

Maple League of Universities Monthly Report

May 31, 2022



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Executive Director's Note:

May is convocation season at our four universities, and in honour of this important ritual, I'd like to share one of my favourite convocation themed speeches: David Foster Wallace, American author and professor, delivered one of the most memorable commencement speeches when he addressed the class of 2005 at Keylon University; what would later become a book titled *This Is Water: Some Thoughts, Delivered on a Significant Occasion, about Living a Compassionate Life*, Wallace illustrates the importance of critical reflection with the following parable:

“There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says “Morning, boys. How’s the water?” And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes “What the hell is water?”

Wallace explains the parable’s message in the following way: “The point of the fish story is merely that the most obvious, important realities are often the ones that are hardest to see and talk about.” In other words, we are all in the water, but the systems that shape our experiences are often invisible. Only through critical reflection can we make the water visible. And only then can we appreciate how it shapes our existence.

A huge proponent of the value of the liberal arts, Wallace argues that it “isn’t really about the capacity to think, but rather about the choice of what to think about. If your total freedom of choice regarding what to think about seems too obvious to waste time discussing, I’d ask you to think about fish and water.” He expands on this in the following way: “the real value of a real education, which has almost nothing to do with knowledge, and everything to do with simple awareness; awareness of what is so real and essential, so hidden in plain sight all around us, all the time, that we have to keep reminding ourselves over and over:

“This is water.”

“This is water.”

In my own work on Hope University, acknowledging Wallace’s “this is water” is fundamental. Effacing the systems and structures at work doesn't make them go away. Inviting them into conversation (naming them) is essential if we are to dismantle, renovate, and renew them in inclusive ways.

Once we understand “this is water,” we also acknowledge, as Ava DuVernay says, “The system’s not broken; the system was built this way. It was built to oppress. It lives off of our ignorance and we can no longer be ignorant. And now that you know, what will you do?”

There is tremendous cognitive dissonance when we surface the discomfort that has been palpable for excluded groups and pernicious for the privileged for a long time – and it is now coming to a head: 1. the systems are broken and 2. the systems are working exactly as designed.

DuVernay calls us in when she asks, “And now that you *know*, what will you *do*?”

Hope is a verb. As we launch graduating classes into the world, we hope that we have equipped these incredible citizens to act – on behalf of themselves and for others, led by the values of a civil, just and democratic society. At the same time, we also have to model that within the academy in our willingness to always transform in order to engage in the world with curiosity and creativity.

In *Shakespeare’s Guide to Hope, Life, and Learning*, my co-authors and I expand on hope in the context of the university classroom: “Learning is embodied hope. It happens in time. It happens in bodies. Each act of learning is unique and can never be reproduced on a factory line. It cannot be abstracted from the bodies and the lives of learners who embody it, any more than a verb can function grammatically without an agent. Hope is a verb.”

This notion of hope-as-action shows up across higher education: in a [recent article about inclusion in university instruction](#), a group of professors at Guelph University call upon us all to engage in what they call “disruptive action”:

“As we continue these important conversations about equity, diversity, and inclusion, let us never lose sight of the fact that commitment to values is (only) an excellent first step and what needs to follow is disruptive action. Action that ensures that we aren’t just picking from the best who make it through our system but that the system itself supports us in becoming our best.”

There is something inherently hopeful about the process of naming, claiming, and aiming. The work ahead constitutes “hard hope.” Hope is not the absence of discomfort or despair. Hope requires us to face uncomfortable truths and sit in that discomfort with grace and a willingness to transform. This brand of hope is forged in hard truths and radical compassion, clear-eyed assessment and creative design.

Cheers to our graduating classes, and a special nod to the work that remains to do within our hallowed halls.

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

I. Extraordinary Student Experiences

The Path Pilot Supports 200 Maple League Entrepreneurs

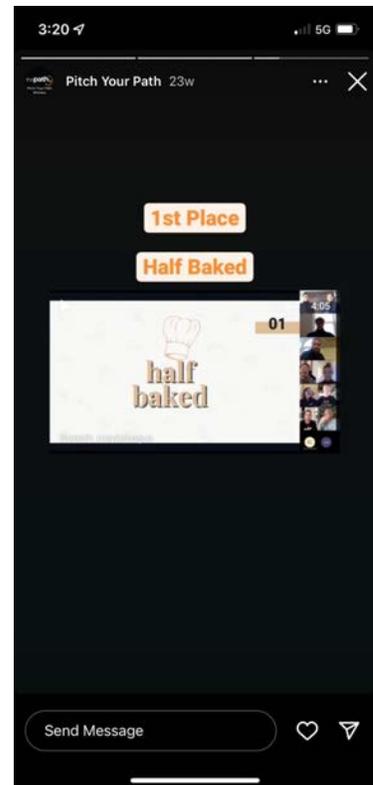
The Path, a new startup incubator shared across Maple League universities, has helped over 200 students build their entrepreneurship skills this year, with courses from Acadia, Bishop's, and Mount Allison universities participating in the pilot. 50 startups were created: 15 successfully achieved traction and five generated revenue. One startup from Mount A will enter PropelICT, Atlantic Canada's virtual tech accelerator, through a strategic partnership with The Path.

Students participating in the program through seven entrepreneurship courses received \$300,000 in external funding to work on their startup, funded through Canada's CEWIL I-Hub. This covered start-up expenses and a work-integrated-learning stipend for students, and additional funding for The Path program costs.

Offering 30 workshops, panels, and networking events to students as well as a dozen possible Alumni Mentor pairings, The Path created a novel academic program this year. Leveraging the strengths of the sister universities, inter-disciplinary and industry collaboration supported students to become successful entrepreneurs alongside their studies.

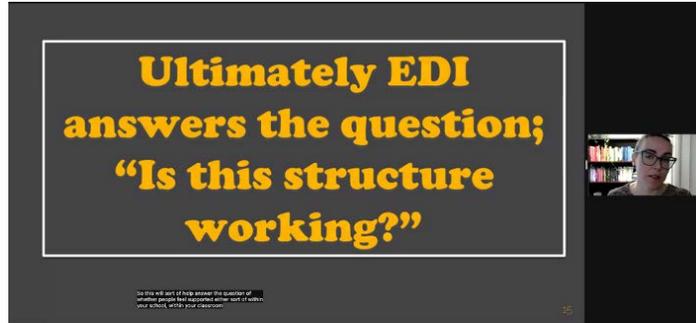
'Pitch Your Path' a pitch competition hosted by The Path in April put nine top startups in front of investors and startup coaches to complete their training and enter the market. \$1,500 in prizes was awarded and winners were featured on The Path's Instagram page.

Following the success of its pilot launch, The Path is seeking sustainable funding and a strategic governance model in order to way find a 'path' for students to become entrepreneurs in Eastern Canada. The Path's next cohort begins in September 2022 and is open to any student across the Maple League. Signup through The Path website or by enrolling in an entrepreneurship course. For more information and to see The Path entrepreneurs, go to thepath.mapleleague.ca or follow [@thepath_mapleleague](https://www.instagram.com/thepath_mapleleague).



PETAL Workshop Series Concludes

In May, students across the Maple League joined four final Pedagogy, Edu-Technology, and Learning (PETAL) workshops. On May 5th, Polly Leonard hosted an Understanding Your Privilege (and What To Do With It) pulling on her experience as the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer at Acadia University. On May 26th, students joined Dr. Erin Austen and Gracie Grieve (St. Francis Xavier) for a session on Accessibility in the classroom.



May also saw sessions on Visual Syllabi (May 12th) and Educational Technologies and Learning Management Systems (May 19th) with Program Director, Matthew Dunleavy.

Summer Courses Bring Together Maple League Students Online and In-Person

For Spring- and Summer-term courses, the Maple League helps to promote courses through a dedicated webpage, a downloadable PDF with all course details, and a series of social media posts across our four social media platforms. For the Spring/Summer of 2022, we promoted 31 courses from all four campuses. The information-sharing system (a Sharepoint database on a Teams channel created for the registrar) which was created for the Maple League Shared Courses in the Fall/Winter supports the easy sharing of student information in the Spring & Summer.

Fall/Winter Shared Course Registration Launching

May saw the start of registration for Fall 22 & Winter 23 terms, though the staggered opening of registration across the ML campuses will continue through the end of June. Nine courses are being shared for the 22/23 school year in Math, Computer Science, Kinesiology, German, English, Psychology, and Nutrition. Most notable is a set of three courses in Nutrition (and a fourth which is scheduled for Spring 2023) which are shared between Acadia's School of Nutrition and Dietetics and StFX's Human Nutrition Department. Emerging from a collaboration between leaders from both departments, this is envisioned as a first step in a longstanding collaborative relationship.

This budding collaboration is an exciting example of what the Maple League, and the Maple League Shared Courses MOU, can make possible.

Launch of Collaborative Decolonizing Education Abroad Initiative

In November 2021 member institutions of the Maple League of Universities received a Global Skills Opportunity grant of \$800,000 to develop and launch a program for Indigenous students to participate in an international experience together. The program called “Nation to Nation: Building Indigenous Knowledge Across International Borders” has officially launched at the beginning of this month as the first cohort travelled to Belize.

Students from Acadia, Bishop’s, Mount Allison, and St. Francis Xavier University made up the first cohort this year; from May 4th - May 17th shared a short-term study abroad experience in Belize through Galen University. This immersive experience includes an in-person pre-departure gathering hosted at Mount Allison University where they participated in a sweat ceremony, and had various cultural discussions. They also participated in a virtual session with the Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor-General of Canada.



While the program and pre-study experience have been transformative, the global pandemic cut short the study-abroad portion of the experience this year. Students returned a few days early after two members of the group tested positive for COVID. The highly transmissible nature of COVID means we can contract the virus at a local hockey game or in travels abroad; as we learn to live with COVID, and welcome larger and larger groups back for in-person events on our campuses as well as attend learning and alumni experiences farther afield, we have to be agile and responsive to the situations as they arise. A tremendous effort from elders, members of Galen University, and the International Study Aboard offices ensured all participants returned safely home and the infected participants recovered with no ill effects.

II. Faculty and Staff Engagement

Faculty and Staff Slow Down Together with *The Slow Professor*

In May we launched the Maple League’s first-ever Summer Book Club. Thirty-three faculty and staff, from the four Maple League campuses, as well as five attendees from outside institutions, will be meeting over four sessions to discuss this touchstone text by Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber.



While the Fall & Winter Book Clubs invite us to take a look at our teaching and interrogate how we can better support our students, we envision the Summer book club as an opportunity to reflect on the university systems themselves. We’re eager to help the members of our campus communities to carve out time to think through the university structures that we both work within, but also help to co-create.

The 2022/2023 Better Together Year will Kick-Off with an Exciting Summer Season

Planning is underway for the 2022/2023 Better Together year, which will once again be shaped around Summer, Fall, and Winter seasons.

Kicking off the year will be a Maple League Hosts session with the Executive Director of Dalhousie’s Centre for Learning & Teaching, Suzanne Le-May Sheffield, whose talk will explore the undervalued role that close relationships, within and across universities, have in improving campus life for everyone.

The First Micro-Certificate Cohort Rounds the Final Corner

The end of May will mark the beginning of the week-long intensive retreat for the Maple League Micro Certificate in Teaching and Learning. This retreat is a culmination of nine months of learning, reflecting, and connection. Over the course of five days, the micro-certificate cohort and the MLTLC will do deep dives into teaching with sensitivity, Universal Design for Learning, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization, and Ungrading, while also putting the finishing touches on their capstone projects.



In May we experimented with a new platform for virtual togetherness: Gather.town. This mediated virtual space allows participants to self-organize into small subgroups without the use of breakout rooms. This will be an interesting tool to consider as we look to the future of the Micro-Certificate and continue to explore how to create community online.

In fact, the future of the Micro-Certificate is looking bright, as we have been fielding emails enquiring about the availability of slots for the 2022-2023 year!

DHSI-East (Digital Humanities Summer Institute-East) Public Keynote

2022 marks the second year of DHSI-East (Digital Humanities Summer Institute-East), a four-day workshop hosted by the StFX Digital Humanities Centre where participants, including faculty, staff, and students, come together to learn about digital humanities. This year's DHSI-East workshop was led by Dr. Constance Crompton (University of Ottawa) and Dr. Emily Murphy (University of British Columbia Okanagan). This year's workshop is about the Text Encoding Initiative, which is a standard for building digital editions.

The keynote for this year's talk was delivered by Dr. Ken Penner (St Francis Xavier University). His public, free, and virtual talk titled "A Toolkit for Humanities Research and Editing Ancient Documents" took place on May 2nd. For more on DHSI-East, visit [their website](#).

III. External Engagement

OLTC Receives D2L Innovation Award in Teaching and Learning

The Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education awarded Dr. Jessica Riddell, Georges-Philippe Gadoury-Sansfaçon, Scott Stoddard, Matthew Dunleavy, and Toni Roberts the prestigious D2L Innovation Award in Teaching and Learning to recognize the innovation and impact of the Online Learning and technology Consultants (OLTC) program in 2020-22.

The D2L Innovation Award in Teaching and Learning recognizes and celebrates excellence in collaborative teaching and learning in post-secondary education. While educators are encouraged to cultivate collaborative approaches to student learning, they must also be encouraged and supported to engage in collaborative teaching.

This program was designed by Dr. Jessica Riddell (Jarislowsky Chair of Undergraduate Teaching Excellence), Scott Stoddard (then Director of Information Technology), and undergraduate student Georges-Philippe Gadoury-Sansfaçon at Bishop's University in the early days of the global pandemic. Training students in pedagogy, technology, and critical empathy, the team took a transformative approach to pandemic pedagogy by creating inclusive virtual learning communities. The OLTC program began as a pilot at Bishop's University in May 2020 and then scaled across four universities in the Maple League in 2021 - 2022. The OLTC program was delivered in curricular and co-curricular pathways at our member universities, engaging students from across the Maple League in transformative experiential and work-integrated learning.

Co-founder Dr. Jessica Riddell asserts, "The OLTC program engages students as partners in the design of COVID classrooms to improve inclusion, equity, accessibility, and transformative learning. Universities are often slow to adapt and change, and yet the rapid move to online and remote instruction over the past two years has disrupted traditional positions of expert and learner. At every stage, we intentionally created spaces where the reversal of traditional paradigms generated rich spaces for student-centred innovation, which transformed mindsets and perspectives about what is possible for everyone involved, including faculty and student consultants to IT staff and student affairs teams."

Ben Boudreau, a student at St. Francis Xavier University, helped to scale the program across the Maple League universities: "The students as partners (SAP) model flipped my perspective in terms of what is pedagogically possible within the classroom and I was amazed that as a small group we were able to help numerous professors discover possibilities that were previously

believed impossible for their classrooms. This program goes further than simply helping the students, and the professors but contributes to higher education as a whole.”

Bishop’s professor and OLTC faculty participant Dr. Jasmeen Sidhu reflects that “the OLTC [program] offered me a unique opportunity to innovate my teaching and move my courses forward into an increasingly modern design. Through student partnership, teaching support, and cutting-edge pedagogical tools, the OLTC [program] offered me the ability to reflect and modernize my courses, and more importantly, my teaching philosophy. I can now better reflect my principles of equity and accessibility in my classes; as such, this program is transformative not just for our classrooms but for higher education more broadly.”

The Maple League consortium leads conversations on quality undergraduate education in Canada. Through inter-institutional collaborations, the four universities take a systems-thinking approach to student-centred education. Dr. Jeff Hennessy, Mount Allison University, Vice-President Academic and Provost reflects, “As post-secondary institutions around the world struggled to move to remote teaching in March 2020, universities that placed value on student-centred learning had a unique set of challenges: how do we partner with students on delivering a high-quality 21st-century education? The OLTC program has been a creative intervention in pandemic pedagogy and stands out as innovative in the landscape of higher education in Canada.”

Emily Rafuse, a student at Acadia University and an OLTC, shares her experiences in transformative work-integrated learning: “Through this program, I have worked with professors to curate their [learning management system] in order to better enhance their students' learning. Being able to talk to professors about pedagogies, universal design for learning, and accessibility from the perspective of a student with a disability has been so beneficial. It is so incredibly important for us to be able to have these conversations and make connections between the student and professor experience, and this program has definitely made room for all of us to have these greater dialogues that may not have happened otherwise.”

The D2L Innovation Award follows the announcement on April 27, 2022, that all the Maple League universities were recognized in the 2022 3M National Student Fellow competition: ten fellows are named every year, and in 2022 a student from each of the four universities was awarded this prestigious fellowship, the highest national recognition of student educational leadership in Canada. Receiving both the D2L Innovation Award for the OLTC program, and stewarding 3M National Student Fellows through mentorship are both examples of student-centred approaches to high-quality undergraduate education.

Maple League Featured at the STLHE Annual Conference

The Maple League will be featured in the largest national conference on teaching and learning in multiple ways June 7 - 11, 2022.

June 7: The OLTC team will join the four other 2022 winners at the pre-conference retreat to share innovative practices. The next day, Cécilia Alain (Bishop’s OLTC Student Champion, 2021-22) will join the team at a post-presentation for “*Working with Students to Co-Design 21st-Century Classrooms: The Online Learning & Technology Consultants (OLTC) Program.*” Read more details in our press release [here](#).

June 8:

- 9am - 10:30am: Dr. Jessica Riddell is the KEYNOTE at STLHE, speaking about Hope University
- 11am- 12:15pm: D2L winner presentation where the OLTC program will receive their national award
- 11am-12:15pm: OLTC conference presentation: Matthew Dunleavy, Dr. Jessica Riddell, & Georges-Philippe Gadoury-Sansfaçon will present—“Pandemic Pedagogy in Practice: Emergency Remote Teaching with Students as Co-designers”— they share the journey of the OLTC program as it has grown and been adapted over the past two years.
- 3:15pm-5pm POSTER SESSION with a Maple League Feature
- 5-7pm: Maple League Reception (Heart and Crown)

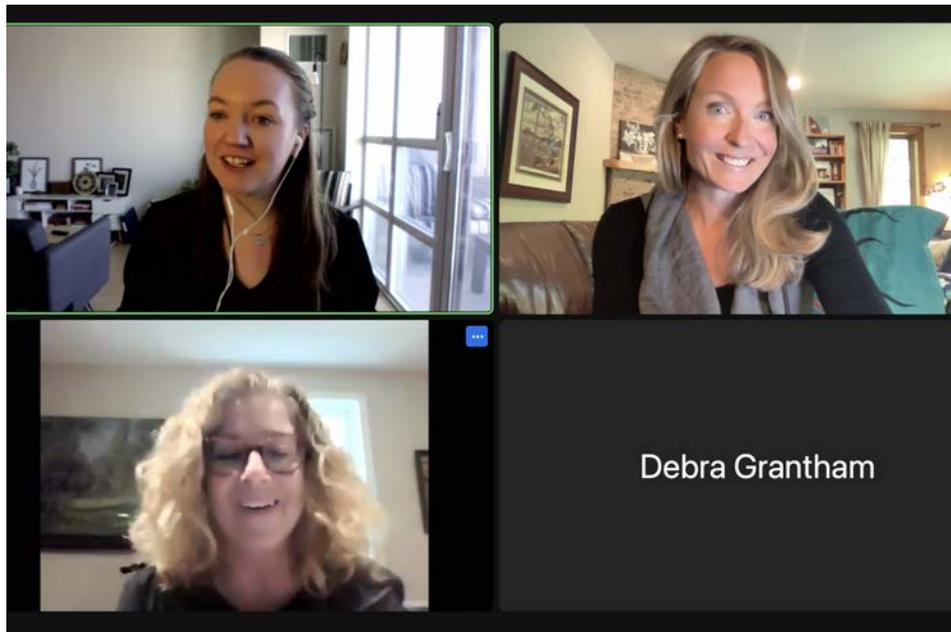
June 9:

- STLHE annual conference Award Ceremony at 6pm on June 9th 2022 at the Canadian Museum of History - to recognize the D2L Innovation Award



Maple League Research on High Impact Practices Featured at National Symposium Series

A lot has changed in our understanding of and approach to teaching and learning in higher education since the 2010 publication of *Taking Stock: Research on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. And yet, much has stayed the same (despite the current pandemic). We have “taken stock” once again – of what we know now, what has changed and what further change is needed in support of deep and essential learning in our ever-changing world. These are among the issues to be covered in our new book *Taking Stock 2.0: Transforming Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. Due to be published in time for the 2022 STLHE annual conference, chapter authors Dr. Jessica Riddell and Tiffany McLennan showcased their contribution in advance on May 24, 2022.



Faculty Excellence Lead Leads Workshop at Canadian Association for Theatre Research

As part of the first act of the Canadian Association for Theatre Research’s (CATR) 2022 conference “RePlay, ReCollect, ReExist,” hosted by St. Thomas University, Faculty Excellence Lead Neil Silcox hosted a three-hour workshop seminar with part-time and contingent faculty from across Canada and from the USA and India. Drawing on, and sharing, insights built through the V_MLTLC’s Book Clubs, Better Together seasons, and Micro-Certificate in Teaching and Learning, “Sh!t-Disturbers: Contract Instructors as Disruptors & Change-Makers” worked with precarious faculty to develop concrete, actionable ways to improve teaching and learning for faculty and students studying theatre history and theatre-making.

Maple League Supports the Educational Development Institute 2022

The Maple League has provided technology support for the Educational Development Institute 2022. Hosted over four weeks, the institute provides staff and faculty across the country working in and around educational development to build community and be part of engaging professional development:

- Week 1 — What is Educational Development?
- Week 2 — Developing and Managing Educational Development (ED) Skills
- Week 3 — Establishing, Expanding, and Strengthening Your Professional Network
- Week 4 — Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Educational Development

You can learn more about the institute and each session on [their website](#).