Teaching Matters

Great Teaching . . . by Design

Looking Beyond the Evidence: What's your Story?

Have you ever felt overwhelmed? I'm sitting at my computer on a late November afternoon contemplating what I have taken away from two recent events: a provincial symposium on assessing learning outcomes and an international conference for educational developers on transformative relationships in relation to fostering cultures of deep learning.

I attended numerous sessions and overall I came away with a sense of what I call "data overwhelmosis". We have more data and more evidence available to us than ever before in higher education. We have software to help us identify specific learning outcomes and each student's level of achievement for each outcome. We have online templates for course syllabi that generate maps of the learning outcomes for an entire program's curriculum. We can use learning analytics and data analytics to monitor students' progress (or failure). We can do social network analyses to show how we connect to one another, how information flows within a unit or across an entire institution (or beyond). We know what educational development practices have empirical backing. The list goes on. My point is that it's clear that we can capture almost anything. We can collate massive amounts of data and generate evidence for (or against) almost anything you can imagine. But to what end? What's the purpose? And what's the overarching plan?

We've talked a lot about these questions as part of devising and implementing our Centre's assessment plan as well as our upcoming external review. Just because we can get data doesn't mean it's a good idea. How much is enough? What will we do with what we collect? Why will it matter? Data collection takes time and effort. We know this from any research project we have undertaken. In our line of work, any time that we ask our staff to input data about their work, this is time not spent working with a client. There has to be a good reason to ask staff members to spend time in this way. This is where the role of questions becomes critical.

For research projects, we determine research questions. We did the same when devising our assessment plan. These questions guide our every move: our methodological decisions, the types of data we need, the appropriate analysis methods, and the way we write up our results. The questions enable us to select the data that will help us determine answers, and these limited data become the evidence for our conclusions. We've realized that we don't need every piece of data that we could collect – just the data that are relevant to the questions. This is a freeing revelation.

But it doesn't end there. The evidence isn't enough. We need to find the story. What does the evidence mean? How will it affect what we do tomorrow or in the next five years? I worry that higher education in general – and educational development specifically – is getting bogged down in the weeds and not stepping back to identify what those weeds are telling us. The examples that I noted in the second paragraph help to illuminate the issue. But what are we overlooking? Which way is the wind blowing now and in the future? Our questions create important frames to make data manageable and even meaningful, but thinking about how to tell the story of the evidence seems the most crucial of all to me.

In the next few months, we will be aiming to tell the story of CTE in our self-study, which will extend far beyond what we convey in our annual reports. We will be analyzing existing relevant data and collecting new data as needed to fill perceived gaps. We will be striving to ensure that we have sufficient information to assist our external reviewers in addressing the questions set in the Terms of Reference for the review. But from all of this, what we most need is to tell our story and listen to what it is telling us. I'm not entirely sure what we'll hear, but I am very intrigued by what will emerge. The evidence is critical, but we need to move beyond it to better understand where we are and where we're going.

Donna Ellis

Denise Marigold: Connecting Positive Psychology to Student Growth

In a program known for attracting students with a "desire to make a difference in the world," sustaining and nurturing that desire is a fundamental challenge. Renison's Social Development Studies (SDS) is such a program; it seeks to empower learners "to pursue lives and careers dedicated to the promotion of individual and community well-being." For Dr. Denise Marigold, Social Psychologist and Associate Professor of SDS, supporting students in achieving the program's objectives means equipping them with the tools they need to become thoughtful, responsible, and engaged citizens.

But how does one do that, precisely? Marigold's approach combines experiential learning with a responsive approach to teaching that is deeply influenced by positive psychology. She wants to see students thinking critically, gathering and analyzing evidence, and applying their knowledge in her classes. She works to get students questioning what they see in the media about personal well-being—how to live the "good life," for example, or how to have happy, successful relationships—by asking them to bring their knowledge of psychology research to bear on the validity of those claims.

The value Marigold places on experiential learning is also evident in her second-year positive psychology course. One of its four learning outcomes states that students will "have the opportunity to experience and apply positive psychology concepts and principles to personal growth and well-being." Each week students choose one of several exercises where they are asked to do things like practice self-compassion, engage in mindfulness meditation, reflect on their personal goals, or keep a gratitude journal, to name a few.

Central to the field of positive psychology, this attention to personal growth and well-being also deeply informs Marigold's approach to teaching and learning. She highlights the importance of attempting to understand and get to know learners as individuals, recognizing that what motivates one student might not resonate with another. In this way, Marigold seeks to be responsive to her students' needs and goals both in her day-to-day teaching and in her overall course design.

 "Her classes have been among the most engaging, well-organized, and enjoyable classes of my under-graduate career. She exudes a positive energy, warmth, and a good sense of humour towards all of her students." (Kara Klein, former student).

Understanding student needs and goals is not without its challenges. Marigold strives to know who her students are, how much effort they put into their learning, and the challenges they are experiencing, academic or otherwise. She understands that personal stress and mental health issues can affect a student's performance in diverse ways, and when students are disengaged it's not always easy to tell when that's primarily coming from their personal challenges. That's something she tries to accommodate in her courses.

This responsive approach to teaching means that Marigold is prepared to make small adjustments to her courses throughout a term, adjustments that accumulate term to term into improved iterations of a course. For Marigold, it is a significant accomplishment when a change to a course makes it more engaging, even for just one student. And she sees these changes ripple outward, improving the learning environment for more and more students. That's the real strength in Marigold's teaching—both her willingness to understand her students, and her ability to make use of that knowledge.

Lisa Kabesh

Educational Technologies Week
February 27 to March 3, 2017

CTE's second annual Educational Technologies Week features 11 different workshops, ranging from 1.5 to 4.5 hours in length. All UWaterloo instructors and staff are welcome to attend as many workshops as they choose. For detailed descriptions of each workshop and instructions about how to register on myHRinfo, go to https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/2017-edtechweek or contact Mark Morton at mmorton@uwaterloo.ca.

Day	Course Title	Time
Monday, February 27, 2017	CTE772 Recognizing Knowledge and Skills in a Digital Age	10:00 - 11:30 am
	CTE773 Already a User: Instructors Share Their Learning Technologies	12:00 - 1:30 pm
	CTE732 Course Redesign for Blended Learning	1:45 - 3:45 pm
Tuesday, February 28, 2017	CTE691 Introduction to the Flipped Classroom	9:30 - 11:00 am
	CTE750 Enhancing Learning Through Gamification	11:15 am - 12:45 pm
	CTE774 Facilitating Peer Review with PEAR	1:15 - 2:45 pm
Wednesday, March 1, 2017	CTE733 Making Screencasts with Camtasia	9:30 am - 12:30 pm
	CTE253 Twitter in the Classroom	1:15 - 2:45 pm
Thursday, March 2, 2017	CTE775 Applying User Experience (UX) Principles to Online Course Design: A Case for Learner-Centredness	9:30 - 11:00 am
	CTE776 Introduction to Mobius	11:15 am - 12:45 pm
	CTE731 Concept Mapping Tools	1:15 - 2:45 pm
Friday, March 3, 2017	CTE762 Teaching Online at UWaterloo: Design Development and Delivery	9:30 - 10:30 am
	CTE766 Online Collaborative Grading with Crowdmark	11:15 am – 12:15 pm
	CTE777 Using WriteOnline.ca in the Classroom	12:30 - 1:30 pm
	CTE726 Clickers and Reef Polling	1:45 - 2:45 pm

Mark Morton

CTE908 Documenting Your Teaching for Tenure and Promotion

Date: Wednesday, March 29, 2017
Time: 11:45 am to 1:15 pm
Location: NH3407

Register through myHRinfo.

Verna Keller

University of Waterloo Teaching and Learning Conference

"Cultivating Curiosity in Teaching and Learning"

Curiosity is at the heart of inquiry and exploration and is a powerful motivator for learning. It lights up our brains, motivates us to seek new information and experiences, and leads to new frontiers in understanding.

Through dialogue, discussion, and debate with colleagues, we grapple collectively with the big questions in our fields. But how do we pique students' curiosity about our fields and invite them into this lively conversation? And how do we integrate this spirit of scholarly inquiry into teaching and learning? What good questions are we asking about teaching, learners, and learning?

For this year's Conference, we invite you to share your own curiosity about teaching and learning, as well as how you foster student curiosity.

- How can we be curious with our students and involve them in research?
- How do we ignite and build on students' curiosity about our fields?
- How can we teach students to ask meaningful questions that draw on facts, hunches, unusual connections, and imagination?
- How do we demonstrate and promote curiosity about teaching and learning within ourselves and amongst our colleagues and students?
- How can we be curious about our students' learning, motivations, and goals?

Last year, over 300 faculty members, staff members, and students gathered for an enriching and exciting day. We hope that you and your colleagues will join us this year.

For more information about the Conference and to submit a proposal, please visit the Conference website: uwaterloo.ca/cte/conference.

Proposals are due Thursday, January 26, 2017.

Julie Timmermans and Crystal Tse

Teaching Awards: Nominations Open

Tips on writing a persuasive nomination letter can be found in Trevor Holmes' blog entry 'How to Write an Effective Nomination Letter' at http://cte-blog.uwaterloo.ca/?p=9

Distinguished Teacher Awards are given in recognition of a continued record of excellence in teaching at the University of Waterloo. The nomination deadline is Friday, February 3, 2017. For more information, visit the Distinguished Teacher Awards webpage at http://uwaterloo.ca/cte/awards/dta.

Amit & Meena Chakma Awards for Exceptional Teaching by a Student are given in recognition of excellence in teaching by students registered at the University of Waterloo. The nomination deadline is Friday, February 10, 2017. For more information, visit the Amit & Meena Chakma Awards for Exceptional Teaching by a Student webpage at http://uwaterloo.ca/cte/chakma.

Verna Keller

Teaching Squares

Are you looking for an opportunity to grow as an instructor but fear being on the receiving end of harsh critique? The Teaching Squares Program at Waterloo is designed to offer participants a safe space in which to discuss their teaching and reflect upon the instructional techniques of their peers. Created by Anne Wessely from St. Louis Community College, Teaching Squares are a faculty-development tool used at many North American universities and colleges. This peer-observation model helps to improve teaching skills and builds community through a nonthreatening process of classroom observation and shared reflection.

The Teaching Squares Program at Waterloo started with two pilots in Pharmacy in the Spring terms of 2010 and 2011. It has now been running as a part of CTE's regular programming since Winter 2013 with over 60 participants to date. The program feedback overwhelmingly tells us that the Teaching Squares Program provides instructors with insight into their own teaching through their square colleagues and that the participants leave with intentions to apply what they've learned in their own classrooms.

How does it work?
A square is formed by four instructors who visit each other's classes over the course of one term. Those being visited are encouraged to provide peer visitors with a copy of their course outline, to comment on why students are taking that particular course, and to share any material that would enhance the observation experience. The peer visitors are guided on how to take meaningful notes during the classroom visit which may include such particulars as teaching methods, attitudes, classroom materials, and classroom management. The visits are preceded by an organizational meeting (that lays out expectations and establishes a classroom visitation schedule) and the visits are followed by a debrief meeting (where the participants share their experiences). Within this debrief discussion, participants identify which teaching techniques worked for them, consider why they worked and how they might be used to effect within their own teaching. The diversity of the square participants allows instructors to benefit from exposure to different teaching styles and techniques that may not commonly be used within their own discipline culture.

Program Takeaways
By allowing instructors to be "learners" again in their colleagues' classes, Teaching Squares opens up unique spaces for reflection and conversation about teaching. During their classroom visits, the Teaching Squares participants have the opportunity to experience a variety of contexts and challenges which leads to a greater appreciation of the quality of and commitment to good teaching already in existence on campus and, at the same time, it provides the catalyst for growth as participants gather ideas on different teaching approaches and consider how they could be used to improve one's own teaching.

Some comments from past participants:
"Observing each others' classes creates an environment of trust. Talking with peers about one's teaching provides an opportunity for reflection that is otherwise difficult to find."

"It was great to get an outsider's perspective on my teaching, and also to observe others' teaching style. I picked up some great ideas for improving my teaching and incorporating better interaction strategies."

If you are interested in being a part of the Teaching Squares Program at the University of Waterloo, please contact the program coordinator, Monica Vesely, at mvesely@uwaterloo.ca

Monica Vesely

CTE642 Course Design Fundamentals

Date: Tuesday, February 7, 2017
Time: 9:30 am to 3:30 pm
Location: EV1 241

Register through [myHRinfo.](#)

Verna Keller

Graduate Supervision Series

Since Fall 2015, 88 faculty members have completed our six-workshop series on Graduate Supervision. Led by staff and faculty from across campus, these workshops were designed in collaboration with the Graduate Studies Office to equip newer faculty members with the requisite experiences to apply for Approved Doctoral Dissertation Supervisor (ADDS) status. With the support of CEL, we have recently moved some of our written case scenarios into short animations. Future plans based on feedback from participants include the development of online resources that will help to optimize somewhat shorter face-to-face time in some of the workshops, where appropriate. We intend to offer the series twice annually; we welcome people who already have ADDS status now that we have met the initial demand.

The first three workshops (CTE801, CTE802, CTE803) set up the basics.

CTE801 Supervision at Waterloo: the relevant policies/practices (Associate Dean, Graduate Studies Office) Participants used case scenarios to delve immediately into issues to which multiple policies and principles apply, imagining themselves as an Associate Dean in a Faculty.

CTE802 Recruiting graduate students, matching research interests and honing questions, the research supervision life cycle. Includes breakout sessions for differing discipline paradigms. (Experienced faculty members, Associate Deans Graduate Studies from the Faculties). Over lunch, participants and panellists discussed best practices in the initial and later stages of doctoral supervision.

CTE803 Meeting with supervisees (Conflict Management and Human Rights Office) Educators from CMAHRO provided a framework for delivering positive and negative messages early on in supervisory relationships, following up on the morning's case scenarios.

The next three workshops (CTE804, CTE805, CTE806) go more deeply into particular facets of research mentorship, successful completion, and beyond.

CTE804 Guiding writing and research with ethics and integrity (Office of Research Ethics, Writing Centre, Academic Integrity Office)

CTE805 Intercultural and gendered interaction: working with students and co-supervisors in the context of cultural and gender diversity (Equity Office, Centre for Teaching Excellence)

CTE806 Next steps: Examining and career support/letter writing (Graduate Supervision Award winners)

Inquiries should be directed to Raymond Legge at GSO or Trevor Holmes at CTE.

Trevor Holmes

CTE Annual Report
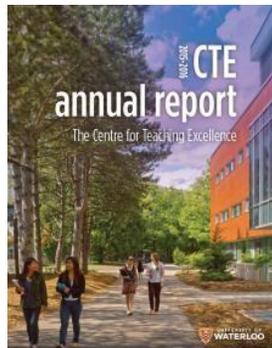
CTE's second annual report reflects on the Centre's activities from the 2015-2016 fiscal year. CTE Director, Donna Ellis, notes that in the report you will read about CTE's various accomplishments and how our client groups have responded to our programs and services. Read the annual report at https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/sites/ca.centre-for-teaching-excellence/files/uploads/files/2015-2016_annual_report_accessible_version.pdf

Verna Keller

Lisa Kabesh joins CTE to Promote Teaching Excellence

Dr. Lisa Kabesh has joined the Centre for Teaching Excellence as Communications Associate. Lisa brings a background in instructional development and writing to her work at the Centre: before starting at CTE, Lisa worked as a writing consultant and has worked at McMaster University's Teaching and Learning Centre. She received her PhD from McMaster University in 2014 where she studied Canadian literature with a focus on Asian Canadian literature and social justice. She has since taken on multiple roles in her work: editor, grant writer, researcher, project coordinator, and educator. At Waterloo, Lisa will take an active part in initiatives showcasing the excellent teaching happening across campus. She will coordinate and provide substantive feedback on nominations for major external teaching awards, including the 3M National Teaching Fellowship, the Alan Blizzard Award, the OCUFA Teaching Award, the Reimagine Education Awards, and the Brightspace Innovation Award in Teaching and Learning. She also looks forward to lending her writing skills to the promotion of the University of Waterloo's culture of teaching excellence. Lisa is keen to learn about your teaching and learning stories at UWaterloo—get in touch at lkabesh@uwaterloo.ca.

Lisa Kabesh

Welcoming Jason Thompson as CTE Liaison for Science

Jason Thompson is the new CTE Liaison for the Faculty of Science. As Liaison, Jason helps instructors in the Faculty of Science integrate technology into their teaching. Jason also works closely with the Science Teaching Fellows to facilitate the uptake of teaching and learning initiatives established by CTE and the Teaching Fellows in the Faculty of Science emphasizing blended learning, learning technologies and course design. He also serves as guide for instructors to access other CTE resources. Jason came to us from the University of Guelph where he had worked for ten years at their Teaching and Learning Services as Instructional Technology Specialist providing support and advice to faculty regarding teaching strategies, learning activities, course design, assessment methods, instructional innovations and the integration of appropriate and effective learning technologies within their face-to-face courses. Jason has his BSc from the University of Guelph in Environmental Science and a BEd from Queen's University.

Mary Power

Congratulations to CTE Spring and Fall 2016 grads!

Congratulations to graduate students who recently completed CTE teaching programs.

Certificate in University Teaching program:
We had eight participants complete the program in **Spring 2016**: Cecylia Bocovich (MATH), Charis Enns (ARTS), Ali Haghi (ENG), Tommy Mayberry (ARTS), Nathalie Moon (MATH), Ali Sarhadi (ENG), Maryam Shahtaheri (ENG), and Laura Williams (AHS).

Fundamentals of University Teaching program:
We had 63 participants complete the program in **Spring 2016**. The numbers by faculty are: Applied Health Sciences: 8; Arts: 12; Engineering: 12; Environment: 8; Mathematics: 14; Science: 9.
An additional 54 participants completed the program in **Fall 2016**. The numbers by faculty are as follows: Applied Health Sciences: 5; Arts: 15; Engineering: 21; Environment: 2; Mathematics: 7; and Science: 4.

Teaching Development Seminar Series program for postdoctoral fellows:
We had 27 Postdoctoral fellows complete our Teaching Development Seminar Series in the Fall 2016 term. Feedback from our participants include:
"This seminar series helped me a lot to understand various areas of classroom teaching. Moreover, the information that I obtained and knowledge that I gained are beyond my expectation."

The next offering of the Teaching Development Seminar Series program is scheduled for January 16-20, 2017.

Jessica Jordao

Graduate Student Programming

The Centre for Teaching Excellence is excited to welcome five new members to our graduate programming team! This coming Winter 2017, Sandra De Vries (Philosophy), Patricia Huynh (Social and Ecological Sustainability) and Luke Turcotte (Public Health and Health Systems) will join us as our TA Workshop Facilitators. Jhotisha Mugon (Psychology) and Laura Williams (Kinesiology) will join us as Graduate Instructional Developers.

The graduate programming teams consist of doctoral students who successfully completed CTE's Fundamentals of University Teaching program. They were hired based on their interest in university teaching, strong communication skills, and interest in supporting teaching development of graduate students.

We would also like to recognize our TA Workshop Facilitators and Graduate Instructional Developers, who have completed their contracts with CTE this term:

TA Workshop Facilitators - Brandon DeHart (Electrical and Computer Engineering), Jessica Leung (Biology), Laura Williams (Kinesiology)
Graduate Instructional Developers - Charis Enns (Global Governance) and Tommy Mayberry (English)

We thank them for all of their hard work and contributions made during their time at the CTE, as well as wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors.

Jessica Jordao