

TEACHING & LEARNING

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Saint Mary's University Teaching Scholar Program

Dr. Terry Murphy, Vice-President, Academic & Research

In recent years, the concept of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) has attracted a great deal of attention in higher education and has been integrated into the strategic plans of universities world-wide. It assumes that individual faculty, academic departments, even whole institutions take a scholarly approach to teaching and learning – from reflecting on practice and identifying challenges, to research and publication in the field.

Universities which encourage this scholarly approach have established a number of programs which support this work. Faculty Associate designations, Teaching Fellows, Teaching Scholars – all provide opportunities for individual faculty to identify a 'teaching challenge' and to focus some of their scholarly activity in this area.

The Teaching Scholar Program

I am delighted to announce that a Teaching Scholar Program has been established at Saint Mary's University beginning with the 2006/07 academic year. The Teaching Scholar will conduct scholarly activities (i.e., research, conference and workshop presentations, individual and group consultations) with a view to supporting and promoting excellence in teaching and learning in the university community.

The program consists of a one course reduction in teaching for an academic year to undertake scholarly work in an area related to an identified need at Saint Mary's and to the interests of the Teaching Scholar.

Teaching Scholar 2006-2007

I am equally pleased to announce that the Teaching Scholar at Saint Mary's for 2006-2007 will be Dr. Shelagh Crooks of the Philosophy Department. Dr. Crooks will conduct teaching scholarship on two fronts: *The Evaluation and Assessment of Teaching*, and *The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*.

The Teaching Scholar will be associated with the Office of Instructional Development and will be supported by the Director, Margaret-Anne Bennett, and OID staff.

The Evaluation and Assessment of Teaching:

In this capacity, Dr. Crooks' role will be to provide support for the implementation of Saint Mary's new teaching evaluation system. This will involve:

- understanding the practical significance of the conceptual shift in the purpose and outcome of the new system at Saint Mary's (given that the university is moving from an *exclusively summative* to a *primarily formative* evaluation) and communicating that understanding to faculty and academic administrators;
- developing a facility in reading and interpreting the formative data from the instructor's form, developing skill in deploying the strategies for teaching improvement as they are described in the pedagogical literature, and providing information and skills development to faculty through workshops and consultations;
- providing guidance to academic administrators in interpreting the data collected via the Summary Report.

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

(SoTL): In this capacity, Dr. Crooks will provide support for the development of SoTL at Saint Mary's as follows:

- developing an understanding of the concept of "Scholarship of Teaching and Learning" and interpreting this concept in the Saint Mary's context (i.e., in light of the strategic plan of the university, and the *Collective Agreement*) and communicating this understanding to faculty and academic administrators;
- drawing the attention of faculty to possibilities for serious research in the Teaching and Learning field, and creating an awareness of the ways in which specific disciplines can contribute to inquiry in Teaching and Learning;
- supporting individual faculty in the development of their own SoTL projects;
- creating an environment of acceptance of and respect for SoTL in the University in general.



Dr. Shelagh Crooks with Dr. Herbert Marsh, Oxford University, at the University of Manitoba conference *The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: An Evidence-Based Perspective*, April, 2006. Dr. Marsh is the developer of the Students' Evaluation of Educational Quality (SEEQ) upon which Saint Mary's new evaluation instrument is based.

Research Project: In addition to the scholarly and academic support functions identified above, Dr. Crooks will conduct a research project in Teaching and Learning from the discipline perspective of philosophy. She has chosen to investigate the Student Learning Portfolio and its possible use as a tool for developing students' abilities to identify and understand the kinds of cognitive processes they utilize in the acquisition of knowledge.

Teaching Scholar Program – Ongoing

In subsequent years, a new Teaching Scholar will be identified to address a teaching/learning challenge associated with Saint Mary's priorities and initiatives as outlined in the Academic Plan (experiential learning, active learning, student success, etc).

Criteria for selection, and information on the application process, will be available by December, 2006.

Stay in touch

We welcome your comments and suggestions on this and future issues of *Teaching & Learning*.
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