

## Teach for Tomorrow Horizontal Strategy M. Catherine Bolton, VPTL

### A Next Generation University

**The Question:** How do we teach for tomorrow AND double our research?

**The Answer:** We see teaching and research not as competing priorities, but as complementary priorities.

**The Concept:** A university where research informs the teaching and curriculum design as a central part of its mission. A university where doubling research also involves doubling research in teaching and learning.

Faculty members have expressed their frustration at the lack of vision concerning teaching at the university and the necessity for changing the culture concerning teaching. While the rewards for research productivity are clear, the rewards for excellence in teaching are less so. Indeed, the impression remains that research and service are supported, but teaching is not. In particular, the inability of professors to carve out sufficient time from their research to invest in their teaching was seen as a major barrier towards improving teaching excellence. How then, can we support our faculty towards teaching excellence?

If we are to stake the claim that we are a next generation university, how do we ensure that our students receive next generation learning experiences in this next generation institution? While some students have learned very effectively in the present lecture-based format, more recent scholarship on teaching and learning at the post-secondary level suggests that this pedagogy is not entirely successful for deep learning<sup>1</sup>. With the increasing use of technology, the resultant proliferation of “information,” and the ever faster-changing demands of the workplace, our students are being asked to prepare themselves for professions which may not even exist at the moment they enter university, and which they and the university cannot foresee. Secondary research has shown that one of the best methods for meeting these challenges is to educate students through an active pedagogy, incorporating high impact practices, particularly at the undergraduate level. But how do we actually do this?

We leverage the research on teaching and learning to inform our teaching practice and to facilitate professors’ adoption of varied teaching and learning practices.

This is not an extraordinary or impossible concept. Universities<sup>2</sup> understand that student success depends on innovative curriculum and teaching practice, but that this cannot be done without research-informed practice. Fundamentally successful academic programs need to be informed by the recent and critical research in teaching and learning, undertaken by researchers who are experts in discipline-based research and learning science research.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.hewlett.org/uploads/documents/Deeper\\_Learning\\_Defined\\_April\\_2013.pdf](http://www.hewlett.org/uploads/documents/Deeper_Learning_Defined_April_2013.pdf),

<sup>2</sup> For reference, examples can be found from Carnegie Mellon’s Simon Initiative (<http://www.cmu.edu/simon/>), UBC’s Strategic directions (<http://flexible.learning.ubc.ca/>)

This would be a new choice for Concordia: to become a leader in research AND in teaching, effectively, to double the research we do in teaching and learning.

### **What do we need to do this?**

1. A research institute in Next Generation Teaching and Learning
  - i. A Concordia University Research Chair in Teaching and Learning
2. A program of support for curriculum innovation that is clear and pro-active.
  - i. Appropriate curriculum design expertise, through expanded in-house resources and personnel in the Centre for Teaching and Learning and through external contracts.
  - ii. Curriculum design expertise that incorporates methods of incorporating professional skills into curricula, through expanded in-house resources and personnel in the Centre for Teaching and Learning and through external contracts.
3. Informed, research-based learning design support.
  - i. A program of support for faculty members to promote actively student outcomes, experiential learning, community engaged learning, social innovation/entrepreneurial learning, and flexible learning.
4. Reformed management of physical teaching space by adapting, changing and building flexible learning spaces that answer to the pedagogical demands of the curriculum.
  - i. Change the way in which departments control classroom space so that all space can respond first to program needs, teaching needs and student needs.
5. A suite of fully supported pedagogical technologies that support teaching and learning and teaching and learning innovation.
  - i. A digital strategy for technology-enhance, blended and online learning.
  - ii. Develop and promote an evidence-based suite of learning technologies.
6. Provide a range experiential learning opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate
  - i. Develop a strategy to increase co-op opportunities.
  - ii. Develop a clearing-house for additional experiential learning opportunities.
7. Reform the course scheduling system.
  - i. Incorporate a flexible course scheduling system, partially modelled in the non-standard schedule of summer term offerings.
  - ii. Move away from the 3-credit course model and the 13-week semester in curriculum planning.

### **Hard Targets:**

1. Open the Next Generation Teaching Institute with the first CURC in Teaching and Learning

within two years.

2. Double our research in teaching and learning.
3. Double the number of experiential learning opportunities we offer our students.
4. Require new faculty members to participate in workshops/training on teaching and learning prior to tenure.
5. Add one new teaching consultant every year.
6. Add one new flexible, active learning classroom to campus every year.

**Short-term Soft Targets:**

1. Formulate a university-wide understanding of good teaching which can serve as the foundation for disciplinary definitions;
2. Establish a more informed adjudication process for evaluation of teaching dossier for both full-time and part-time faculty through “good practices” documents;
3. Establish a teaching committee formed principally, but not exclusively, of those faculty members holding ETA positions as a source of experience of university teaching, and innovation in teaching and learning.
4. Create a Certificate in University Teaching for full-time and part-time faculty.
5. Pilot the employment of sabbaticals centred on the development of teaching excellence;
6. Pilot the ETA profile to include formally the responsibility for promoting curriculum development and innovation.