Summary Report: 
Brainstorming Session 1: Teaching and Learning Framework


Date of Event: Tuesday, March 15, 2011
Time: 8:30am to 1:00 pm. Venue: Senate Rooms, ED5004/5 MUN
Size of group: 50+ Number of small groups: 8 (6 or 7 per table)

Context
Participants invited to this brainstorming session were members of the Working Group, the Advisory Committees and Steering Committee. There were three goals for the morning’s work: 1) To identify the underlying principles/beliefs that are underscoring the Teaching and Learning enterprise at Memorial University; 2) To review the data from the consultation process to date; 3) To begin to design an effective first-year experience for incoming undergraduates. Each of the Advisory Committees had been asked to prepare and submit a statement of the foundational principle(s) or beliefs which were underscoring the work of that particular committee.

Introduction
There was a brief introduction to the purpose of the session by Doreen Neville. Maureen Dunne then randomly divided the assembly into 8 groups. She reviewed the working assumptions for interpersonal communication for the morning’s work.

Part 1: Considering the Principles/Beliefs

Process
The principles were written on 12 large charts which were posted across the wall in the front of the room. The Advisory Committee identification and the corresponding statement of its foundational principle are listed below:

Academic Support
The University recognizes its obligation and is committed to providing comprehensive academic support and guidance to all students throughout their academic career. The University is committed to communicating to students, in a genuinely effective way, the availability of academic support and the importance of proactively seeking guidance. The University recognizes the importance of community and will actively create new forums with the intention of fostering collegiality among all of its members.

Program Quality Assurance
Memorial is committed to the continuous evaluation of the quality of its programs.

*Student Centered Learning*
Memorial provides a distinctive educational experience grounded in student-centered learning and development in all teaching, learning and institutional practice.

*Non-academic Student Support*
Memorial University is committed to the holistic development of our students and will provide a support community that fosters individual transformation.

*Teaching Recognition*
Teaching achievement should be valued, celebrated and rewarded.

*Complementarity with Research Plan*
The concept of knowledge co-creation is at the core of both research and teaching/learning. Research and teaching/learning are thus inseparable, and of equal importance: Research informs teaching and contributes to it; similarly, issues or thoughts that arise from teaching can inform and drive research.

*Laboratory Instruction*
Memorial supports self-directed learning with support from instructors in facilitation and debriefing.

*Critical Thinking*
The capacity to think critically is what distinguished the university graduate. The development of this skill in the student and the professors’ fostering of it is at the heart of our endeavor.

*Diversity*
Memorial University needs commitment to support all forms of diversity, and recognizes the “value-added” of student, staff and faculty diversity.

*Lifelong Learning*
Lifelong learning requires commitment and support by the university.
[Beliefs; Prior Learning Assessment; Adult Learning Information/Resource Center; Community outreach (storefront); Embrace technology; Interdisciplinary courses/programs]

*Experiential Education*
Experiential education needs to be expanded but also appropriately resourced and recognized.
Interdisciplinarity
Meaningful interdisciplinary teaching and learning brings together expertise in different fields in a way that retains and clarifies the fundamental building blocks of a given discipline while articulating its complementarity with one or more other disciplines.

Individuals were asked to reflect about their personal responses to the listing of principles and then to discuss their reactions within their small groups. After a subsequent large group discussion, each group was asked to discuss and record their responses to, and/or recommendations about, this set of principles in terms of their completeness and clarity.

A synthesis of the comments made included the following points. They have been grouped according to perspective: concepts that need to be included or emphasized in the principle statements, descriptors of the environment necessary for achievement of the principles, and suggestions for format of the statement of principles.

1) Concepts that need to be included in the content of the statement of principles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Comments from Group Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance of student engagement in their own learning</td>
<td>• More about student engagement/active participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Challenge students to be engaged learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Engagement is missing and needs to be clearer – not just student engagement but engagement of all sectors – faculty, students, staff, disciplines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students’ responsibility for their own learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emphasis on student responsibility for their learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenging curriculum content</td>
<td>• Particular emphasis needed on development of students’ critical reading, writing, and information-seeking skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• [Concepts of] Self-directed learning and research to include both laboratory instruction and synthesis of subject literature</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Relevancy and currency as cross-cutting themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance between teaching and research as the major</td>
<td>• Balance between teaching and research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More emphasis on bridging the gap between</td>
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<tr>
<td>activities of the university</td>
<td>research and teaching/learning</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Assessment as a formative strategy for learning | • Creating a culture of assessment *for* learning  
• Converting student assessment from information to action |
| Lifelong Learning | • Include idea of faculty and staff as life-long learners [as well as students] |

2) Description of the *environment* necessary for achievement of principles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment</th>
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</table>
| Required change  
In university culture | • Cultural change (radical) – engagement on part of upper administration and faculty  
• Institutional change: Challenge to MUN to go from ‘research intensive’ towards ‘teaching intensive’ and to pioneer [a solution]  
• Participate/partner with the broader community in the holistic development of the student [The whole institution is responsible for student development, not just teaching personnel] |
| Commitment to resources and sustainability of support | • Where are resources and support mentioned?  
• For both faculty and students: support, programs, incentives, accountability, value, environment for learning  
• Must be supported by appropriate infrastructure and resources |
| Standards for success | • Benchmarks for success, both qualitative and quantitative  
• Needs to have benchmarks, timelines and measurable outcomes |
| Recognition and support for teaching | • Teaching competence must be more heavily weighed in promotion and tenure criteria  
• Does not address equity for approximately 70% of instructors who deliver teaching and learning opportunities at Memorial  
• Create mechanisms to hear from faculty/discussion on teaching: questionnaires, surveys, National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the faculty equivalent |
| Respect for student diversity | • Meeting diverse student population where they are (not simply where we want/expect them to be) – and offering warm, fun, welcoming environment  
• First-year – critical time for engagement |
Suggestions on *format* of statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Comments from Group Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Principles need to be more succinct and distinct</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Each principle needs an accompanying action statement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• All are statements reflecting what the university will do!</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• [A few suggestions were made on wording of specific principles]</td>
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</table>

*Underlying Core Values*

In order to maximize the practicality and usefulness of the principles, the group was asked to identify what they thought were the core inclusive one-word terms that collectively represent the essential or core values of the entire set of principles. The values were then grouped for similarities within the group and consensus achieved on five concepts per group. These core values were assembled on cards on the wall and clustered according to similar use of language or perceived commonalities of intent.

Cluster 1: Engagement, engaging, consistent engagement, engaging, engagement, engagement, engagement

Cluster 2: Respectful, supporting, shared responsibility, community, community, collegiality, supportive community

Cluster 3: Equity, collegial/collaborative, supportive, citizenship, learning-community, inclusiveness

Cluster 4: Commitment, investment [of resources], commitment, reflexive realism [practical, do-able], support (concrete), valued

Cluster 5: Quality, continuous improvement, blended teaching and research, quality, educational excellence

Cluster 6: Holistic, holistic approach, holistic development

Cluster 7: Integrity, completeness/integrity
These clusters require further discussion to achieve clarification of terms, a possible re-clustering, and then appropriate naming through group discussion and consensus-building.

**Facilitator’s Commentary**

There were significant patterns of repetitive themes in the issues and concerns that were discussed in small and large groups and reported in writing in both parts of first segment. A draft statement of principles that captures the fundamental ideas that emerged in the conversations as heard and interpreted by the facilitator, might read something like:

*A quality education at Memorial University is achieved through continuous dialogue between learners and teachers. As an essential human endeavor, it is founded on respect and ethical care for diverse others; as a scholarly activity, it is evidence-driven both in content and in process; as a community responsibility, it is fully achieved only through the active engagement of all of its members and a generous commitment of resources. [Sample statement only.]*

**Part 2: Considering the Consultation Data**

In the second part of the morning, there were four short presentations on the early patterns that are beginning to emerge from the university-wide consultation process. In all cases, the presentations were made by individuals involved in collecting the data they presented. Data from the faculty/school consultations was presented by Doreen Neville, data from the student focus group sessions was presented by Elaine Crocker, data from the student online survey was presented by Albert Johnson, and data from the faculty focus group sessions was presented by Trudi Johnson. While the consultation is not yet completed, there are definite patterns and trends that are beginning to emerge across all groups. The patterns and trends so far evident can be viewed in the presentation PowerPoint slides in Appendix A.

After listening to the issues arising in the data collection, group participants were asked to report on the most important insights they gained from the presentations and the emerging themes they thought most needed to be captured in the framework document. During the large group discussion that followed the small group conversations, the issues that most needed to be addressed in the document were identified as (in no particular order):

- Assurance of higher levels of consistency of instruction
- Professional development in teaching for all instructors
- Development of a sense of community at every level
- Better communication across and between groups, perhaps more focused on a just-in-time approach
• Emphasis on faculty engagement, not just student engagement (e.g. timeliness of response to students, relevancy of curriculum, etc., but with faculty being offered more support for teaching and with more value given to teaching)
• Relevance of curriculum – more emphasis on real-world orientation and connectedness
• Creation of both social and professional spaces, accompanied by high standards of maintenance
• Strong first-year experience
• Low student-teacher ratio in classes
• Managing expectations of technology-oriented students as they make the transition from high school to university
• Orientation process that is offered over the entire first-year
• Adjustment of the inconsistency in messaging about the importance of teaching within the institution – e.g. the practice of offering teaching “release” or “remission” as a reward

Part 3: Turning Theory into Practice: The First-Year Experience

In this segment of the workshop, group participants were asked to assimilate what they had learned through the processing of the foundational working principles and the core values, as well as through listening to the patterns and trends in the reporting of the consultation data, and bring those emerging understandings to the design of a first-year experience. The question they were asked to address was,

What are the most essential elements or opportunities that need to be included in the design of an effective first-year experience?

Given the apparent, but not fully articulated, assumption that first-year students need to become independent, empowered, and successful, the responses from the groups to the question above were organized into the following elemental categories which are listed in order of frequency of related comments.

The most essential elements or opportunities that need to be included in the design of an effective first-year experience are:

A first-year experience in the form of a course/seminar/interest group
• First year foundational seminar/course
• Orientation 100 course (perhaps incorporated as a 4th hour into a basic first year course such as English 1080?)
• “Teach them how we are going to teach them.”
• Mandatory course : Critical Enquiry 1000
• For-credit first year experience course
• Required writing/reading “credit” first year course (interdisciplinary course with specific professional development for instructors
• MUN101 – first year survival – credit course, mandatory – 1st year –
• Interdisciplinary first-year cohorts or interest groups – groups that may continue to connect beyond first year
• Addressing varied skill sets (note-taking, research, presentation, library, writing skills, math skills)
• Cohort training
• Compulsory experiences

**Strong teaching in first-year courses**
• Best teachers assigned to first-year classes (considering personal suitability as well as credentials)
• Effective teaching
• Commitment to supporting faculty and staff in providing the first-year experience
• Education of instructors about the first-year student adjustment expectations
• More teachers
• Professional development for all teachers in addressing learning styles with appropriate teaching methods and strategies for blended learning
• Focused professional development, orientation, teaching strategies for faculty teaching first-year (required); pan university, team taught
• Create a new valuing system for teaching first year and undergraduate
• Teaching support for first-year instructors
• “Star Professors”

**A set of strategies to enable students to make personal connections to the academic community**
• “Buddy system” with older students
• Meetings with faculty advisors – recognized as important by the institution
• Easy access to instructors – in person and online
• Improve connections/communications before they arrive – career/advising
• More value on orientation – faculty/school specific
• Advising is critical
• Personal contact
• Responding at critical times in student formation (early on), e.g. monthly check-in with advisor to check progress
• Summer orientation
• Office space for instructors for meeting with students

**Common spaces for first-years for socializing and information-gathering**
• Making connections through gathering spaces
• Quality gathering spaces (both departmental and a main central one)
• Student Service Mall
• Common space
• Focus on student informal learning spaces – identified spaces by students
• First-year experience centre - “Mall” - collaborative approach to resources
• By end of first-year students need to be part of a social group/community (need to feel connected/feel important
• First year societies
• Ways to keep students on campus daily

**High quality courses**
• Standards for curriculum
• Course consistency [in multiple sections of same course] in outlines, assignments; team approach
• Creative approaches to research
• Evidence that [students] can do something with classroom experience, e.g. internships, work terms
• Tech-enabled approach, lecture capture, use of D2L, communications
• Communication of expectations and responsibilities (note-taking, role of instructor)

**Continuous academic support**
• Mentoring program for students entering with 70-75% averages
• Target strategies for at-risk students
• Academic tutors
• Target strategies for traditionally low performance courses – Supplemental instruction
• Advocacy

**Recognition and support of diversity**
• Recognition of different student needs
• Respect for specific needs of diverse groups

**Small class size**
• 30 student cap on first year courses
• Small class sizes

**Need for more research**
• What are students’ first experiences?
• Where are they going [when they leave]? Do exit interviews.

**Other**
• Complete re-design of lecture theatres
• Focus on aesthetics across campus, e.g. public art, décor
• Enough spaces to accommodate everyone (e.g. residence – not turning anyone away)

**Conclusion**

By the conclusion of the workshop activities, the group had assembled a draft set of foundational principles for the working committees, considered the core values that underscored them, reflected and commented on the patterns and themes of the
consultation data to date, and made a first effort at identifying the essential elements of an effective first year experience.

In terms of moving forward from this session, the connective tasks that need to be completed are:

1) a refinement and synthesis of the foundational working principles of the sub-committees so that they clearly and succinctly express the educational and operational principles of the Teaching and Learning Initiative. They may need to be captured from more than these two perspectives.

2) the specific naming of the core values of the Initiative so that they can be used as a clearly defined set of criteria against which critical decisions are measured and made; and

3) a comparison of the principles and values identified in this workshop to the characteristics of a Memorial graduate, as drafted in an earlier session in January, to ensure alignment of programs, processes and goals.

Facilitator’s commentary. This workshop session, in and of itself, was an important learning opportunity for those of us who designed and facilitated it and those who participated in it.

Because the principles were not submitted until shortly or immediately before the workshop began, the differences in perspectives of the various groups were not readily apparent until the charts were posted. In retrospect, the question posed to the groups beforehand needed to be slightly different for the two different kinds of working committees. For those committees working directly with concepts of student learning, the question might have been: ‘What are the foundational principle(s) of student learning which are underscoring the work of your committee and towards which teaching must be directed?’ For the others, the question might have been, ‘What are the foundational principle(s) of providing support for learning and teaching that are underscoring the work of your committee?’

This shift in focus will need to be applied in the formulation of the foundational principles of the framework document. We will need a set of principles that are based on research and experience in how students learn and we will need a set of principles on how to best create the learning and teaching environment that achieves optimal student learning.
Appendix A
Teaching and Learning Framework Initiative

The Early Returns – March 15, 2011

Consultation Sessions: Best Experiences

Engagement
- Active student participation
- Enthusiastic and passionate instructors
- Meaningfulness of material
- Personal connections – relationships with faculty
- Personal connections – student cohorts

Consultation Sessions: Best Experiences

Flexibility
- Scheduling – blocks, evening, institutes
- Delivery – recognize learning styles, on campus, online, blended, media rich
- Small group experience, small classes
- Informal learning
- Evaluation and timely feedback

Consultation Sessions: Best Experiences

Experiential
- Practical applications – experience from the faculty
- Laboratory and field work
- Practical experiences – internships, work placements, work study

Consultation Sessions: Best Experiences

Challenging
- Provide opportunities for students to grow by presenting challenges
- Create a greater sense of competency with the material
- Students take risks and are support to do so

Consultation Sessions: Conditions for Success

Appropriate Learning Spaces
- Good spaces (i.e., seating, lighting, acoustics, etc.)
- Small group work spaces – breakout rooms
- Technology enabled spaces
- Informal gathering spaces
Consultation Sessions: Conditions for Success

Support of Teaching
- Support for faculty development in teaching
- Appropriate teaching load and class sizes
- Office space for teaching staff, including graduate students
- Promotion and Tenure recognition of teaching as equally valued as research

Support of Students
- Better integration of student support services across the university
- Improve student preparedness especially in first year
- Curriculum designed to address learning styles
- Improve student access to supports

Integration of the Curriculum
- Insure connectedness of programs of student for students
- Insure student exposure to great teaching
- Insure integration of research and experience with the course material

Student Survey - Questions
- Think about your learning experience at Memorial in the broadest possible terms. What are three things that the University can do to improve your learning experience at Memorial? (102 responses)
- What types of supports or services do you need as a student of Memorial? (91 responses)

Student Survey: Improving the experience
- Smaller class size
- Interaction with faculty (response time)
- Support and PD for faculty in teaching
- Improved technology (i.e., online note available, lecture capture, wireless network, etc.)
- Standardized course evaluations and marking
- Better classroom facilities (furniture, aesthetics, etc.)
- Comfortable gathering spaces
- Flexibility (more courses, more online courses, more time slots, etc.)
- Better orientation
- Cheaper alternatives to textbooks
- Listen to students

Student Survey: Improving the experience
- Better classroom facilities (furniture, aesthetics, etc.)
- Comfortable gathering spaces
- Flexibility (more courses, more online courses, more time slots, etc.)
- Better orientation
- Cheaper alternatives to textbooks
- Listen to students
Student Survey: Student supports and services

- 24 hour library service
- Cheaper food on campus
- Résumé counseling
- Career counseling
- Financial advising
- Technology support (i.e., be able to order printed copies of online notes, application based support, D2L, etc.)

Student Survey: Student supports and services

- Peer Tutoring
- More help centre time
- Parking
- Better access to doctors on campus
- Grievance procedure to mediate issues between faculty and students
- Services for above average aged students
Teaching and Learning Framework Initiative

The Early Returns – March 15, 2011
Tenure Track Faculty and Part-Time Instructors

Tenure Track Faculty:
Threads across best teaching
- Connection between teaching and research
- Real world connections
- Relationships in the learning environment
- Variety in assessment models
- Communication
- Time and energy, instructor passion, model lifelong learning
- Teaching expertise

Tenure Track Faculty:
Positive aspects of teaching
- Orientation sessions and workshops
- Past learning experiences
- Reduced teaching load
- Administrative support
- Relationships

Tenure Track Faculty:
Aspects that need work
- Peer connections
- Orientation
- Teaching load
- Promotion and tenure requirements

Tenure Track Faculty:
Suggestions to support new faculty
- Ongoing orientations and PD, buddy system
- Handbook
- Reduced teaching load
- Integration of teaching and research
- Accountability of P and T
- Teaching Certificate
- Integration of curriculum

Tenure Track Faculty:
Sustain good teaching and learning
- Collaboration
- Relevance
- Focus on the difference that Memorial provides
- Nurturing Environment
Per Course Instructors: Threads across best teaching
- Sense of community and collegiality
- Respect
- Organized
- Practical application
- Real-world connections
- Student input
- Challenging courses, effective questioning

Per Course Instructors: Positive aspects of teaching
- Opportunities for professional development
- Academic support
- Library access
- Instructor qualities
- DELT

Per Course Instructors: Aspects that need work
- Storage space
- Communications and connections
- Consistency
- Program goals
- Professional development
- Office space

Per Course Instructors: Support for PC instructors
- Decision making
- Orientation
- Hiring
- Salary
- Collaboration, mentoring and monitoring, establish connections
- Storage space
- Acknowledge value

Per Course Instructors: Sustain good teaching and learning
- Classrooms
- Gathering spaces
- Committee to discuss common issues
**Student Feedback**

Question posed to students:
What key words describe the kind of teaching and learning environment Memorial needs to create and sustain in order to strengthen its academic programs?

**Undergraduates**

- Comfortable, relaxed, respectful, welcoming classrooms
- Approachable professors with good communicative skills
- Constructive feedback
- Hands-on practice
- Small vs. large classes
- First year advisors

**Undergraduates**

- Connections to real world and career options
- Interdisciplinary options
- Sensitivity to individual needs and differences: recognition that there are ‘different’ ways of knowing and demonstrating knowledge; alternative methods of assessment
- Need to understand background context and terminology (international students)
- Orientation good – need better awareness of services earlier in program

**Undergraduates**

- Opportunities and space for social interactions (first year off campus)
- Writing skill support
- Interactive classrooms where students are engaged and challenged
- Development of critical thinking skills

**Graduates (SGS)**

- Strong interpersonal relationships between students and supervisors
- Critical thinking development – challenging
- Collegial and collaborative culture (Orientation)
- Connections to real world
- Balance between on-line and face-to-face

**Graduate**

- Common meeting spaces for socialization and interaction
- Variety of opportunities and experiences: field work; inclusion in research projects; presenting and publishing
- Opportunities for graduate students to teach and receive teaching training
Graduate students

• More opportunities for networking and participation for part time students (part of the university community)

• Positive and supportive service ethic