

**Maple League of Universities Monthly Report**  
**January 31, 2022**



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## Executive Director's Note:

Critical reflective practice is one of the most powerful thought exercises for goal-setting, strategic visioning, and living what Parker Palmer calls an “undivided life” (*Courage to Teach*, 1997).

“If we want to grow as teachers -- we must do something alien to academic culture: we must talk to each other about our inner lives -- risky stuff in a profession that fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical, the distant, the abstract.”

— Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*

Critical reflective practice is a process of “meaning making” that links past practice with present context in order to harness future facing goals (Dewey, 1916/1944; Schön, 1983; Rodgers, 2002). If there is no room for reflective practice, actions remain unconnected and experience alone might cause us to “reinforce stereotypes..., offer simplistic solutions to complex problems and generalize inaccurately based on limited data” (Ash & Clayton, 2009, p.26).

Engaging in critical reflection helps us “articulate questions, confront bias, examine causality, contrast theory with practice and identify systemic issues all of which helps foster critical evaluation and knowledge transfer” (Ash & Clayton, 2009, p. 27, quoted [here](#)).

Critical reflection is a skill that can be learned through practice and feedback (Dewey, 1933, Rodgers, 2002). And yet we do not usually assign critical reflection in our courses, nor do we have clear frameworks for teaching it or develop criteria for assessing it. This oversight is not limited to our classrooms: we do not value critical reflective practice - or invite in all the messiness and imperfections of growth – in tenure and promotion structures either. Even in strategic visioning processes the depth of reflection is uneven at best. What is valued and visible is the shiny packaging of perfection rather than the more candid, contested, and authentic narratives of constant and ongoing transformation.

The lack of attention to critical reflection is problematic when we consider the research that links this practice to building critical thinking (Kuh), designing for authentic learning environments (Herrington and Reeves), developing emotional and social intelligence (Dewey), and other key competencies of a liberal education.

Over the past several months I had the privilege of working closely with 10 award-winning faculty and 48 student leaders on developing critically reflective dossiers for the 3M National Teaching and Student Fellowships as a 3M mentor (outside and beyond my role as the ED). The dossiers are daunting because they are extensive (35 pages and 15 pages respectively), but what is more challenging is that they require nominees to excavate their authentic voices. The academy has trained us to stamp out our inner voices – with all the vulnerabilities and joys, silliness and sadness – in order to “sound like experts” in professional and disciplinary fields.

So many faculty reflect, when given safe and brave spaces, that they have lost the spark of delight that led them into academia in the first place. These revelations should be troubling to us all. And yet critical reflective practice helps us unlock fundamental values and align work with purpose. In doing so, reflection builds resilience in a profession that otherwise has [high burn-out rates](#). One of the nominees this year was generous enough to send a letter to the four Maple League Presidents about her transformative process in writing the dossier; with permission we share it in the appendix of this report.

Getting back to the core values and deep delights of our identities – as leaders, scholars, colleagues, and educators – is hard work for so many because we weren’t taught how to do critical reflective practice; this means we also don’t teach, model, value, or facilitate the deep work of critical reflective practice for our students or our colleagues. We can be better.

I am grateful for the opportunity to walk alongside faculty on their reflective journeys. The process as a 3M mentor gives the gift of renewal -- of joy and a shot of energy and a reminder of the hope in the world, helping us remember our own heart work. It is intimate, individualized, and intensive work, but it is some of the most meaningful work we can do.

We must do more to teach and evaluate critical reflective practice in our classrooms, in our faculty development, and our work as institutions. Looking back helps us understand our present and move into the future with alignment, purpose, and joy. While there is tremendous value for individuals to engage in this work, we must also challenge ourselves to do this as communities of practice, as institutions, and as a consortium. Our very resilience and joy are at stake.

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

## I. Extraordinary Student Experiences

### **Current and Former OLTCs Host First Better Together Session of the Winter Season**

Current and Former OLTCs, Donovan Faraoni (Bishop's), Shannon Gougen (Mount Allison), and Emma Trumble (Bishop's) drew on their work-integrated learning experiences through the OLTC Program when they hosted their Better Together session "*Students as Innovators, Collaborators, and Higher-Education Change-Makers*" on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

Keep your eye on our [Maple League YouTube Channel](#) for a recording of the session in the coming weeks in case you missed it!

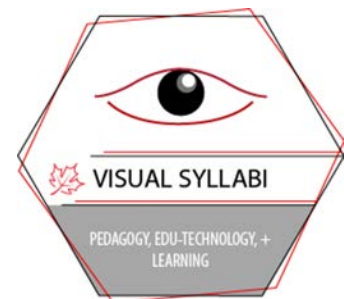


### **OLTC Program Gears Up for Micro-WIL Workshops in the Winter Term**

Starting in March, the OLTC Program will run a series of free, virtual, applied learning workshops where students across the Maple League can delve into a variety of topics in Pedagogy, Edu-Technology, and Learning (PEL). Through these workshops, students will be able to earn PEL badges that can be put towards a Record of Completion.

Students will have the opportunity to gain badges in the following areas:

- Accessibility
- Alternative Assessments
- Critical Empathy and Hope University
- Critical Reflective Practice
- Educational Technologies and Learning Management Systems
- Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization (EDID)
- Formative and Summative Assessment
- Learning-Centered Syllabi
- Learning Objectives and Bloom's Taxonomy
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Visual Syllabi



These sessions will begin later in the semester, session details, schedules, and sign up process will be shared across our platforms.

### 3M Student Fellow Mentoring Program Leads to Record Number of Submissions

Dr. Riddell and her team created an extensive mentorship network for 48 students in the 3M Student Fellowship cultivation pipeline this year. Supports include a handbook, info sessions, one-on-one mentoring, as well as institutional and individualised meetings. Dossier development is intensive and complex, and we believe that it provides crucial critical reflection and writing competency development as a Micro-Work-Integrated Learning opportunity.



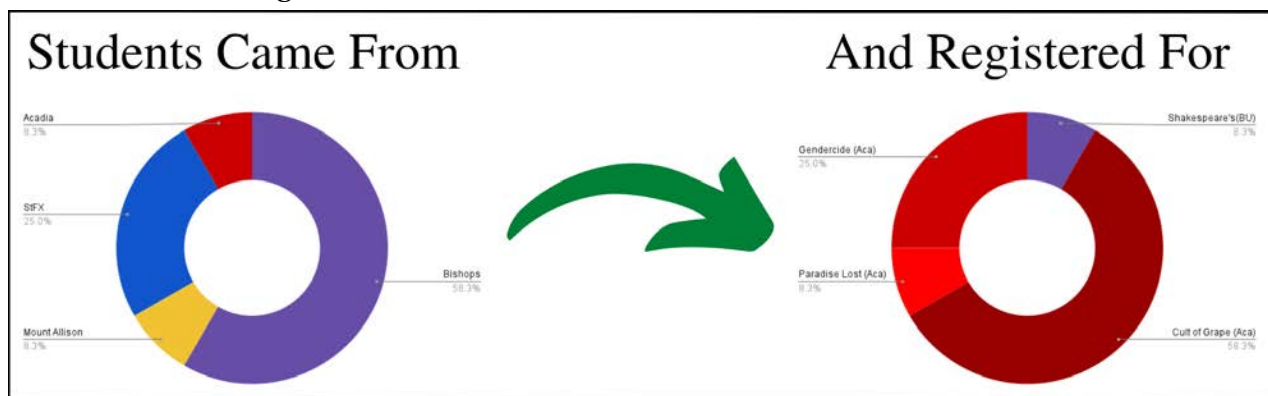
### Maple League Canada Summer Jobs Wraps Up with Reflections on Funding Students

As the 2021 Canada Summer Jobs positions wrap up, the Maple League team have reflected on funding opportunities for students in transformative work-integrated learning (as a part of the OLTC program). We sought important feedback from a number of partners, including VPs Students, Business Offices, and the leads on reporting and project management. One of the key values of the ML is that we don't duplicate work, add extra things to already full plates, or split already scarce resources. We are especially attentive to the perception that Maple League applications might take away from institutional application success; despite working to ensure this was not the case, our relationships - built on trust and transparency – remain the highest priority. After weighing the benefits of federal funding against the experiences navigating the complexities, including supporting individual universities work with student interns, reporting through Business Offices, and a host of other risks, the Maple League will no longer apply for the CSJ program. The Canada Summer Jobs application process is outside the sphere of ML control or influence, so the reputational risk to the consortium is too high. Instead the Maple League will look for other sources of funding for students in the OLTC program and other leadership positions and fellowships The Maple League is exploring how to support universities apply for funding streams through ICTC, which offers more funding, has a streamlined application process, and supports individual institutions in the future.

### Winter Shared Courses Launch

The start of the year saw an influx of students interested in Maple League Shared Courses; while there were new challenges presented by the sudden onset of Omicron, Registrars, Faculty, and the Maple League's Faculty Excellence Lead all stepped up to ensure that students were supported. These new obstacles helped clarify ways in which the systems and procedures for Shared Courses can be improved to make them more resilient to unforeseen future challenges.

### Winter 22 Course Registration Overview



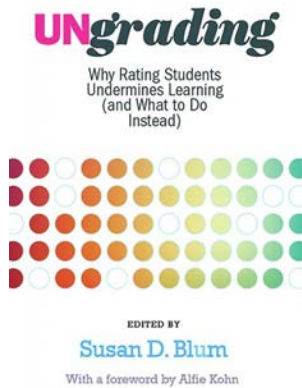
We also took the next step on our new timeline for Shared Courses, with seven exciting courses submitted for the 2022- 2023 year, from across the Maple League, including:

- Statistical Learning
- Geographic Information Systems
- Social Determinants of Health
- Aesthetics of Sport and Dance
- Cultural Memory in Post-1945 Germany
- Marvel, Mentors, and Metaphors

Information for these courses is now on the desks of the Academic Deans, who are working with Department Heads/Chairs to obtain approvals and course codes. This new timeline promises to help students take better advantage of opportunities at other schools, to smooth out the process of gathering and sharing information, and to improve the experience for students and faculty alike.

## II. Faculty and Staff Engagement

### Book Club Draws 75 Readers from Across the Country and Internationally



The Maple League Book Club's reading of *Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)* has drawn incredible interest, with over 75 readers joining us in our first week. We have a diverse range of voices in the conversation, from undergraduate students to Deans joining from our four Maple League campuses as well as Dalhousie, Georgian College, San Diego State University, University of the Fraser Valley, University of Alabama, Champlain College, University of Calgary, and even the Stratford Theatre Festival.

### Better Together Launches the Winter Season with Transformative Student Voices

Date	Topic	Speaker
JAN 26	Students as Innovators, Collaborators, and Higher-Education Change-Makers	Three students
FEB 9	COVID, networks & significant conversations: Influencing teaching & learning cultures in higher education	Natasha Kenny
FEB 23	Slowly but Surely: Inclusiveness in STEM and Beyond	Man in red jacket
MAR 9	Maple League Hosts: In Conversation with	Gavan Watson
MAR 23	Cornucopia of Creativity	Man with dog and woman with colorful face
APR 6	Maple League Roundtable on Knowledge Mobilization	Woman in dark top
APR 20	Maple League Pedagogy Panel: Award Winning Educators from Across the ML	Woman in blue top

The Winter season of Better Together will run from January 26th to April 20th with seven sessions featuring passionate faculty sharing their experiences and challenges, dedicated students imagining the future of learning, panels sharing their expertise on pedagogy and knowledge mobilization, and two luminary university leaders, Natasha Kenny and Gavan Watson, who will be helping us re-envision higher education for the 21st century.



In January we launched the Better Together Winter season with “Students as Innovators, Collaborators and Higher-Education Change-Makers,”; the first panel of the winter season was hosted by three students from the OLTC program; they talked about the joys and challenges of co-creating with faculty and shared their vision for where students need universities to grow.

If you were to put us in the situation where we have just 10 minutes with faculty to completely change how their course runs for the whole semester...the first thing that I would recommend is check-ins. We do faculty feedback forms at the end of the semester but if we say “the font was too small,” “the room was too cold” you can’t do anything about that. If I had been able to let you know, three or four weeks ago that the font was too small in your PowerPoints and I couldn’t read them from my seat, you could have changed that in the middle of the semester and that might have changed the course for somebody.

*~ Emma Trumble, in Students as Innovators, Collaborators and Higher-Education Change-Makers*

### **Maple League Live Offers Open Office Hours for Faculty in the Time of Disruption**

In response to the rising uncertainty that the Omicron variant brought to the Winter term, the MLTLC launched Maple League Live, a biweekly drop-in centre for faculty co-mentorship and support. The first of these sessions were warm and welcoming spaces where faculty asked for help untangling the challenges they faced. It is a space for faculty to be wholly themselves, as teachers, researchers, colleagues, leaders, and people with rich and challenging off-campus lives.

### **Maple League Mentorship Program Stewarded the Submission of Four 3M Faculty Dossiers**

This year the Maple League 3M Faculty Mentoring Program had ten applicants in the pipeline and successfully stewarded the submission of four dossiers from a total of ten faculty in the mentorship program. Each dossier takes between 150 - 400 hours of work, from gathering 40-50 letters of reference to the curation of evidence (of educational leadership, innovation, and teaching excellence), not to mention the difficult and time-consuming work of critical reflection.

There is also a significant amount of support that goes into these dossiers including:

- **‘How To’ Handbooks** for the 3M National Student Fellowship and the 3M National Faculty Fellowship: these handbooks are available to both nominees and nominators within the Maple League with the aim of improving the number and quality of applications from Maple League universities. These handbooks include excerpts from successful dossiers, tips and advice, and guidance on structure and critical reflective practice that constitutes a successful dossier
- **3M mentorship network:** 3M faculty and 3M students from Maple League universities work with nominators and nominees in the compilation of dossiers
- **Administrative support** in compiling dossiers, collecting reference letters, and copy-editing through the Jarislowsky Chairship
- **Webinars** and on-demand **digital resources** (such as [Teaching Dossiers Q&A with a 3M Teaching Fellow](#))
- A network of **institutional champions** help identify and support nominations (both faculty and student)
  - **3M Faculty Champions:** Dr. Jeff Banks (Acadia), Dr. Jessica Riddell (Bishop’s), Drs. Andrew Nurse, Robert Lapp, Elizabeth Wells (Mount Allison) & Dr. Angie Kolen (St. FX)
  - **3M Student Champions:** Dr. Matthew Lukeman (Acadia), Katie Bibbs (Bishop’s), Adam Christie, Drs. Andrew Nurse, Robert Lapp, Elizabeth Wells (Mount Allison) & Dr. Angie Kolen (St. FX)

### Maple League Communities of Practice Remain Active and Engaged

**ML Athletic Directors:** In January community of practice discussions, in addition to continuing best practice sharing, the Athletic Directors brought up the idea of doing more joint communications and branding in their spheres of control in order to increase Maple League awareness. The Sports Information Team will connect to brainstorm ideas and execution in the coming weeks.

**ML Registrars:** The Registrars are among the most active groups as they seek new ways to improve the user experience of the Maple League Shared Courses. Many steps have been taken at the suggestion of the Registrars to improve the timing and ease of registration for the courses including moving to a Fall/Winter call for courses instead of releasing calls on a semester basis, using the earliest registration date of all four schools with the latest add/drop date, and ensuring all necessary registrar team members are added to the ML Registrars Hub in Teams.

### III. External Engagement

#### **The Maple League Participates in the National Teaching And Learning Forum**



The Maple League’s OLTC Program Director, Matthew Dunleavy, and Faculty Excellence Lead, Neil Silcox recently submitted an article for the [National Teaching and Learning Forum](#). “Your Connection is Unstable!: Building Trust & Community Online” explores how to use the tools of virtual togetherness in ways that improve compassion, understanding, and our ability to connect to one another as people. This is yet another example of how the Maple League is establishing itself as a leader in imagining 21st century universities.

#### **OLTC Program is Heading to the EDC Conference**

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>, Matthew Dunleavy and Dr. Jessica Riddell will present at the Educational Developers Caucus Conference at the University of Waterloo, Ontario.



In “*Student Collaboration in Course (Re)Design*”) they share the findings from the Bishop’s pilot of the OLTC program and how it was adapted to spread across the Maple League for the 2021-22 academic year.

## Appendix A - 3M Teaching Fellowship Impact Letter

Dear ED and Presidents' circle of the Maple League,

In my ten years at Bishop's, and even longer as a researcher of mentorship and youth engagement, I have been discussing with leaders how to measure impact. Most of us agree that the impact that we systematically measure is too often the impact that matters the least. How do you reliably measure transformation? This year, I was among a cohort of Maple League faculty nominated to a 3M fellowship. Some of us will likely be successful- and this is an easy measurement, it will be useful for the reputational work that is necessary for us to continue our shared mission of excellence in Higher Education. For me, this process did so much more. Submitting that dossier reconnected me with my purpose. The dossier was a culmination of my impact that otherwise goes unmeasured and unacknowledged. It has given me a tool to remind me why the work, the emotional labour, and the commitment to excellence matters and has already given me more energy, focus, and drive to carry on.

I would never have embarked on this journey were it not for the investment of the Maple League to give me the infrastructure, the tools, and most importantly, the mentorship by Dr. Riddell, to put my name in the ring. By investing in faculty in this way we feel seen, we feel valued. Moreover, it bolsters our hope that the work, even the invisible work, matters. Those of us fortunate enough to join the fellowship are given an opportunity to learn from outstanding educators and get a "hope booster" every year, which we can bring back and share with our respective campuses. So, to me the impact of this investment might be hard to get on a report or put in a graph, but that doesn't mean it is not there.

I cannot repay the generosity of this investment of time, talent, or funds bestowed on me by Dr. Riddell and by you as leaders and decision-makers in the Maple League, I can only pay this forward in my collaborations with students and colleagues. That said, I wanted to name out loud the positive impact that your vision and investment has had on me. Thank you for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Sincerely,



Heather Lawford, PhD,

Canada Research Chair, Tier 2- Youth Development

Full Professor, Department of Psychology

Co-Director- Centre of Excellence in Youth Engagement at the Students Commission of Canada

Bishop's University