

Maple League of Universities Monthly Report
September 30, 2022



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Executive Director's Note:

The Maple League is wired for hope – as educators, learners, and as members of a collective who are curious about the ways in which we can better deliver high-quality undergraduate education.

I had a chance to speak to an international collective of researchers this month and found myself talking about the work we do in the Maple League as a series of “hope circuits” in the work of renewing and renovating our systems. During this session, we wove together a critical framework for hope and exposed conceptual tools to do the “hard hope” work in their own disciplinary, institutional, and UK contexts.

Conversation helps us ground our experiences and builds an emerging critical framework to explore what hope is: by clustering our experiences of hope in a *tour de table* style in the workshop, we moved into a space that is post-critical, i.e. builds, illuminates, and expands definitions of Hope rather than narrowing thinking to one particular theoretical framework. Moving from the “to-be” list to the “to-do” list helped us anchor hope as something that we live in our daily practice.

Over the course of the session, participants contributed the following thoughts:

What is hope?

Hope is necessary for survival

Hope is a promise of future;

Hope is a seed before it germinates;

Hope is another candle on the birthday cake.

Hope happens - we just need to recognize it...

Hope is personal, reflective and generative...

HOPE IS Positivity for the future

Hope is overcoming challenges

Hope is a feeling of trust

Hope grows from messy conversations about learning - and we may not see the endpoint in the moment, but we are confident it will be there.

During this session, I also shared the conceptual tools I have used in Maple League collaborations to build hope circuits into the systems, structures, and policies that animate our institutions:

10 principles to build hope circuits:

- Commit to Unlearning and re-learning
- Practice Divergent thinking
- Reframe authority and expertise
- Engage in Critical reflective practice
- Stay with the trouble
- Take a systems-level approach
- Build Intentional Community
- Embrace the Messy and emergent over the impervious and static
- Slow down when things get fast
- Be attentive to the language we use and the stories we tell

As a Shakespearean, I have written elsewhere that our deep engagement in theatre – as spectators, learners and patrons – provides a roadmap for how we produce meaning in communion with each other; and that this model can map onto the classroom, organizations, and society more generally (Riddell 2019). In Shakespeare’s plays, there is no poet persona or narrator to guide (or misguide) us. Instead, the world is created in real-time over the course of roughly three hours through exchanges amongst the players onstage. As spectators, witnesses, and participants, we are inextricably bound up in the creation of an ephemeral moment produced by bodies in space, language and animated by the force of our imaginative energies.

The first step in building better systems, therefore, is to acknowledge that meaning is created through multiple and often competing perspectives. This requires more improv than scripted theatre because the ground shifts under us as situations arise, and scenarios unfold: we must embrace Freire’s definition of critical hope as the “need for truth as an ethical quality of the struggle” (*Pedagogy of Hope* 3).

In the spirit of improv, we need to relentlessly respond with a “yes, and...” rather than a “no, but...” As you can see from this month’s report, the projects that have flourished all share the “yes, and” approach - and in doing so, build hope circuits for humans and communities to flourish.

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

I. Extraordinary Student Experiences

Better Together Launches with Student Presidents

The Fall Better Together season opened with an inspiring panel featuring key members of student leadership: Brendan Roberts (St. Francis Xavier Students' Union President), Camilla Rizzi (President of Bishop's Students' Representative Council), Rohin Minocha-McKenney (Mount Allison Students' Union President), Sadie McAlear (Acadia Students' Union President). Speaking to an audience of faculty and staff from across the ML, these student leaders had a clear vision for what students require from their faculty and administration.

As Sadie McAlear said, "Now more than ever, what students need... is compassion."



Rohin Minocha-McKenney added, "Students wear so many hats that if it was raining, they wouldn't be able to tell.... Taking some of those hats and bringing them into the classroom is a really big opportunity."

We are dedicated to continuing to bring student voices to the table in future Better Together sessions.

OLTC Program is Reanimated at BU

The success of the OLTC project to date has been dependent on external funding, pro-bono work, and a lot of goodwill. None of these are renewable resources. To make the OLTC sustainable in the long term, we have been in conversation with Business Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) for a new funding envelope (\$210,000 for 16 months). The conversations are progressing to the final stages, but we must ensure we have the systems in place to support the project in the longer term.

In the meantime, Bishop's University has reanimated the OLTC program and is hiring eight students to support faculty for Winter 2023 course planning. Jessica Riddell, in her role as Jarislowsky Chair, has partnered with Jason Vierti (the new director of Information technology

Services) and Loch Baillie (former OLTC and BU alumna) to recruit, interview, hire, and train this new cohort. In collaboration with the new director of Experiential Learning (EL), Ghislain Demers, and engaged faculty like Dr. Jamie Crooks and the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning, they have mapped out a longer-term strategy to ensure the institutional sustainability of the program. There is a proposal under consideration to create a clear pathway from curricular experiential learning (EL) to employment and transformative work-integrated learning (WIL). Turning the orientation into a credential – i.e. a three-credit or six-credit course – offered in the spring term (May) provides the necessary 80 hours of training to train OLTCs. When students graduate from the program, they would then be eligible to apply for co-curricular employment with ITS to act as OLTCs for faculty. In May 2023, the goal would be to enroll 25 students in a 3 or 6-credit spring intensive course.

A longer-term goal would be to offer the course regularly to provide students across the Maple League with quality structured and EL opportunities that focus on the development of future-facing skills that support transitions into the 21st-century job market (both within and outside the post-secondary industry), including digital literacy, technological skills, and social-emotional skills.

Goals include:

- Create WIL opportunities that seek to engage underrepresented student communities (specifically GBA+, Indigenous, Newcomer, Persons with Disabilities, LGBTQ+2 Community, BIPOC, first-generation, international students, etc.) and factor in barriers, needs, and other factors of lived experience into the iteration of program design
- Develop partnerships with senior and junior faculty, IT departments, EL and EDID specialists, and multiple stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of this program long term
- Continue to develop, evaluate, and iterate on an innovative EL → WIL model that will eventually become scalable to other liberal arts and higher education institutions across Canada, and act as a potential revenue generator for the university
- Continue to explore the value of a micro-credential or badge system for OLTCs that helps WIL students develop a suite of skills and competencies in a co-curricular record for future-facing employment
- Research on high-impact educational practices or the design of post-COVID classrooms via the OLTC EeL/WIL model

Maple League Shared Courses Help Students Connect across Institutional Boundaries

September saw the launch of five new Maple League Shared Courses for the Fall term, which, along with the five courses slated for the Winter term, will make for the most Share Courses offered in a single year, and we have had 16 students registered for these courses. The Fall Shared Courses are

- *Nutrition in Metabolic Disease* with Dr. Ruth Harvie (StFX)
- *Sustainable Food Systems & Diets* with Dr. Liesel Carlsson (Acadia)
- *Statistical Learning* with Dr. Hugh Chipman (Acadia)
- *Cultural Memory in Post-1985 Germany* with Dr. Renata Schellenberg (MTA)
- *Aesthetics of Sport & Dance* with Dr. Jason Holt (Acadia)

The process itself has been smoother and clearer, as evidenced by far fewer emails from students and staff asking for help or clarification. We are gearing up to launch our call for Shared Courses for the 2023/2024 year, which we hope will build more inter-campus links between students and faculty.

New Contributors to Maple League projects

We are benefitting from two new partners - newly graduated students from the Maple League - to help us steer existing projects and animate new ones. Funded through the Jarislowsky Chairship, Loch Baillie and Cécilia Alain are already very experienced in the field of student-centred education and undergraduate leadership.



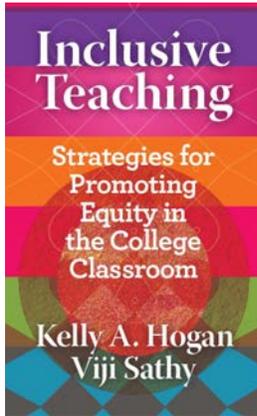
Cécilia Alain (BU Alumna 2022) has been collaborating with Dr. Riddell since 2020. She acted as the OLTC's Student Champion at Bishop's in 2021-22 and is now continuing her work with the Maple League as a Postgraduate Research Fellow funded through the Jarislowsky Chair. She supports the team's research with some data analysis, literature reviews, social media support, and a bit of graphic design. Cécilia Alain is also helping with the 3M National Teaching and Student fellowships process this year.



Loch Baillie (BU Alumnus 2021) has been working with Dr. Riddell since 2020. He was one of the original Online Learning & Technology Consultants and has recently returned to the program as the Jarislowsky Postgraduate Fellow in Instructional Design. Loch is currently hiring and training the third cohort of OLTCs to support professors during the Winter 2023 semester. He

has also collaborated with Dr. Riddell on a number of courses, including ENG225: Shakesperience.

II. Faculty and Staff Engagement



A Record-Breaking Start to the Fall Book Club

Interest in this fall's reading of *Inclusive Teaching* through the Maple League Book Club was record-breaking, with over 80 individuals registering for the opportunity to connect with colleagues from across the ML and engage with cutting-edge scholarship on EDID. (the book was published only six weeks before the Book Club's first meeting.) It is exciting and inspiring to see so many faculty and staff from the Maple League carve time out of their busy schedules to engage in the hard work of making our campuses more inclusive and accessible!

Micro-Certificate Welcomes an Intrepid New Cohort

Following the success of the pilot year of the Maple League Micro-Certificate in Teaching and Learning, a call went out to assemble a new cohort for the 2022/2023 year.

- 45 faculty applied to the program this year
- Interest in this program more than tripled from last year.
- We've grown the cohort from 12 to 16 participants, with even distribution from each school.

Throughout the year, participants will engage with programming offered by the Virtual Maple League Teaching and Learning Centre and will engage in critical self-reflection, as well as group conversation and co-mentorship. Each participant will also develop a capstone project they will work on throughout the year. This year's cohort consists of:

From StFX

- Tracey Everitt
- Ruth Harvey
- Rhonda Semple
- Margaret Vail

From Mount Allison

- Anne Berthold
- Kiera Galway
- Emily Keenlyside
- Justin Leifer

From Bishop's

- Jenna Buck
- Jessica MacEachern
- Yasir Malik
- Marila Mariano

From Acadia

- Birdie Bezanson
- Sharron Churchill
- Jennifer Kershaw
- Christine Klavec

3M Mentoring Network is in Full Swing

The call for 3M National Teaching and Student Fellowships is now out. The deadline for the faculty 3M Fellowship is November 15. The deadline and parameters of the award this year have changed, and our 3M faculty mentoring network is active:

- We are currently working with four faculty members as they prepare dossiers for submission.
- The 3M Student Mentoring Network is now being mobilized in advance of the January 31, 2023, deadline. A call for applications has been sent to students, and resources have been circulated to our Student Mentors in each institution. Resources include a handbook and a Q&A guide to prepare students' dossiers for submission, as well as a link to a recorded Better Together session explaining the application process to students.
- 3M Student Mentors include Katie Bibbs (BU), Erin Austen (St. FX), Shelly Colette (MtA), and Matt Lukeman and James Sanford (Acadia).

We have some wonderful 3M student alumni who have agreed to help mentor students this year. We will keep you posted!

Maple League Athletics Directors Welcome New Member and Set a Focus for the Year

The September Athletic Directors meeting welcomed the new Mount Allison Athletic Director Jacques Bellefleur. Jacques started his new role on August 29th after coming from Université Sainte-Anne and has an appreciated sense of enthusiasm for all things Maple League. He replaces Pierre Arsenault, who took on the role of CEO of USPORTS earlier this year.



The Athletic Directors table is focussed this year on closing the gap between Athletics and Academics and focusing on things like risk management, prevention of sexual violence, and Anti-Racism initiatives.

III. External Engagement

Maple League Hosts: Dr. Ivan Joseph Emphasises the Value of Social Cohesion



Through Maple League Hosts, we bring luminary thinkers from outside of the Maple League to share some of their wisdom with us. September saw us welcome Dr. Ivan Joseph, Vice-President at Wilfrid Laurier University, and celebrated author, coach, and TED speaker with over 25 million views. In his talk “Finding Your North Star”, he emphasized the importance of social cohesion for individuals and institutions and commended the

Maple League for its work in innovative undergraduate education. This session brought in over 70 registrants from across the Maple League and from 27 outside institutions.

Dr. Riddell and the Maple League Recognized by Forces Avenir

Executive Director Dr. Jessica Riddell was honoured at the Forces Avenir Gala in Quebec City on September 27 as the winner of the ‘Avenir Personnel Engagé’ award. The ‘Avenir Personnel Engagé’ award recognizes a university faculty or staff member who, in addition to their teaching and research responsibilities, has contributed to the enhancement of student engagement at their institution and in the wider community. Jessica was nominated for her commitment to teaching excellence and to transforming higher education through accessibility, inclusion, empathy and hope. Her work to co-create the Online Learning and Technology Consultants program, launched at Bishop’s during the pandemic and subsequently expanded across the other Maple League universities, was particularly noted.



Maple League Communications Directors Collaborate on Fall MacLean’s Feature

During September, the Communications Directors collaboratively designed a full-page feature for MacLean’s Magazine highlighting this year’s 3M Winners and communicating the value of a Maple League education. Sherri Turner, the Director of Communications at Acadia University, took the lead on coordinating freelance designers and relaying messaging, images, and edits.

Building Hope Circuits through Conversation: Plenary talk for the International

Dr. Jessica Riddell was the plenary speaker for an international group of researchers on September 21, 2022, to talk about the Maple League. She was invited to speak to the Impactful SoTL Educational Enterprise Collective (ISEEC), hosted at the University of Hertfordshire and Supported by the Journal of Impact Cultures. In that session,



ISEEC 21 September 2022
In this session we were honoured to have Professor Jessica Riddell facilitate an engaging discussion around Hope and challenge.
© ISEEC: New SoTL, Spring term meeting Wednesday, 21 September at Sun UK time: 09:00AM/12:00PM Meeting Recording

she outlined the efforts to rewire and renew systems, structures, and policies to create spaces that are inclusive and hospitable within universities. Click [here](#) to read her contribution to the *Journal of Impact Cultures* about the conversations where we build hope circuits.

Changes to Governance Leads the Maple League into a New Phase

As we move into the next phase of working together, the MLPC has designed a new governance model that will allow this academic consortium to continue to grow and become more deeply ingrained in our respective institutions. In its first phase (2012-2018), the Maple League was a primarily top-down organization led by the four presidents. In its second phase (2018-2023), under the leadership of Dr. Jessica Riddell, the Maple League has become more deeply embedded in the four universities. The consortium has grown with a proliferation of communities of practice, innovative initiatives, grant applications, and external funding and partnerships. This inter-institutional collaboration has now reached an inflection point – a moment of risk and of opportunity. A new governance structure - with the Vice Presidents Academic and Provosts taking the lead as the new governing board – will further embed this inter-institutional collaboration into the academic missions of the four universities. At its core, the Maple League is founded on the conviction that by working together, we can strengthen each of our institutions to the benefit of our students, faculty, staff, administrators and governors.

The two guiding questions that animate all Maple League collaborations are:

- What can we do together that we cannot do on our own? and
- How does working together enhance what we do on our own?

We are excited to see the VP Academics and Provosts take the lead as the new governing board of the Maple League as we move into a new phase of leadership in the design and delivery of quality undergraduate education in Canada and around the world.