



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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TEACHING EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

Humber College is committed to the highest quality in the teaching and learning experience, and implements an extensive approach to new faculty training. All new full-time faculty, counsellors, and librarians hired at Humber College participate in a mandatory two-year professional development program that exposes participants to the multilayered responsibilities of teaching in a postsecondary institution. Expansions of college programs and approaching retirements have combined to result in significant hiring with 146 full-time positions being filled over the past three years. Our new members work through various courses, completing a range of activities and assignments, all geared to maximizing their effectiveness in the classroom.

New full-time hires start the week before many college personnel are due back in the fall, spending a three-day residential component off site. This allows for members to meet others in their cohort and begin an orientation to their new full-time career. They practice and record micro-teaching sessions in small groups, experiment with varying learning styles and best practices, listen to performance expectations from an administrative panel, and meet and network with colleagues from various sectors of the college. Upon return to campus there are opportunities to meet the student government and senior administrators, and connect with the individual who will serve as their mentor for the next several years. There is also a program designed to expose them to the various services and personnel representing supporting resources for students.

The first year of the program is fairly intensive with weekly meetings to explore issues and best practices; learn the pedagogical foundations of preparation and delivery of materials; and explore assessment and evaluation and a range of teaching strategies, often modeled by exemplary faculty. Toward the end of the first year, another micro-teaching session helps them reflect on the development of their teaching skills and set a learning plan in place to address areas they would like to develop further.

Year 2 of the program is a more independent journey with support and ownership for follow-through resting more directly within the respective school or department. In this phase, each participant is responsible for an educational project, which is an activity, product, or process that ultimately adds to the learning experience for the students. This may mean it connects to the classroom or support services available, refines delivery methods, aids in faculty development, and involves community partnerships or whatever is deemed appropriate. By the end of this year, each participant is expected to have produced a professional teaching portfolio, attended advanced educational seminars, and documented leadership in some capacity outside of the individual classroom context.

Ultimately, the Teaching Excellence Program is designed to provide curriculum experts with the tools, resources, and capabilities to be effective instructors, maximizing the student-learning opportunities.

Participant Feedback

"I'm sure I'm not alone in remarking that many of us come to teach at the post-secondary level with a wealth of industry experience and knowledge but little teaching experience and no training in pedagogy. Thrust into the classroom setting, it does not take long to realize that whatever background we possess in our subject areas, even with some facility for speaking to groups, the challenge of teaching successfully is far broader, deeper, and more complex than that. TEP has been invaluable first of all for acknowledging this challenge and confronting it directly. While we may all have understood that teaching is itself a profession, TEP actually put before us the specific resources and tools that any profession requires, and to which many of us never had been exposed previously. Of course, we have only begun to plumb these resources at this early stage. But through TEP, we know where they are, what they are, and something about learning to use them."

—Salem Alaton, Professor, School of Media Studies

"The Teaching Excellence Program at Humber has been extremely valuable, and I feel strongly that it expe-



dited the acquisition of teaching skills that would have otherwise taken many years to figure out ‘the hard way.’ The focus was well paced and very practical, allowing me to apply and test out concepts, often through trial and error. This enabled real learning, which absolutely improved my confidence as a new teacher and exposed me to a variety of tools and techniques. I also need to say that TEP was important because it exposed me to many excellent new and experienced teachers who modeled great teaching and offered a sympathetic ear and helpful thoughts regarding some of the tougher behavioural issues we struggle with. I find that the nature of teaching here includes a risk of becoming somewhat isolated...It’s potentially a lot of independent work. TEP was critical to a new member because it immediately established connection and a sense of belonging to Humber and colleagues. Very important for those lonely times when a class may not have played out as planned...Great to know others are facing these challenges, too, and that we are here to support each other.”
—Jeff Short, Professor, School of Business

“I think for me the biggest bonus was this—although I had been teaching for several years, and was a Marketing practitioner for over 20 years, the TEP program helped me expand my lessons from ‘fun and anecdotal’ to ‘learner-centric.’ The workshops helped me build my lesson plans based on learning objectives and strategies. I discovered many ways to cover content that meet various learning styles. The classes are still fun, but now I’m sure that learning is really happening. That was my real area for development, and I feel that the TEP program and other professional development initiatives continue to help me exceed that objective.”
—Suzanne Ross, Professor, School of Business

“I think that the didactic sections provided portals into subjects that we were not skilled in or perhaps were not even aware of. It means that we have been able to quickly prioritize where we need and want to put our time and energies in making our teaching better. The group work gave us the opportunities to see teaching, colleagues, and students across disciplines and campuses at Humber...an excellent eye and mind opener. And fun, too.”
—Marta Bozdek, Professor, Health Sciences

Deborah Dunbar, Faculty Development Advisor

For further information, contact the author at Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning, 205 Humber College Blvd., Etobicoke, ON, M9W 5L7 CANADA. Email: deborah.dunbar@humber.ca

Suane D. Roueche, Editor

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