive faculty development program
   3. The principles will inform curriculum design and assessment (program development and mapping)
   4. The principles will inform a strength-based approach to performance management and professional development planning
   5. These principles will inform administrators of effective teaching and learning practices for curriculum development and delivery and teaching assignments
   6. The principles will inform facilities, scheduling, and information technology practices

**Rationale**

* As a college, the institution should function as a learning organization, focused on building a culture that is grounded on strong, well-researched principles of teaching and learning.
* Principles of Teaching and Learning will support a number of the Academic Plan themes and strategies, including:
  + Technology – Open Source Learning, Technology Literacy
  + Learning – Personal Learning, Cross-Disciplinary Learning, Differentiated Learning, Flexible Programs
  + Pathways – Lifelong Learning
* Principles will support the Strategic Plan, particularly Future Ready Students
* The College needs to explicitly support new faculty in their development as educators

**Benefits**

* Messaging that technical expertise is only half the skill set required for teaching effectively.
* Commonality amongst initiatives –
* Consistency between effective teaching and learning practice (whether student or educator)
* Aligns strategic college priorities around teaching and learning (organization around academic plan)

1. **Establish a competency framework for the Future Ready Educator that will inform self-reflection and support diverse faculty development pathways.**

**Rationale:**

* A competence framework describes the vast range of responsibilities of the teaching profession that is acquired over time with intentional study of teaching and learning. This framework is a useful as a resource for faculty development planning.
* Supports the Strategic Plan, particularly Quality Employees
* Supports all themes and strategies in the Academic Plan
* Provides the basis for developing specific professional development offerings for faculty.

**Benefits**

* Provides a continuum for faculty self-reflection and strength development
* Contributes to a structure and focus for PD activities and mentoring relationship

1. **Engage the college in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (i.e. formal research of the practice of teaching and learning) so we can improve teaching with support of pedagogical excellence.**
   1. Establish a committee/director to oversee / manage research projects and coordinate collaboration with other post secondary institutions
   2. Review the desire, capacity and available funding to engage in this research.
   3. Share new/experimental practices of teaching and learning through workshops/presentations to identify best practices.
   4. Evaluate the effectiveness of innovative teaching practices within different programs and different semesters
   5. Establish a rigorous Research Ethics Review process to support and facilitate educational research
   6. Establish educational research priorities and allocate funds for support of projects within priority areas

**Rationale**

* Action research would demonstrate current best practices in our college and identify opportunities for further investigation and development
* Evidence-based teaching and learning models is an effective use of resources.
* The foundation of institutional SOTL is a rigorous Research Ethics Review process to guide aspiring researchers and ensure the quality of research procedures and protocols meets external standards so that findings can be disseminated and published
* The college has initiated a number of new processes and technologies in education, but has not supported systematic evaluation on the effectiveness of these initiatives. Faculty are using new technologies in innovative ways but lack capability to assess the effectiveness of their actions and further develop their innovations

**Benefits**

* College research would increase our profile in education leadership and media
* The reflection that results will improve teaching and learning
* Published college research would increase our profile with other academic institutions and provide opportunities for partnership
* Evidence of the efficacy of various learning strategies would better inform professors and administrators.

1. **Provide space away from students to encourage informal faculty and staff collaboration e.g. a lunch room/coffee area for gathering.**

**Rationale**

* There is very little open and private space for faculty and staff to dialogue around teaching and learning
* Providing open space is a College priority for students and is equally important priority for increasing staff interaction and informal learning/sharing

**Benefits**

* Informal discussions provides day-to-day encouragement, advice, ideas and inspiration
* Provides opportunity for interdisciplinary networking
* Provides opportunity for new and experienced colleagues to network

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