



Report of the Provost's Task Force on Innovation and Excellence in Teaching, Learning and Technology (2015)

Executive Summary

The Provost's Task Force on Innovation and Excellence in Teaching, Learning and Technology was tasked with recommending specific sustainable initiatives and processes across the University to foster a student-centred learning environment, promoting innovative and effective teaching and learning practices at Lakehead University. The Task Force was charged with recommending institutional changes to organizational structure and infrastructure, policy and resource requirements to lay the groundwork for the development of an Advanced Teaching, Technology and Learning Centre.

The Task Force was comprised of faculty members and staff from across both campuses, from a variety of Faculties, and from a wide range of stakeholder units. We met regularly over a period of 8 months, including conducting research and drafting suggestions in a number of dedicated sub-groups. The work was guided by the University's 2012–17 Academic Plan, and its recent Strategic Mandate Agreement with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

The Task Force concluded that to fulfill Lakehead University's commitment to teaching and learning, we must engage in a process of renewal. To build upon our teaching successes we must foster a culture where teaching and learning matter—a culture built on the principles of collaboration and adequate support to create the conditions for innovation and excellence. It is a culture that should embrace a diversity of learners.

The Task Force determined that the current Instructional Development Centre does not have the structure or resources to be able to offer an appropriate range of supports for faculty and instructors. The Task Force recommends the re-organizing of current offices to form the

framework of a more sustainable teaching and learning centre—the new ‘Advanced Teaching, Technology and Learning Centre’—that will better support faculty teaching and learning needs, and continue the Centre’s administrative successes.

To achieve the important and ambitious goals for Lakehead University set out in the Academic Plan and our recent Strategic Mandate Agreement, we propose the following series of 5 principles to guide the University’s work on teaching and learning, and make the associated 18 recommendations. The principles and recommendations detailed below outline high-impact, actionable and achievable items to further build a culture of teaching excellence and innovation at Lakehead University (the rationale and discussion supporting each of the recommendations is presented in the full report).

Principle 1: Teaching and research must be consistently reaffirmed as the twin pillars of the University, and central to the core purpose, mandate, and Academic Plan of Lakehead University.

1. The position of Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning should be established.
2. The scope and responsibility of the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee should be significantly expanded, with a revised and expanded terms of reference and composition.
3. Continuing Education and Distributed Learning (CEDL) should be moved from the portfolio of the Vice-Provost, Student Affairs, and become one of the responsibilities of the new Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning, or of the Provost directly. The mandate of CEDL should be revised and expanded to form the foundation of a new teaching and learning centre as outlined in Lakehead University’s Strategic Mandate Agreement. The new centre should be adequately funded and able to assist in the operationalization of Lakehead University’s Academic Plan.

Principle 2: Clear support and direction from senior administration, campus leaders charged with making financial decisions, and key figures in each faculty are necessary for innovation and excellence in teaching and learning, as well as the successful transition to new forms of teaching and learning.

4. We recommend a university-wide program of enhanced strategic support for teaching innovation and excellence with specific funding for innovative teaching and learning enhancement projects to encourage and make possible transformation toward key teaching and learning priorities.
5. We recommend tasking a senior committee, representing a variety of user groups including the teaching and learning community, with providing strategic support for the Technology Services Centre (TSC), and communicating resource use and progress to stakeholders.
6. We recommend that the Provost and Vice-President Academic empower Deans to use existing mechanisms to promote engagement with teaching and learning.
7. The Task Force recommends that the current activities of the Instructional Development Centre (IDC) be limited to the existing work of the Coordinator, and that the remainder of 2015 be devoted to designing and building a new teaching and learning centre at Lakehead University to be up and running in 2016.

Principle 3: Lakehead University should support and celebrate innovation and excellence in teaching and learning.

8. Lakehead University should create opportunities for better communication and collaboration in teaching and learning at and across all its teaching locations. This should include ways to facilitate faculty and student exchanges as well as collaborative teaching opportunities across the University, and at all teaching sites. Collaboration could include team teaching across multiple departments or Faculties, or across its campuses.

9. The new teaching and learning centre should establish Communities of Practice based on faculty needs and interests.
10. The University should establish a Lakehead University Teaching Chair program.
11. Lakehead University should celebrate and reward teaching excellence and innovation. We recommend a review of existing policies on teaching awards and the development of a fuller suite of teaching awards to recognize the diversity of instructors, teaching, and stakeholders involved in recognizing excellence and innovation. A fuller suite of awards should reflect the institution's relatively small size to ensure that awards remain meaningful.
12. Lakehead University needs to improve internal communication directly related to faculty members' work.

Principle 4: Lakehead University should take pride in and further welcome a diversity of learners. The University should take pride in its reputation as a university committed to equity and access. It should foster an institution-wide culture to match the diverse student body and make teaching accessible to all students.

13. All staff, faculty, contract and sessional instructors, and graduate assistants should be provided with opportunities for on-going training in best practices for inclusive teaching and learning that addresses accessibility, language, ability, culture, and the personal and academic needs of a diverse student body.
14. Lakehead University should prioritize writing support for all students to promote the writing skills necessary for academic success. The University must be prepared to meet the specific needs of International and Aboriginal students.
15. Lakehead University should encourage, and provide resources to ensure, institutional and

faculty responsiveness to the student body in indigenizing and internationalizing the curriculum, as well as making learning accessible by removing unnecessary barriers to educational access wherever possible.

16. Experiential learning opportunities should be prioritized.

Principle 5: Wherever possible, the University should work to create synergies between teaching and research to ensure they inform each other.

17. The Senate Research Committee should recognize the Scholarship on Teaching and Learning (SoTL) in assessing applications for research and travel funding. The Committee and the new teaching and learning centre should work together to ensure SoTL is recognized and rewarded as legitimate scholarship.

18. Lakehead University should provide support to encourage more undergraduate research initiatives, linking student interests with faculty research projects, highlighting successful projects, highlighting successful projects, keeping a website of undergraduate research funding opportunities, and providing increased opportunities for undergraduates to engage meaningfully in research. This initiative should be a cooperative effort between the Office of Research Services and the new teaching and learning centre.