

Maple League of Universities Monthly Report

February 28, 2022



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Executive Director's Note:

February has been a difficult month for many, punctuated by storms, strikes, snow days, and childcare challenges – on top of the ongoing complexities of COVID. February in Eastern Canada also offers a “false spring” only to dash away hopes of an early thaw with punishing temperatures and deep freezes. False hope and cruel optimism can have a deleterious effect on even the sturdiest of souls.

Indeed, in *Cultivating Critical Hope*, the authors discuss how losing hope “causes us to become stagnant, decreases our efficacy to engage in leadership, takes away our sense of agency to act as leaders, and widens the gap between espoused and actualized values” (Bishundat, Phillip, Gore, 2018, p. 94). And yet, “critical hope” does not exist in the absence of despair. In the Hope University session I hosted this month as part of the Maple League Better Together series, we talked about how despair is a pre-condition of critical hope; moreover, these concepts are not linear nor opposites, but rather ebb and flow as we navigate ever-changing conditions.

In their critical hope framework, Bishundat et al. (2018) assert that “isolation is an enemy of hope” and “community is an ally of hope.” Furthermore, “Educators who resist isolation by finding community can be more resilient leaders” (p. 94). This concept resonated in the Hope University session: several respondents reflected on the value of interconnected communities of practice that build hopeful spaces; others talked about the relational work that fosters collaboration and critical reflection – both crucial for the well-being of individuals and institutions. Indeed, without reflection *and* action Bishundat et al. assert, our collective capacity to reconstruct society in more just and equitable ways is diminished (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994).

In my role with the Maple League of Universities, I’ve had a unique opportunity to see the inside of four universities, sit at tables and gain insights into how the policies, systems, structures inform, shape, and reflect deep cultures. Working with partners ranging from students to presidents and provosts has offered a nuts and bolts understanding of systems (and constraints) and a greater understanding of how universities strive to contribute to the broader society. This experience has also enabled me to beta-test concepts, design projects and initiatives, and facilitate change through diverse communities of practice.

“Hope,” Paulo Freire (Brazilian educator and philosopher) tells us, “is rooted in men’s incompleteness, from which they move out in a constant search—a search which can be carried out only in communion with others” (*Oppressed* 91). In communion with others, we build hopeful and resilient systems where individuals flourish and institutions thrive, even in February.

~ Dr. Jessica Riddell, Executive Director, Maple League of Universities

I. Extraordinary Student Experiences

Maple League Shared Courses Moving Forward on Multiple, Exciting Fronts

The new timeline for Fall 2022 & Winter 2023 courses is advancing, and we are confident that this new system will not only streamline the overall process but ensure that more students are able to incorporate Maple League Shared Courses into their scholastic journeys. Alongside this work, the four Registrars, meeting biweekly with the Faculty Excellence Lead, have started the process of planning a retreat during the Spring when they can operationalize Maple League Shared Courses.

Meanwhile, we have begun the process of promoting exciting Spring & Summer courses from across the Maple League. While these courses operate outside of the Maple League Shared Course system outlined in the MOU, we are excited to help spread the word about innovative, exciting courses which are available to students through the standard Letter of Permission system.

One of these courses is Shakesperience, promoted to students across the Maple League.

When: June 27-July 1, 2022

Where: Stratford Theatre Festival in Stratford, Ontario

What: This is an intensive field study course designed to take students on a deep dive to understand the inner workings of North

America's largest repertory theatre. The first part of the course will be online, with readings and micro-lectures in advance of the in-person experience. Then we will meet in-person to study, learn, watch, listen, and engage in the process of making theatre in Stratford, Ontario. We will watch five plays, engage in post-show discussions with actors, meet with directors and education associates, and connect with dramaturges and academics. For more information, and to register, please visit <https://www.bushakesperience.com/>.



PETAL Mirco-WIL Workshop Series Now Open for Registration

Registration is now open for the Maple League Pedagogy, Edu-Technology, and Learning (PETAL) workshops series. From March-May, the OLTC Program is offering a series of free, virtual work-integrated learning (WIL) workshops. Once completed, they will receive a PETAL badge for the specific topic.

The Micro-WIL experiences contain two parts: **1)** a short workshop/training session on a given topic, and **2)** a challenge/project. First students are introduced and trained on a given topic/area and then they use their new training and experience as students to complete their challenge. When students complete four or more workshops (of their choice) they will receive a PETAL Record of Completion.

PEDAGOGY, EDU-TECHNOLOGY,
+ LEARNING



MAPLE LEAGUE
MICRO WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING WORKSHOPS

Starting Thursday, March 19th these sessions will run every Thursday at 9 am ET / 10 am AT covering the following topics:

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) — March 17th
- Learning Objectives and Bloom's Taxonomy — March 24th
- Critical Reflective Practice — March 31st
- Learner-Centered Syllabi — April 7th
- Alternative Assessment — April 14th
- Formative and Summative Assessment — April 21st
- Critical Empathy and Hope University — April 28th
- Understanding Your Privilege (and What To Do With It) — May 5th
- Visual Syllabi — May 12th
- Educational Technologies and Learning Management Systems — May 19th
- Accessibility — May 26th

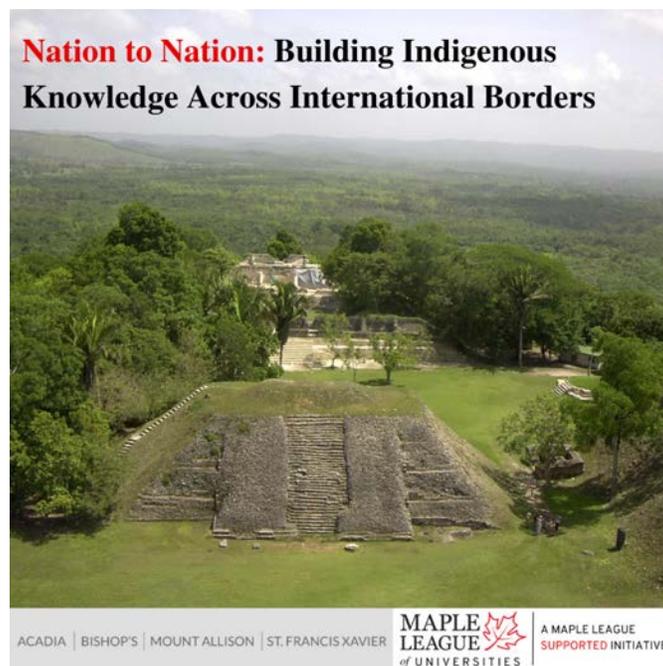
Spaces are limited, so sign up today! All registrations links and sessions details can be found on our [website](#).

Maple League International Offices Move Ahead on Student Focused Reconciliation Initiative

The Maple League supported initiative run by International representatives from the four institutions called *Nation to Nation: Building Indigenous Knowledge Across International Borders* will move forward with their first-ever jointly developed field school program in spring 2022. The representatives received news this month from Universities Canada that funding through the [Global Skills Opportunity](#) can be accessed for international travel again after the Government of Canada's announcement of the Level 3 travel advisory being downgraded to Level 2. After a thorough selection process, the International representatives added Genner Llanes-Ortiz (Bishop's) as the Faculty Supervisor, Juan Carlos Lopez (Acadia) as the understudy for the Faculty Supervisor, and Terena Francis (StFX) as Indigenous Lead to the team.

The group met on February 18th with Sherry Gibbs who is the lead on this project at Galen University, the partner school in Belize. The meeting was vibrant and full of good conversation as the group discussed a range of topics including pre-departure sessions, a draft trip itinerary, travel routes, and cross-culture peer engagement.

The International representatives have requested their meetings move back to weekly instead of bi-weekly and the larger team will meet bi-weekly as they approach pre-departure sessions in March and their trip to Belize in May.



II. Faculty and Staff Engagement

Maple League Book Club Sprouts Vibrant Communities Despite Winter Isolation

...This club gives me wings! The book has become my best friend and favourite source of inspiration.

~ Correspondence from a Book Club participant

In a difficult term, faculty have persevered through storms, illness, and unexpected childcare (on top of the regular demands of the term) to make it to the Book Club. Thanks to a commitment to a come-as-you-are attitude we have seen fairly high attendance week after week, which leads to exciting, challenging conversations! We have even learned that striking faculty at Acadia are continuing to read and discuss the book as part of building their on-campus community between stretches on the picket line.

Teachers, staff, and students alike have all shared vulnerably of their own challenges and successes in reimagining how we teach.

Executive Director Leads Better Together Session Around Hope University

In the February 23rd Better Together session, “Hope University – Designing resilient systems so individuals don't have to be,” Dr. Jessica Riddell engaged over 30 staff and faculty in a group re-imagining of how our university systems are designed and run.



In this collaborative, uplifting session a 5-page document was co-created full of the hopes and dreams that faculty have for how we might reimagine the institutions we work in to address the needs of 21st-century students and society.

This session is the first public-facing event in a series of conversations, lectures, and roundtables dedicated to envisioning Hope University which will happen in the coming months, all of which demonstrate how the Maple League is putting into practice the models and systems which will inspire the next evolution of post-secondary education.

III. External Engagement

Through Maple League Hosts, Natasha Kenny Leads An International Conversation About The University Cultures



February started off with our first Maple League Hosts session of the year, where we were joined by Natasha Kenny, Senior Director of the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning at the University of Calgary. Her talk titled *COVID, networks and significant conversations: Influencing teaching and learning cultures in higher education* was an inspiring set of prompts about what lessons we can take into the post-pandemic educational landscape.

Attendees joined from across the Maple League, as well as from more than a dozen institutions across Canada, from the U.S., and Ireland. More than 30% of attendees filled out the follow-up survey and gave the session an average rating of 9/10!

One of the few online meetings that doesn't leave you feeling screened-out, the Better Together series has cracked the code of virtual presentations. Coupled with the enlightening content being presented, these sessions are a must-attend!

~Anonymous Survey Respondent

Participants at the EDC Conference Learn About Student Collaboration Through the OLTC Program

On February 23rd, Matthew Dunleavy and Dr. Jessica Riddell were joined by Cécilia Alain (Bishop's University)—a fourth-year student who has worked with the OLTC Program as the Bishop's Student Champion and as a Research Assistant for Dr. Riddell—at a presentation for the Educational Developers Caucus Conference at the University of Waterloo, Ontario.



OLTC Design and Expansion Team Apply Submit D2L Innovation in Teaching and Learning Dossier

Established in 2012, the D2L Innovation Award in Teaching and Learning, sponsored by D2L (Desire2Learn), celebrates and recognizes up to five post-secondary collaborative teams each year for their innovative approaches that promote student-centred teaching and learning.



OLTC founders, Dr. Jessica Riddell, Scott Stoddard, & Georges-Philippe Gadoury-Sansfaçon, OLTC Program Director, included Matthew Dunleavy, and *Teaching, Pedagogy, and Technology in Courses* course instructor, Toni Roberts, in the submission for this unique and prestigious award.

In their dossier, they highlighted the OLTC Program as an innovative response to the COVID-19 global pandemic that harnesses Students-as-Partners (SaP) to redesign our classrooms for student and faculty success, first at Bishop’s University and then across the Maple League.

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3 DESCRIPTION OF THE TEAM

Phase I: The Creation of the Program in the Context of COVID

One of the innovative elements of the OLTC program was the composition of the OLTC design team. In the early days of “emergency-pivot-remote teaching” in March and April 2020, the Information Technology Services (ITS) department scrambled to support faculty navigate a new and constantly shifting context. In May 2020, as it dawned on us that COVID was not a short-term disruption, Scott Stoddard (Manager of IT Client Services) started to think about alternatives to past approaches in which the students worked as helpdesk employees. Dissatisfied with the transactional dimension, he reached out to his colleague, Dr. Jessica Riddell (faculty member in the English Department and Stephen A. Jędrzejowski Chair of Undergraduate Excellence). Together they started to imagine a transformative and reciprocal approach to faculty support. Almost immediately, they brought in Georges-Philippe Sansfaçon-Gadoury, a third-year student and elected Student Union Representative leading the VP Academic portfolio.

Therefore, the design, implementation, and quality assessment of the program was divided into three equal leadership roles:

1. A faculty member to provide pedagogical support, mentorship, and evidenced-based design principles, with access to professional development opportunities through inter-institutional networks
2. A senior member of ITS coordinating the technological and logistical aspects of the program;
3. A student member, elected to the Students’ Representative Council, representing and soliciting student perspectives.

Tripartite Approach Models Critical Empathy

The intersection of these three perspectives provided the program’s design with a more dynamic approach to support faculty as they prepared for Fall 2020. Furthermore, the distributed roles and responsibilities also engaged in critical empathetic design: the faculty lead provided a teaching lens and could help find faculty mentors for the OLTCs; the IT lead integrated these perspectives more effectively in designing technology to fulfill these diverse needs; and the student lead provided key perspectives and advocacy to design for and with students.

Success in teaching and learning initiatives are often developed in small, and yet strong networks of trusted and like-minded colleagues from different disciplinary or professional perspectives (cf. *Book & Burningham, 2009*). Furthermore, hubs are individuals or groups that “energize cross-connections, improve knowledge flow, enhance learning across small clusters of expertise, and play critical roles in building and sustaining robust integrated networks” (Taylor et al., 2021, p. 1).