



**Kwantlen**  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

---

# **Peer Mentoring Alliances: Transformational Leadership & Scholarship from the Inside Out**

Alice Macpherson, CQ, MA  
Balbir Gurm, RN, EdD

---

*"We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment. Whether we permit chance environments to do the work, or whether we design environments for the purpose makes a great difference."*

John Dewey (1916)

# Background & Program Context

- Kwantlen University College is a publicly funded post-secondary institution that has a range of offerings from certificate to bachelor's degrees.
- Kwantlen's faculty, through reading circles, have defined the scholarship of teaching and learning as "the public display of the individual understandings and truths that educators have of their roles and what they do with that knowledge."
- Faculty believe that they need to improve the scholarship of teaching and learning but generally do not have a history of participating in that scholarship.
- Kwantlen has created a Centre for Academic Growth and has an Office of Research and Scholarship to encourage and support faculty in their scholarship.
- Some faculty decided that they should review the literature and learn from other institutions in similar environments.
- A need for collegial interactions emerged quickly when there was an opportunity to talk about the scholarship of teaching and learning.



# Theory Underlying the Project

- The academic work of teaching is deeply embedded in cultural and intercultural practice and reaches well beyond the ‘halls of learning’ and on into ‘communities of learning’ where academics have the opportunity to become transformational leaders through the scholarly teaching that they do.
- They need the critique and support of other like minded individuals to build a framework to further and also share human knowledge in ongoing transformational ways.

## Wilcox and Ebb (1992)

- “...professorial knowledge is not proprietary but communal, dedicated to the welfare of society through the transmission and extension of knowledge. The role of the scholar can be conceived in four phases: teaching, discovery, application, and integration, each of which has its own ethical assumptions and problems (Boyer 1990). Often the competing needs of these roles cause conflicts for the scholar teacher/researcher. In responding to these problems, the scholar must balance individual with group realities and requirements. An important pedagogical conception to help achieve the balance is the learning community.”



# At Kwantlen, faculty theorize that the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning encompasses:

"The public display of the individual understandings and truths that educators have around their roles and what they do with that knowledge. This includes what we know about our diverse disciplines, subject matter, and how students learn coupled with our reflections on how we utilize this knowledge within the educational process. A vital part of this scholarship of teaching is our reflections on our practice as we further our understanding of the interplay of both process and content." (2005)

- This reflection is conceived as being a process that ranges from the solitary through to the public and published.
- One manifestation of this reflection is the action research based **Peer Mentoring Alliances**, which are an element of Kwantlen's Faculty Learning Communities initiative.



# Learning Community Basics

- Question: How is a “learning community” created?
- Faculty members form into small groups that interact in a collaborative program intended to enhance teaching and learning and foster situated leadership that will have transformative impacts.
- Seminars and activities spaced over the year were developed and evolved, starting with a targeted approach to new faculty coupled with a general invitation for experience and continuing faculty.
- Participants gave feedback at various points during the process and responded with suggestions that make the program stronger each iteration.

## Our Provocative Vision

- At the end of April, 2007, there will be a vibrant and alive faculty community that is positive and proactive around the topics of teaching, learning and scholarship. As a result of this pilot, most Kwantlen Faculty will be aware of this dynamic and energizing process. People will want to take part and we will double our numbers for next year.



# Concepts from the Literature

## ■ Community of Inquiry

- ❑ bridges private and public world
- ❑ Opportunity to reflect & share ideas
- ❑ Co-construct knowledge (University of Calgary, 2006)

## ■ Result - decrease isolation, competition and increase feedback and belonging

## ■ Communities of Practice

- ❑ Those with a shared concern or passion
- ❑ Include people interesting in a particular are and the community develops through personal practice. (Wenger, 2005, Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002)
- ❑ Intersubjectivity through interaction and interdependence and community is co-created through participation & mutuality.

## ■ Communities of Learning

- ❑ Understandings are embedded in culture and values
- ❑ Academic work requires ethical reflection on the transmission and extension of knowledge
- ❑ Create balance between, scholar/teacher (Wilcox & Ebbs, 1992)



# Concepts from the Literature

## ■ Learning Organizations

- ❑ Shared ideals, collaboration, flexibility & reflection. (Senge, 1990)
- ❑ learn to develop to support student learning.
- ❑ Learning through dialogue to create common understandings (Habermas, 1971) or “learning conversations”. (Bushe, 2001)

## ■ Glocalization

- ❑ Complex interaction and synthesis of globalizing and localizing tendencies (Spybey, 1996, Appadurai, 1990, A. Scott, 1997)
- ❑ Merging of global opportunities and local interests, sharing & expanding boundaries

## ■ Common Themes that Emerged

### ■ Creating new horizons through dialogue (Habermas, 1971 )

- ❑ Philosophical Framework-Phenomenology
- ❑ Multiple perspectives & realities,
- ❑ Culture & context impact analysis & understandings
- ❑ Power & politics impact dialogue understandings
- ❑ Words define understandings
- ❑ Understandings are embedded in culture & values



---

# Learning Community Initiatives

## Face to Face Locations

- Peer Mentoring Alliances
- Teaching Learning Series
- CASTL Leadership Project

## Professional Development Opportunities

- International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Conference, Vancouver, October, 2005
- Developing Student Autonomy workshops with Alan Wright, February, 2006
- What is this SoTL? with Richard Gale, March, 2007
- Online Conference on Teaching from the University of Hawai'i, April, 2006, 2007

## Virtual Locations

- E-mail, Moodle, Website
- Artifact Collection and Archiving





# Peer Mentoring Alliances

- The Pilot Alliances project (2005/2006) had 31 faculty members expressing interest and developed with 22 active through the year.
- The Alliances start with a day of activities in which the primary purpose is getting to know each other, building trust and develop common understandings through dialogue.
- The environment that is set provides the context and support to develop lasting bonds over the next year.

## Agenda:

- Welcome and Education Quotes
- What is this “Peer Mentoring Alliances”?
- A brief welcome and a round of names, department. What do you want? What brought you here today?
- Appreciative Icebreaker
- Personal Alliance Inventory
- “Speed Dating” Activity
- Burning Questions about Teaching & Learning
- Name Game
- Project Possibilities and Support Available
- Alliances Personal Want Ad
- Alliance Creation
- Alliance individual Group Planning
- Descriptions
- Wrap up



# Appreciative Icebreaker

- Participants are invited to “Tell a story about a time when you were really interested and excited about your collegial experience, including talking with colleagues about teaching & learning. What did you learn? What do you want more of?”
- They have 10 minutes to talk in pairs, times when their teaching and their learners’ learning was particularly exciting and alive.
- They are paired and given a brief list of prompts to use as they take turns listening to each other’s story for 10-15 minutes each.
- The whole group is brought back together and each pair introduces each other with a bit of the other person’s story.
- The facilitator elicits teaching and learning themes that emerged from the stories.
- Themes are and made visible on flip charts.
- These charts are then hung on the walls to serve as prompts for further discussion and alliance formation.



# “Speed Dating” Activity

- With chairs in parallel and participants facing each other, each person has 2 minutes to answer one of the questions.
- When time is called, one row moves one position and a new question is announced
  - Memory of my First Day at Kwantlen.
  - What brings you joy?
  - Best exam experience
  - When I put my feet up I ...
  - I went into teaching because ...
  - Most memorable student and why?
  - If I had the money, I would ...
  - What I like best about teaching is ...
  - If I were to describe myself as a drink, I would be ...
  - What I like best about Kwantlen is ...
  - My most exciting moment in the classroom ...
  - I want to know ... about my teaching and my students learning.
- This has proven to be a dynamic energizer, with many participants not wanting it to stop.
- We are told that it positively affects how the groups form.



# Ongoing Alliance Activities:

Once Groups form through the all day process they decide on activities, including:

- Collegial conversations, sharing experiences around teaching/learning in person and online.
- Collaborative interactive projects, such as:
  - peer observations in classrooms,
  - book and articles reading and discussion,
  - jointly developed and implemented scholarly projects.
  - Coffee meetings.
- Lunches to which all participants are invited.
- Collecting feedback - both face to face and electronically.
- The 2006-2007 Peer Mentoring Alliances have formed and chosen scholarly projects.
- This year we have a total of 37 faculty members actively involved from the 43 that expressed interest.



# Comments & Recommendations by Peer Mentoring Participants

## What Worked

- Good to talk to others outside my discipline
- Difficult to schedule meetings (but did meet individually)
- Want to connect with others for next year
- The diversity of approaches to teaching
- Exciting to just get to talk about teaching and hear other ideas
- That reflective conversation is a source of solace in the war against solitary practice
- It was good to talk with "newer" instructors – new to teaching, as well as, experienced, but new to Kwantlen
- Our meetings also gave us all a chance to decompress from the strains/frustrations that hit us all at various points of the semester, no matter how many years we have been doing it.
- This was a good idea that the groups should include new comers and old staff.
- A rich experience to share teaching ideas, and inter-disciplinary gossip...
- Enjoyed the opportunity to converse with colleagues from other areas – if only over coffee a couple times a semester.
- A multidisciplinary group was a good idea.
- I had a good experience with the mentor group. Our group was cooperative, had open discussion on important issues and was comprised of experienced persons.
- Got a lot of good ideas and support for my teaching practice.
- Looking up, looking forward!



## Challenges

- Emphasize scheduling time to meet (We faced, some times, problems finding suitable time to meet.)
- Need to consider timetables when forming groups – my group had very conflicting schedules so we were not terribly successful at meeting all that much. Even though our group didn't get off the ground, I still believe in and look forward to being part of next year's alliances.

## Next year ...

- Keep it interdisciplinary
- Work on getting new faculty teamed up with more experienced faculty (I think this happened this year so nothing new just let's keep it going).
- New groups comprising of different persons may be constituted so that we can know about other faculty as well.
- Lunch next year during the first week of May
- We should pay special attention to new faculty arriving at KUC for the first time this fall; getting to know a wide range of faculty members is important to becoming part of the college community.
- There should be at least one activity during the semester at the group level.
- Recommend that alliances arrange a first meeting by [date]; if unable to do so, contact [person] so that options can be explored to allow participants to be involved.
- Perhaps provide extra encouragement to those who are signed up with participants who were unable to make the initial large group session to set up a timely meeting.
- Start announcing the upcoming alliances immediately; perhaps make it a regular or semi-regular attachment to other announcements.



# References

- Boyer, E. (1990) Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate. San Francisco, CA, USA: Jossey-Bass Publishers
- Cox, M. D. (2004) Introduction to faculty learning communities. In Cox, M. D. & Richlin, L. (Eds) New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 97, Spring 2004. Online at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/tl.129>: Wiley Periodicals, Inc.
- Habermas, J.(1971). Knowledge and human interest. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Kanuka, H. (2005) Investing in faculty. Online at: [http://commons.ucalgary.ca/pressroom/investing\\_faculty.html](http://commons.ucalgary.ca/pressroom/investing_faculty.html)
- Richlin, L. & Cox, M. D. (2004) Developing scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning through faculty learning communities. In Cox, M. D. & Richlin, L. (Eds) New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 97, Spring 2004. Online at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/tl.129>. Wiley Periodicals, Inc.
- Senge, P. (1994) The fifth discipline: The art & practice of the learning organization. New York, NY, USA: Doubleday.
- Wilcox, J. R. & Ebbs, S. L. (1992) The leadership compass: values and ethics in higher education. George Washington Univ. Washington DC. School of Education and Human Development: Online at <http://www.ericdigests.org/1992-1/compass.htm>
- Dewey, J. (1916) Democracy and education. Don Mills, ON, Canada: Macmillan.



# CASTL Leadership Project

- Another element emerged as a group of 18 faculty met in December 2005 and January 2006 to develop a proposal to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) Higher Education Program.
- This proposal was supported by the President and Vice-President of Kwantlen University College.
- It was submitted March 14, 2006, accepted May 19, 2006.
- Kwantlen is a member of the Leadership Cluster that is focused on Building Scholarly Communities and attended the first convening of this group November 8, 2006.
- Transformative Dialogues: Teaching and Learning Journal created with first Issue May, 2007.

<http://www.kwantlen.ca/academicgrowth/TD/>





# Teaching Learning Series

- The first project started with a small pilot and a targeted approach to new faculty coupled with a general invitation for experienced and continuing faculty.
- A comprehensive series of teaching and learning focused workshops were scheduled for primarily half days in August. This series included a possible 60 hours of teaching/learning focused workshops.
- Educational divisions supported this initiative by earlier hiring and encouragement to take part.
  - 80 faculty members spend a total of 822 hours in August at a variety of events before the start of the 2005 Fall semester.
  - Current faculty responded to the opportunity to participate as well and there were 80 individuals who took part in events in August, 2005.
  - Initiative has continued in May and August through 2007 with a certificate available.

