

Developing Institutional Educational Frameworks – The Royal Roads University Experience

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Over the last 30 years, the post-secondary environment has become highly competitive and highly-diversified (Coates, 2017; Teichler, 2012; D'Andrea and Gosling, 2007; Bok, 2003). As a result, universities and colleges constantly seek ways to differentiate themselves and help potential students understand their institution's unique strengths and characteristics. Communicating key aspects of an institution's educational identity, however, can serve many more purposes beyond supporting competitive marketing and recruitment efforts. In addition to framing a message to prospective students, an explicit articulation of the institutional identity connects current students, faculty, and alumni, and is helpful to those responsible for representing the university to funding agencies, accrediting bodies and other governmental agencies, research grantors, and philanthropically-minded individuals and groups. A clear understanding of institutional identity is helpful in making sense of both internal and external organizational dynamics and changes, supporting the development and reinforcement of an organizational image, supporting further organization-wide innovation and creativity as well as fostering and promoting employee and constituent engagement (Stensaker, 2015).

D'Andrea and Gosling (2007) suggest that academic identity is complex and for most teachers and researchers involves multiple affiliations including personal, disciplinary, professional, institutional and what it means in general to be an 'academic'. They suggest that identity is a component of what Bourdieu (1998), cited in D'Andrea and Gosling, (2007) calls 'habitus':

. . . an acquired system of preferences, of principles, of vision and division (what is usually called taste) and also a durable system of cognitive structures (which are essentially the product of internalisation of objective structures) and of schemes of action which orient the perception of the situation and the appropriate response. (p. 25)

A university's institutional identity is a way of describing the culture of an organization related to the collective meanings associated with "shared attitudes, values, goals and practices" (MacDonald, 2013, p. 153). As such, articulating an institutional identity can be an important tool for promoting organizational sense-making, encouraging institutional affiliation, supporting change leadership efforts as well as the shaping of long-term identity and culture (Stensaker, 2015; MacDonald, 2013).

D'Andrea and Gosling (2007) note that today's universities are placing greater emphasis on improving teaching and learning while contending with a host of challenges, such as a more diverse student population, increased globalization and internationalization, an influx of alternative delivery models including distance and blended learning, increased competition for students, the rise of corporate entrepreneurialism, heightened accountability measures, and , more emphasis on the marketization, commodification, and vocationalization of education. They advocate for a "whole-institution" (p.5) approach to addressing these challenges where the interconnectedness between ideas, strategies, and innovations can have the greatest positive impact on learning and teaching. An "institutional educational framework" can serve as a very helpful starting place for addressing and perhaps thriving with these challenges. It can assist faculty, staff and senior administrators in a university describe or articulate the characteristics related to learning and teaching that are most relevant to the unique educative mission of their institution. Articulating a common and institution-wide understanding of the

unique mix of history, learning approaches, curriculum, teaching strategies, and educational practices that give rise to a particularly institutional identity is a laudable exercise but often runs counter to the traditional faculty allegiances that tend to be aligned with their own disciplines and specializations (D'Andrea and Gosling, 2007). Thus, we have included a case study in this paper that hopefully, helps to illustrate that local allegiances and institution-wide identities do not have to compete but can be quite complementary and mutually-strengthening.

In the first part of this paper, we describe the attributes of institutional education frameworks, explore the reasons why such frameworks are important, and articulate the benefits of developing them. Next, we present the Royal Roads University Learning and Teaching Model (2013) as an example of an institutional framework and describe the models' rationale, core characteristics, development process, and some of the key lessons learned in its implementation.

Description and Rationale

Although more established definitions for an institutional framework exist (see International Ecological Engineering Society, 2016; Lee, 2014; Ostrom, 2007; Ostrom, 1990; Oakerson, 1986), in this paper, we define an institutional educational framework (IEF), as a description of the current and agreed-upon learning, teaching, and research characteristics that help define the unique identity of a university. The IEF articulates the current or intended qualities and contexts of the learning and teaching process in the institution, its intersection with student and faculty research, and how the administrative, resource, and technological infrastructure of the university are engaged and support student learning. IEFs can be useful in helping to define academic priorities, in describing the current learning and teaching model, or in clarifying the institution's unique qualities and characteristics related to the learning and teaching enterprise. As result, IEFs provide a means of connecting the university's mission and values and the learning and teaching practices that support them. "Agreed-upon" implies that the process of developing the framework involves some degree of collective examination of the key learning and teaching characteristics that result in a coherent and common understanding of the unique educational qualities of the institution.

IEFs are still quite rare in colleges or universities although robust and illustrative examples exist at the University of Calgary (2016) in Calgary, Canada; Open University of Catalonia (2015) in Barcelona; Utrecht University (2016) in the Netherlands; University of New South Wales (2014) in Sydney, Australia; Tecnológico de Monterrey (2015) in Mexico, and Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (2011) in Lima, Peru. Based on the number of new educational frameworks that have emerged over the last five years, the development of these frameworks is becoming more prevalent worldwide as universities and colleges strive to define, articulate and, sometimes, preserve a unique institutional identity within the broader post-secondary landscape. Our review of these frameworks indicates that many of them combine research from the current literature on learning, teaching, and pedagogical innovation with an inductively-generated description of the educational principles, characteristics, or elements that guide learning and teaching within the specific institution.

Why would university officials want to develop an IEF? Coates (2017) observes that the current demand for higher education worldwide is expanding at a rate never experienced before. Meeting this demand requires increased institutional transparency that helps to demystify the learning and teaching processes that actually occur in universities. Coates defines transparency as “people and organisations thinking, acting and reporting in ways readily understandable by relevant others” (p.5). An argument can be made that articulating a pedagogically-centric university-wide identity is a fundamental step in increasing transparency because it surfaces assumptions and tacit understandings inherent in learning and teaching practices that can be examined and debated in a dialogic manner. Hopefully, these discussions will pinpoint and clarify shared perspectives and commonly-held perspectives on key pedagogical characteristics that can help define an institution’s unique approach to learning and teaching. Coates (2017) argues that the proliferation and expansion of different kinds of delivery models in today’s universities reinforce the need for clarity and transparency in articulating these models.

Academic transparency is particularly important and relevant to distance and blended learning because the learning and teaching processes inherent in these delivery modes still remain rather mysterious to many potential learners despite their increasing popularity (Veletsianos, 2010a). Reflecting on the Wesch (2008) lecture at the University of Manitoba on new models of learning, Wellburn and Eib (2010) point out that many distance education courses and programs have differing assumptions and conceptualizations of relevant learning environments that traditional approaches to learning and teaching. For instance, many distance educators in today’s universities teach and conduct research “based on the notion that powerful learning experiences are social, immersive, engaging, and participatory” (Veletsianos, 2010b). Without articulating these different perspectives and practices through the examination of an institution’s pedagogical identity, there is the risk that these newer perspectives and innovations will not receive the profile they deserve. On the other hand, bringing these newer ideas to the conversation table enables those administrators and instructors not familiar with distance, online, or blended learning to be exposed to newer pedagogical models and practices.

Developing an IEF also helps the collective university community deepen the explorations and conversations about what university mission statements actually mean in their specific institutional milieu. D’Andrea and Gosling (2007) point out that almost all university mission statements make claims about offering excellent teaching or a high quality learning environment but “it is less than obvious that institutions are either clear about what these goals mean or actually pursuing these goals with strategic vision”(p.1). D’Andrea and Gosling (2007) advocate for an institution-wide strategic approach that helps universities place greater emphasis on improving teaching and enhancing student learning. Academics have to be centrally involved in the conversations that support these holistic efforts if the potential for increasing the reach of engagement and involvement within the institution can be reached. This is a goal that is highly consistent with the thrust of this paper. Too often, recruitment, communications, and marketing specialists are charged with the responsibility of communicating the institutionally-unique characteristics to prospective students, industry representatives, and community partners. Faculty members usually play a more significant role at the school, department or program level in helping to define important learning and teaching characteristics to support key decisions by prospective students. Although both of these kinds of roles are important, we argue that a more integrative model that

supports the development of a more broadly-based learning community at the institutional level can have many greater benefits to the university (D'Andrea and Gosling, 2007; Huber and Hutchings, 2005).

Another purpose of developing an IEF relates to the development and promotion of institutional coherence. In his recent book on educational systems change, Fullan (2015) describes coherence as “the shared depth of understanding about the purpose and nature of the work. Coherence, then, is what is in the minds and actions of people individually and especially collectively” (p.1-2). Achieving shared understandings about the purpose and nature of learning and teaching at an institutional level in a university can be a tall order given the factors that mitigate against it such as the prevalence of a loosely-coupled and distributed system of authority, power, and control; a discipline-based organizational structure; and the individual autonomy in thought and practice that underlies the principles of academic freedom (Buller, 2015). Coates (2017) aptly describe this challenge:

Higher education is fundamentally complex. As it grows in scope and scale there is a need for more information about what it is doing and delivering. As a quick game of ‘higher education trivia’ can reveal, even a room full of experts can find themselves hard-pressed to answer even the most basic questions about the systems, institutions and people they work with. The majority of academics tend to ground their work only within their discipline, and can be challenged by non-departmental facts and figures such as the number of students at their institution, or details of senior executives, let alone the name and nature of their nation’s accreditation or quality agencies. (p.6)

Despite this challenge, Fullan (2015) argues when coherence-making is done purposely and systematically through a collective meaning-making process, it can be a powerful and self-sustaining means to improve quality and effectiveness:

We have come to call this phenomenon the ability for those in the system to “talk the walk.” We all know about “walk the talk,” a good quality but not sufficient by itself. When people can talk the walk, you know that it is the real McCoy. When people can explain themselves specifically, they become clearer; when they can explain the ideas and actions to each other, they become mutually influential. When large numbers of people come to do this over time they socialize newcomers and the whole thing becomes sustainable. (p.2)

Another advantage of developing an IEF is that the process of coherence-making usually involves a substantive cross-disciplinary and cross-department exchange of ideas about learning and teaching at the university. This process helps to move teaching from an isolated, mostly private endeavour to a level which is more consonant with Shulman’s (1993) notion of “teaching as community property” (p.7) where instructional ideas and practices are captured, shared, and further enhanced by a larger community of practitioners. With continued leadership support, these public-minded explorations can lead to the creation and development of an institution-wide teaching commons defined by Huber and Hutchings (2005) as “an emergent conceptual space for exchange and community among faculty, students, and all others committed to learning as an essential activity of life in contemporary democratic

society” (p.1). They suggest that a teaching commons not only can be space for exchanging ideas but can also foster reflection, critique, and innovation as well as the proliferation and diffusion of new ideas about learning and teaching, thereby increasing “pedagogical intelligence” (p.116) through the whole university community.

Table 1 provides a summary of the key benefits of developing institutional frameworks. According to our review of the frameworks above, most are established with the view that they will be revisited, augmented, enhanced, or revised over time in response to changes in the strategic mandate of the institution, to keep pace with new developments in learning and teaching theory and practice, and/or to respond to shifting policy requirements at the national, provincial or state level or changes in accreditation requirements. Two examples of current frameworks that clearly display this evolution over time are the frameworks for Chadron State College (2014) and the Open University of Catalonia (2015).

Table 1: Benefits of Institutional Frameworks (adapted from Hamilton, Márquez, & Agger-Gupta, 2013a)

- Serve as descriptive, not prescriptive guides to the learning and teaching characteristics of a university
 - Promote conversations and dialogue about learning, teaching and program planning;
 - Guide future infrastructure, resource and policy decisions related to learning and teaching;
 - Inform professional development strategies and activities;
 - Help in course design and program development;
 - Support faculty recruitment and selection efforts;
 - Make tacit assumptions about the institutional learning and teaching culture more explicit; and
 - Promote a stronger sense of coherence in learning and teaching approaches across the university.
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It is important to note that frameworks are not plans but can serve as the basis for a plan. For instance, the IEF from Ohio State University (2014) is described as serving as “a structure to guide change over time, ensuring that the academic missions drives the physical environment, and connecting ideas and information to implementation.” In fact, the framework can serve as an anchor point for the development and implementation of successive plans because it helps to flesh out the academic mission of the institution and describe its essential qualities as they pertain to the learning and teaching functions, services, and programs.

Like any change leadership initiative, IEFs take time and effort to develop and validate within the organization but if carried out with a clear purpose, strong leadership support, and broadly-based consultation can be highly beneficial in helping to develop and re-affirm a strong and unique sense of institutional academic identity (Buller, 2015; D’Andrea and Gosling, 2007).

In the next section, we provide an example of a recent effort at Royal Roads University to create an Institutional Educational Framework—the *Royal Roads Learning and Teaching Model (LTM)*. After a brief overview of the university, we will introduce the Learning and Teaching Model, describe the process of development, share some next steps for its future development, and reflect on our lessons learned in the development process.

The Learning and Teaching Model at Royal Roads University: A Case Study

Background

Royal Roads University (RRU) in Victoria, British Columbia is a Canadian public university that specializes in applied and professional programs that are mainly aimed at learners who are already in the workforce. When the university was created in 1996, the government of British Columbia was responding to a need to serve those whose access to advanced education was limited within more traditional universities both in terms of labour market need and mode of education structure and delivery. The university was given a mandate from the government of British Columbia to respond to the emerging needs of a changing world and workforce. The enabling provincial legislation was very clear:

“The purposes of the university are

- (a) to offer certificate, diploma and degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels in solely the applied and professional fields,
- (b) to provide continuing education in response to the needs of the local community, and
- (c) to maintain teaching excellence and research activities that support the university's programs in response to the labour market needs of British Columbia.” (Royal Roads University Act, 1996)

To achieve this mandate, programs were created which are interdisciplinary to maximize the learning experience for those students who seek to make a personal and professional difference in their lives and the lives of others. Meeting the needs of professionals and aspiring professionals necessitated the development and evolution of an approach to designing and delivering undergraduate and graduate degrees as well as professional certificate programs that focuses on relevance, application to practice, theory-practice connections, and the responsiveness to changing labour market needs and conditions. The university now offers 50 interdisciplinary programs to over 5,000 students with over 7

0% of the programs serving learners at the graduate level.

Over the last 20 years, the university has developed a national and international reputation for delivering programs designed specifically for aspiring and experienced professionals who want to advance in the professional careers. The expertise of industry, the public sector, and institutional partners are incorporated into program development and instructional delivery to increase program relevance and quality.

At RRU, the typical student is between 30-40 years old and is well established in his or her career. Through their collaborative, experiential, and applied learning experience, students focus on enhancing their leadership capacity, their complex problem solving and solution finding abilities and their systems thinking capabilities for the betterment of their home, communities, and organizations. RRU relies on a blended learning model in order for students to stay in their home organizations and communities, and equally important, for those students to integrate their real world organizational and community experience into their academic programs of study and vice-versa. This model allows for short intensive residencies on campus combined with online courses that integrate the strengths of team-based, applied learning, and experiential practices. Although most other universities now offer alternative modes of delivery for some of their programming, when RRU was created it was not the case. The blended model remains our primary mode of delivery across all of our schools. Digital delivery and internet-based technology-enhanced learning are fundamental to the instructional and program design process.

Complementary to its teaching programs, RRU has developed a research program that is almost exclusively applied, responding to the economic, social, and environmental concerns of British Columbians and beyond. The research program is framed around the strategic themes of learning and innovation, thriving organizations, and sustainable societies and communities.

Since the university's inception, the design of programs has evolved to support and reinforce its mandate. The general approach to teaching and the ways in which or university provides support for students have evolved over the last 20 years. During this time, it was not uncommon to hear faculty, staff, and administrators make reference to "our learning model". This phrase became embedded in the vernacular of university culture which meant that, in the past, most faculty and staff could articulate a version of the model verbally but there had been very little actual documentation of the specific characteristics of the university-wide approach. In describing this rather tacit model and the lack of an overt articulation of it, the university's Academic VP Dr. Steve Grundy once quipped that "it was our secret sauce with the emphasis on 'secret'". Finally, in 2013, the university's Academic Council recognized the benefits of commissioning a team of administrators and faculty members to engage in the necessary research and consultation process that would lead to a clear and overt articulation of the model.

The next section provides a brief overview of some of key elements of the current description of the model.²

Overview of the Learning and Teaching Model at Royal Roads University

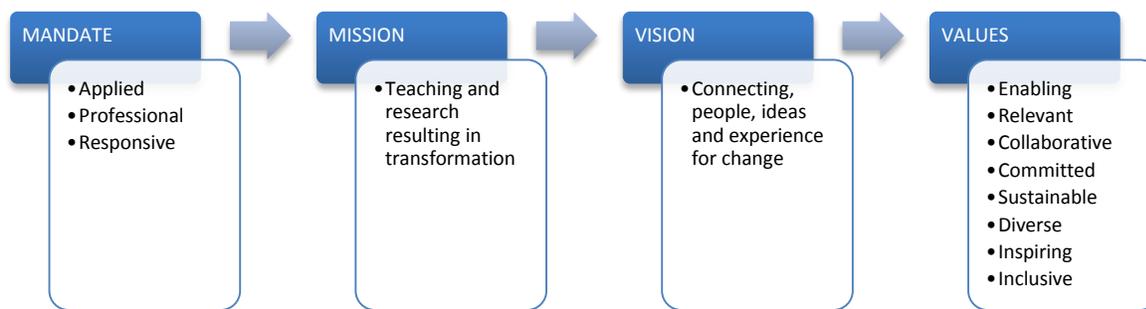
At its most fundamental level, an institutional educational framework describes the current, robust, and agreed-upon educational characteristics that help define the unique identity of the university or college, especially pertaining to its core educative mission. It provides a means of connecting the university's mission and values and the learning and teaching practices that support them. The RRU Learning and

² A detailed version of the description of the Learning and Teaching Model is found at <http://media.royalroads.ca/media/marketing/viewbooks/2013/learning-model/mobile/index.html#p=8>.

Teaching Model was intended to describe the distinctive characteristics of the current university-wide approach to learning and teaching (Royal Roads University, 2013). It included an inductively-generated description of the educational principles, characteristics, or elements that guide learning and teaching combined with a summary of the relevant and current research literature on learning, teaching, and pedagogical innovation.

The description of the model begins with the university's mission to immerse students in a learning context that facilitates personal and professional transformation and allows them to succeed in a global workplace. As illustrated in Figure 1, a set of values emerged from this context that guided the development of our learning and teaching framework.

Figure 1: A Strategic Focus on Learning and Teaching



Foundational Frameworks. At the heart of the student experience at RRU is a focus on meaningful, relevant, and lifelong learning that permeates all educational offerings, including degree, non-degree, and continuing education programs. UNESCO's Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century (Delors, 1996) and subsequent work by UNESCO'S Education for Sustainable Development Initiative (2012) presented a conceptual framework for ongoing, lifelong learning that applies very well to the RRU context.³ This model organizes learning into the following five pillars:

1. Learning to Know – the development of skills and knowledge needed to function in this world e.g. formal acquisition of literacy, numeracy, critical thinking and general knowledge (the mastery of learning tools).
2. Learning to Do – the acquisition of applied skills linked to professional success.
3. Learning to Live Together – the development of social skills and values such as respect and concern for others, of social and inter-personal skills; and the appreciation of cultural diversity. These are fundamental building blocks for social cohesion, as they foster mutual trust and support and strengthen our communities and society as a whole.

³ This conceptual framework also serves as the basis for the development of the Canadian Council on Learning's Composite Learning Index (CLI). For more information, see www.cli-ica.ca/en.aspx.

4. Learning to Be – the learning that contributes to a person’s mind, body and spirit. Skills include creativity and personal discovery, acquired through reading, the Internet, and activities such as sports and arts.
5. Learning to Transform Oneself and Society – when individuals and groups gain knowledge, develop skills, and acquire new values as a result of learning, they are equipped with tools and mindsets for creating lasting change in organizations, communities, and societies.

These five pillars are linked together by a social constructivist approach to individual learning and a social constructionist approach to the development of learning communities that significantly influences how students learn and how faculty and staff support their learning at RRU. There is general agreement that a social constructivist orientation includes the following key elements (Mayes and de Freitas, 2004; Beetham and Sharpe, 2007):

- Self-responsibility for learning that enables students to actively construct their own understanding of concepts;
- Complex problems to support a discovery-oriented approach to learning;
- Open-ended activities and challenges to encourage experimentation and risk-taking;
- Collaborative inquiry with peers and faculty members to help learn faster or deeper than when solely engaged in individual activities;
- Shared ownership of the learning process to facilitate a common understanding and shared meaning of the tasks and experiences involved in learning;
- Discussion and reflection that draws on existing concepts, contexts and skills; and
- Timely and effective feedback to guide correction and improvement in concept and skill attainment.

The social constructivist/constructionist orientation is a foundation for both a set of principles that guide the learning and teaching process, i.e. the RRU Teaching Philosophy, and a constellation of practices, i.e. Core Elements of our Learning and Teaching Model.

Taken together in a summary fashion, Table 1 illustrates that we understand learning at RRU as a socially constructed activity and we conceptualize lifelong learning as a process of social and personal discovery beyond the acquisition of knowledge.

Table 1. Foundational Frameworks for Learning and Teaching at Royal Roads University

Social Constructivist Framework	UNESCO Framework
Self Responsibility	Learning to Know
Complex Problems	Learning to Do
Collaborative Inquiry	Learning to Live Together
Open Ended Learning Activities	Learning to Be
Discussion and Reflection	Learning to Transform Oneself and Society
People Learn in a Diversity of Ways	Learning to Know

RRU Teaching Philosophy. The implementation of curriculum development and teaching strategies that reinforce the social constructivist view of learning at RRU is supported by a robust teaching philosophy collaboratively developed by faculty and staff in 2002. This philosophy indicates that, at Royal Roads University, faculty members and academic staff:

- share a passion for learning and teaching;
- value students as individuals who bring expertise and life experience to their education, and support them as they construct knowledge in a personally relevant way and enhance their lifelong learning skills;
- focus on applied and professional learning and integrate research into the curriculum;
- are experts in many substantive areas of knowledge and take steps to share this knowledge in ways that do not interfere with the adult student responsibility to learn and reflect for themselves;
- are knowledgeable in their areas of expertise and in current adult learning theory;
- know how to use appropriate learning technologies for the desired learning objectives;
- believe that teaching is a critically reflective practice;
- foster learning environments that are respectful, welcoming, and inclusive;
- facilitate learning experiences that are authentic, challenging, collaborative, and engaging;
- model and encourage academic integrity;
- aspire, as lifelong learners, to create experiences where new learning changes all members of the learning community and where students contribute meaningfully to the learning of others; and
- actively participate in the University's global learning community.

This teaching philosophy extends to the ways in which our programs are designed, our courses are developed and taught, and our students are supported.

Core Elements of our Learning and Teaching Model. Despite the different contexts and mandates, most programs at RRU share a number of fundamental curriculum design elements, learning processes, and support services that work together to support authentic, relevant, and meaningful student learning. These curriculum design elements and learning processes, summarized in Figure 2 and Table 2, are described in more detail below.

Figure 2: Core Components of the RRU Learning Model

Outcomes Based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning outcomes are used to make clear the purpose of programs and courses
Technology-Enhanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology enables the blending of face-to-face and on-line strategies aid in accessibility and participation
Experiential and Authentic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies employed to provide practical relevance
Learning Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students stay together to support each other through a whole program
Team Based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 50% of course assignments are team-based
Integrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject matter from a variety of disciplines enables complex problem solving
Applied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty are scholars and practitioners
Engaged Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning techniques are employed that require active participation of students
Action Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students engage in practical and participative research
Supportive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic and student services are integrated to support engagement and success
Flexible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies are put in place to enable access and working lives of students

Table 2: Advantages of the Core Components of the RRU Learning Model

Component or Strategy	Advantages
<p>1. Outcomes-based – all curriculum is developed and delivered using program-wide learning outcomes that are created in consultation with expert advisory councils.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifies program focus • Helps students connect program to workplace • Provides a focus for assessment/evaluation • Helps employers understand program benefits
<p>2. Enhancing Learning through Technology – most programs, and sometimes even individual courses, feature a blend of short-term, on-campus residencies and online learning courses that are made possible by the use of web technologies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhances access and relevance – students can continue to work and engage in a reflective cycle involving reading or other learning activities, applying new skills and knowledge in the workplace, and reflecting on what worked, while engaging with others in online dialogue throughout the learning cycle • Provides complementary social learning processes: online engagement enhances deep-level thinking and the exchange of perspectives; understanding how others interpret or experience a phenomenon gives students a broader understanding about possible learning strategies • Residencies help students make personal connections to faculty and other students
<p>3. Experiential, Authentic Learning Strategies – problem-based learning, project-based learning, service learning, action learning, action research, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a more integrative experience • Enhances practical relevance • Deepens learning by focusing on systemic understanding and distinctions between simple, complicated, and complex problems, issues, and challenges • Provides students with a more realistic understanding of their profession
<p>4. Learning Communities – groups of 20-50 students work together as a cohort for the duration of the program, frequently forming a lifelong professional community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps students experience a strong sense of connectedness, collegial support, and shared experiences • Increases access to professional knowledge of colleagues and peers • Exposes students to a diversity of views, experiences, perspectives, and scholarship • Creates a broad base of readily available learning resources

5. **Team-Based Learning** – up to 50% of course assignments may involve group projects or team-based work.
 - Enhances skills related to collaboration, team facilitation, project management, conflict management, etc.
 - Makes large assignments more manageable and realistic
 - Provides opportunities for more complex learning

6. **Supporting Integrative Learning** – programs and courses bring together subject matter from a variety of disciplines and feature teaching strategies that help students make connections across subjects and between thinking and doing, e.g. capstone courses, team-teaching, integrated course delivery, integrative assignments.
 - Increases relevance and authenticity to workplace
 - Provides tools, resources, and approaches suitable to solving complex problems and managing emerging issues
 - Makes connections across courses
 - Promotes relevance and meaningfulness
 - Helps students apply higher-order thinking skills such as analysis and synthesis
 - Promotes praxis – strengthens links between theory and practice

7. **Faculty with Professional Experience** –faculty collectively possess strong academic credentials and significant experience in the application of the subject matter to professional contexts.
 - Enhances relevance for students
 - Helps faculty members mentor and guide students
 - Fosters links between academic and professional perspectives
 - Requires scholar-practitioner faculty members who are able to bridge the worlds of scholarship and applied practice with maturity and the confidence to play a supporting role to student learning

8. **Teaching as an Active Process of Facilitating Learning** – faculty use a variety of strategies to engage students and support/guide the learning process.
 - Helps students understand and integrate the ideas of a given course with their personal experiences to create personally relevant and actionable knowledge
 - Increases students’ personal responsibility
 - Acknowledges student experience and expertise as a relevant and critical source of knowledge for others
 - Enhances teaching quality and relevance

- 9. Action-Oriented Research as a Process of Inquiry**—students develop meaningful research questions and engage in worthwhile investigations to solve real organizational, community-based, or societal problems.
- Links systematic inquiry to workplace issues and problems
 - Provides a professional context for the integration and application of concepts and skills learned in other components of the program
 - Create opportunities for positive and meaningful change to occur
- 10. A Whole Community of Support** – RRU staff from many different services work together to deliver timely and integrated student support.
- Helps connect many different RRU services to students, e.g. program support, student services, library, instruction design, continuing education, media, information technology, etc.
 - Provides a seamless suite of services to students
- 11. Flexible Access**—a variety of structures have been implemented, e.g. flexible admissions, block transfer agreements, dual degree partnerships, etc. to support a smooth entry of students into RRU programs.
- Recognizes the importance and value of relevant workplace and life experience
 - Acknowledges the value of both formal and informal learning
 - Provides multiple pathways of entry into RRU programs

The model was intended to be evolving and generative. The goal in developing the model was not to advocate for one ‘best way’ to teach but to articulate a number of common design elements inherent in RRU programs. None of these methods, on their own, are effective in supporting high-quality student learning. We contend that it is how these elements work together in the service of authentic and relevant learning that create engaging and relevant experiences for today’s and tomorrow’s students at RRU.

The LTM Model Development and Implementation Process

The model above was the result of a multi-year and inclusive development process led by a team of administrators and faculty members. The development process was designed to respond to the following questions:

- How do we create educational environments that reflect what we know about effective learning?
- How do we shift the focus from teaching to learning to better serve our students now and in the future?
- What if we provided advanced learning opportunities for emerging and current leaders and other professionals that supported the enhancement of 21st Century skills and knowledge?

- What if we were able to provide learning opportunities that were authentic, relevant, and integrative?

These were some of the fundamental questions that the team considered in developing a working paper describing the LTM and the current research about effective learning and teaching that supported it (Hamilton, Márquez, and Agger-Gupta, 2013b). There were two main phases for developing the framework: (1) a Pre-Draft phase and (2) a Post-Draft phase.

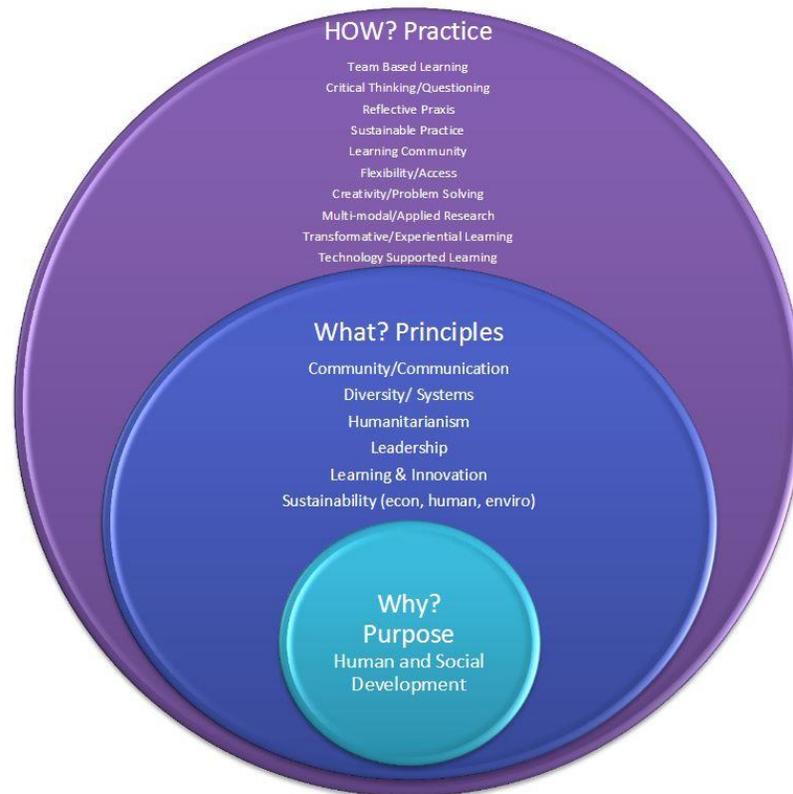
The pre-draft phase was best described as the primary “information-gathering” component of the development process. The development team began by systematically reviewing all programs at RRU to identify and examine the foundational LTM elements that these programs had in common. The starting point was to take a ‘slice in time’ approach by beginning with an inductive analysis of every program’s structure and curriculum, then examining current practices, systematically reviewing program and course proposals submitted to the university’s curriculum committee, holding discussions with colleagues, reviewing a database of comments on their learning experiences provided by graduates, and looking at recent research related to learning and teaching in post-secondary learning environments. The desired outcome of this phase was to produce a working paper that could be broadly circulated in the university community to seek an informed response and guided feedback for incorporation into an eventual formalized version of the model. The resulting paper articulated 11 core components of the LTM, described their benefits, and illustrated how these components work together to provide an authentic, relevant, and integrative learning experience for RRU students. As well, the authors examined the teaching philosophy, key curriculum design elements, and learning processes that are a common foundation for all RRU programs including both credit and non-credit programs.

The post-draft phase was designed to evaluate the reaction within the RRU community to the draft paper and to seek input into the creation of the final version of the framework. A draft of the paper was circulated to faculty members, administrators, and staff members across the university. People were invited to respond to a series of questions related to its meaningfulness, applicability, and relevance to the institution. This consultation process involved presentations to formal committees such as the Board of Governors, Academic Council, and Curriculum Committee as well as exploratory dialogue sessions with key committees and offices responsible for operational planning and support such as the Academic Leadership Team, the Centre for Teaching and Educational Technologies, and various school meetings. Furthermore, a series of ‘community cafes’, modelled after the methodology provided by Brown (2005), were organized where faculty, staff, and students could interactively discuss the model’s merits and shortcomings. These sessions were live-streamed to facilitate remote participation by members of the university who could not attend one of the face-to-face sessions. Finally, faculty and staff members were invited to submit response briefs about the model. This enabled the consultation process to extend its reach to many of the faculty members and students who did not live locally. On the basis of the feedback generated through the consultation process, the paper was revised and then launched publicly online and in document form.

LTM 2.0

Subsequent to the draft consultation stage, the LTM white paper was revised based on the feedback obtained and then a working copy of the document was printed and distributed university-wide to staff and faculty members. Approximately, a year after its printing and distribution, work began on 'LTM 2.0'. This moniker was intended to emphasize the ongoing and regular revision of the model based on broadly-based input from the university community. The objective of LTM 2.0 was to “refine the articulation of our LTM, and further expand upon, unpack, and develop our understanding and application of concepts central to our LTM such as experiential learning, outcomes and team based learning, applied research, and teaching with technology”(Royal Roads University, 2017). This phase is noteworthy for three major highlights so far. First, the administrators and faculty members leading LTM 2.0 were not the same individuals who led the original development process. The original development team was overjoyed that a truly distributed leadership model was in effect and that there was a broadened base of hands-on support to carry the process through an ongoing revision stage. Secondly, the LTM 2.0 expanded the consultation process and modelled a number of input mechanisms that could be adapted to use as teaching strategies, such as hosting a Design Thinking “Maker Day” and using technologies such as Padlet to post people’s perspectives on the value of the LTM to the university. Thirdly, conversations are now occurring about whether RRU’s applied research model should be more explicitly integrated into the LTM. Figure 3 below provides one conceptualization of how the two models could be integrated into the expanded RRU Learning, Teaching, and Research Model.

Figure 3: LTM 2.0: Learning, Teaching, and Research Model



Reflections on the Development and Implementation Process

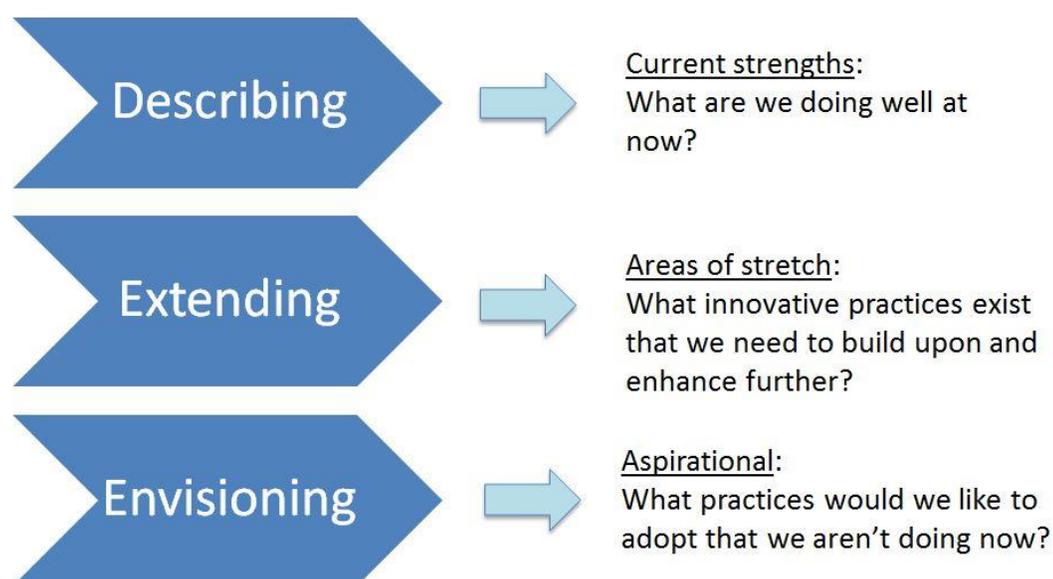
Our experience in developing the LTM has led us to reflect on its achievements and challenges as well as the opportunities it has created to profile important aspects of the learning-related culture at RRU.

First, the actual experience of engaging in the development process has enabled us to stand back and consider various approaches to the development of institutional educational frameworks. On this basis, we have developed a conceptual model illustrated in Figure 4 that describes three main approaches to developing a framework: Describing, Extending, and Envisioning. The first approach, *Describing*, suggests that a framework can be dedicated to documenting and describing the existing realities of learning and teaching at the institution including an analysis of the perceived strengths of the current approaches. This approach is synonymous with a ‘slice in time’ orientation where the focus is on accurately capturing the current status quo that exists within the institution. Not only does this involve profiling the ‘best practice’ explanations and actions within the institution, it also involves engaging stakeholders in describing their experiences with the aesthetics of the framework. For instance, answering the question: “What does the LTM *feel* like, for students, faculty, and other stakeholders, when it is working well?” (Lewis, Passmore, & Cantore, 2008; Maturana & Varela, 1987; Oliver & Brittain, 2001).

The second approach, *Extending*, suggests that frameworks can also help to identify promising areas of expertise and innovation that can be refined and expanded across the institution. This approach focuses not only on identifying core competencies related to learning and teaching but also on how to extend these competencies by identifying and promoting innovative practices in the hopes that they may be more widely-adapted.

The third approach, *Envisioning*, focuses on identifying practices that may not have taken solid root in the organization yet but are considered highly desirable to promote, implement, and support within the institution. This third approach is considered more future-oriented, developmental, and aspirational than the other two, because it embodies the hopes of stakeholders for more effective teaching and learning practices.

Figure 4: Approaches to Developing an Institutional Educational Framework



Our review of the existing frameworks described earlier suggests that educational institutions tended to combine two or three of the approaches in their descriptions of their frameworks. For this initial attempt at articulating a framework at RRU, we were mostly concerned with providing a current description of practices as well as identifying some key areas of extension. For example, team-based learning and authentic learning are approaches to learning that were identified as important in effectively supporting our university's mandate. Experienced professionals need to know how to work effectively in teams and they can benefit greatly from being engaged in learning experiences that enable the direct and timely application of skills and knowledge. Nevertheless, as a collective entity, we still have a lot to learn from our own practices, as well as other institution's innovations, regarding how best to design, teach, and assess both team-based learning and authentic learning. As a result, our approach provided a combination of *Describing* and *Extending*. For other institutions, the specific combination of approaches will depend on the overall strategic goal for developing the framework as well as the

relative maturity of any frameworks that already exist. For instance, an institution might begin its initial framework with a description of current practice but develop future frameworks later that are more aspirational.

In its first three years of implementation, the LTM has provided an organizational frame for deepening and sustaining a dialogue about learning and teaching in classrooms, schools, and committee meetings. It has also served as a helpful framework for organizing and presenting faculty development programs and activities, both online and face-to-face. For instance, since the launch of the LTM, The Centre for Teaching and Educational Technologies (CTET) and the Learning Services department have collaborated on the establishment of a Team Performance Unit that provides program-specific support to students engaged in team-based learning. Furthermore, subsequent to the launch of the LTM, CTET has used the core components of the LTM to organize and anchor its faculty development programs, including an emphasis on learning outcomes, authentic learning, teaching with technology, and team learning.

One of the key benefits of developing the LTM has been the emergence of a common language and, perhaps, a greater shared understanding about the key characteristics of RRU's learning and teaching approach across the university. The articulation of the LTM has helped to demystify and unpack valuable terms such as learning outcomes, authentic learning, and transdisciplinarity. This shared language has assisted in faculty recruitment efforts because most schools now require prospective applicants to read the LTM prior to interviews and site visits. Serving as a helpful heuristic, the LTM has functioned as a launch pad for perspective sharing and meaningful dialogue regarding learning and teaching at RRU.

Some of this dialogue has been oriented towards the future evolution of the model and the next steps in its ongoing developing. This kind of conversation has been insightful because the LTM was never intended to be a static, rigid, and prescriptive entity. For example, the initial statement of the LTM was silent on faculty and student research and how this contributed to improved teaching and learning outcomes. Through faculty dialogue and input, faculty and student research has now been added to the framework. In a second example, the School of Leadership Studies created a set of four principles in alignment with the LTM elements (Harris and Agger-Gupta, 2014).

The LTM has also helped to provide a sense of coherence to the existing work by faculty members who have been engaged in studying their own teaching practices. The model contributes to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) by serving as an organizer for the various SOTL-related research studies already conducted by RRU faculty that contribute to the knowledge base that is specific to many of the 11 core components identified in the LTM such as promoting student engagement, assessing team-based learning, designing authentic learning experiences, assessing the impact of capstone projects, building student and faculty learning communities online, and facilitating student action research in professional workplaces. A book has been published by Grundy, Hamilton, Agger-Gupta, Marquez, Veletsianos, Forssman, and Legault (2016) that serves as the first means of organizing and sharing some of this body of work. The book shares studies that focus on case studies of existing practices, institutional change and transformation initiatives, faculty and student research, and new innovations in learning and teaching. Secondly, in addition to helping to organize existing case studies, the LTM has served as a launch pad for new investigations that have enabled deeper examination of some of the key

components. SOTL-related case studies of how the model works (or does not work) in practice have been sought from both faculty and staff. For instance, recently a series of studies have examined both faculty and student perspectives related to the learning and teaching model (Harris & Walinga, 2015; Walinga, & Harris, 2014; and Walinga, Harris, & Slick, 2013).

A recent article by Hamilton (2014) describes the kinds of support strategies that are helpful leverage points for building an institutional model for pedagogical inquiry. These three categories of strategies-- leadership, policy, and organizational structure--have been key to the LTM implementation process so far. First, leadership for the development and the dissemination process related to the model has been broadly-based and includes the university's Academic Leadership Team (ALT) as well as a number of faculty and staff members who have played key roles in writing the white paper, organizing consultation processes, conducting background research, and supporting the development of the case study process. This collaborative development process would not have been possible without the stewardship of a senior academic leadership group that was open to dialogue and the sharing of divergent perspectives about important learning and teaching issues. Engaging the campus community to help determine what is both unique and essential in the institution's learning and teaching identity was also an important source of information for the framework and a means of instilling its presence in ongoing departmental and committee conversations about academic matters (D'Andrea and Gosling, 2007).

Regarding policy and planning, Weimer (2006) suggests that commissioning a faculty-prepared white paper on pedagogical issues identified as important across the institution and then discussing these in forums across the institution can serve as an important starting point for further institution-wide engagement in pedagogical inquiry. For us, it was a key step in developing a tangible conceptual model that could then be critiqued and revised. Starting with an audit of existing internal and external studies on learning and teaching topics at the university helped determine the institution-specific intelligence that was already available at the university and which could benefit from wider analysis and dissemination. This step involved doing a meta-analysis of the key themes and conclusions stemming from SOTL-based inquiries as a means of informing the development of an institutional framework and for determining intersection points between the identified themes and an existing institutional framework. The process helped to reveal gaps in institutional knowledge about learning and teaching that could be addressed through future SOTL studies or by commissioning future campus-wide studies.

The learning and teaching model now serves as an important reference for key university-wide academic decisions and has been integrated into the development of the latest institutional academic plan. Furthermore, key steps were taken to ensure that the model was aligned with the three overarching institutional strategic research themes at the university: (1) learning and innovation; (2) thriving organizations; and (3) sustainable societies and communities. This is consistent with Weimer's (2006) advocacy for creating a positive institutional research agenda that actively inquires into learning and teaching issues that are important across the campus.

Finally, regarding organization structure, the linkages between the model and the promotion of the scholarship of teaching and learning across the university is dependent on two existing structures of support. The first means of support is provided by the services offered by the Office of Research. This

office provides small-scale research grants for faculty that they can use for the development of the case studies and related SOTL research as well as for the dissemination of the findings from the case studies. Applicants for small-scale funding through internal research and professional development grants must clearly indicate how their proposals directly relate to at least one of the three strategic research themes mentioned above. In fact, the theme of “Learning and Innovation” sends a clear message across the university that the institution is supportive and actively encouraging research that addresses this topic. Those scholars engaged in SOTL-related work can make strong arguments for why and how their proposed research is related to this theme.

The second means of support is provided by the central institutional body responsible for promoting faculty development and instructional development, the Centre for Teaching and Educational Technologies (CTET). Since 2014, the centre has organized a series of workshops and sharing sessions for faculty and staff around most of the 11 core components of the model. These events and activities have provided important forums for faculty and staff members to discuss perspectives, issues, and innovations related to the learning and teaching model. This kind of discussion serves as a form of teaching commons (Huber & Hutchings, 2005) that provides instrumental work for increasing faculty interest in engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning at RRU.

Central to the development of a viable and sustainable teaching commons is the support for ongoing dialogue about learning and teaching issues and the degree to which this dialogue permeates the operational fabric of the institution. The evidence that this is happening at RRU includes the extent to which the model has become central and strategic to supporting faculty development plans, programming discussions at departmental meetings, orientations for new students, recruitment sessions for prospective students, presentations to visiting delegations, papers at research conferences, monthly research project lunch and learn sessions, regularly-scheduled “teaching talks” coordinated by deans, and the development of international partnerships. In many ways, the efforts put into describing and articulating the LTM have helped to consolidate a rather cohesive RRU-wide learning community.

Despite these benefits, there have also been important challenges to address, resolve, and overcome. Although the LTM has seemingly been met with a highly receptive response with the university community, there is a constant danger of it becoming an overly simplistic heuristic that ends up being too prescriptive, formulaic, static, and rigid in its application. Addressing this challenge involves maintaining a focus on the original goal of the LTM as a description of what makes RRU unique, rather than this being a set of specific actions for teaching success. Not all programs at RRU make use of all 11 of the elements of the LTM – and this diversity is generally acceptable, within the context of the values of the RRU mission. But when used as a prescription, the LTM can begin to limit, instead of facilitating, innovation into teaching, and to indoctrinate, instead of socializing, people into the RRU learning and teaching culture. Herbert Simon (1956) in a playful essay on the uses and limitations of models reminds us that: “The [models] that actually occur do not have the same content as the phenomena to which they refer. They do not tell the truth or at least they do not tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth (p.3).” Thus, it is best to be mindful of the LTM’s role in serving as a helpful map -- but not the territory itself (Korzybski, 1933) -- and to be constantly vigilant to its overuse and inappropriate application.

Conclusion

It is clear from our case description that the LTM needs to continue to evolve. This is an on-going process. Engaging the broadly-based learning community, including students, faculty, administrators, and technical support personnel in the development of our institutional framework has continued to remind us of the value of ensuring that an inclusive, dialogic, flexible, engaging, and emergent process needs to be at the core of our efforts to describe, refine, and revisit our educational framework.

In our reflections, we made special note of the connection between developing an IEF and promoting the scholarship of teaching and learning. Our description of the development of our institutional framework adds to the SOTL literature by providing one of the few existing chronicles of the creation of an institutional educational framework. The personal benefits of what the scholarship of teaching and learning literature calls “going public” are well-documented. These include an increased understanding of students’ learning experiences, greater self-awareness of one’s approach to teaching, increased excitement about teaching, enhanced professionalism, and strengthened research expertise (Hamilton, 2014; McKinney, 2007; Savoury, Burnett, & Goodburn, 2007; Weimer, 2006; and Cox, Huber & Hutchings, 2004). From our perspective, however, the greatest benefit comes from the collective opportunity to engage with other faculty across the university, collaborate in new inquiry, exchange perspectives, grow our institutional-wide professional learning community, generate excitement about the work we do together, and build on new knowledge from a cross-disciplinary and a cross-institutional vantage point (Hamilton, 2014; Weimer, 2006; Huber & Hutchings, 2005; Harris & Agger-Gupta, 2014). Hamilton (2014) noted that the organizational structures and dominant dispositions of most higher educational institutions lead to a rather “closed door” purview towards both learning and teaching that is difficult to avoid and overcome. Our desire to continue opening this door via various initiatives was one of the key drivers behind the development of the RRU Learning and Teaching Model. Providing institutional support structures for both knowledge sharing and knowledge creation are essential if scholarly inquiry is to be viewed as an important vehicle for enhancing professional expertise and transforming cultures of learning and teaching (Hamilton, 2014; McKinney, 2007; Weimer, 2006).

Given this focus, it seems highly appropriate to be seeking ways to build, develop, and sustain a professional learning community that promotes knowledge sharing and knowledge creation among faculty and staff. Sharing case studies is one strategy that has been identified previously as an important step forward in developing a viable support structure for promoting pedagogical inquiry and scholarly work, and building relationships related to learning and teaching in higher education (Hamilton, 2014; Hamilton, Marquez, and Agger-Gupta, 2016; McKinney, 2007; Savoury, Burnett, & Goodburn, 2007; D’Andrea and Gosling, 2007). As observed by D’Andrea and Gosling (2007) and Huber and Hutchings (2005), promoting ongoing and sustained collaborative dialogue across the university requires ongoing institutional support if universities desire to take advantage of the collective capacity to inquire more deeply into the learning and teaching process and to enhance further opportunities to innovate beyond the individual classroom. Huber and Hutchings (2005, p.5) advance this notion by arguing for the development of a “teaching commons” – a conceptual space for faculty and staff to engage in ongoing dialogue, exploration, knowledge exchange, debate, and critique that deepens pedagogical knowledge and provides a springboard for the adaption of further innovative practices.

We view the development of the RRU Learning and Teaching Model (LTM) and the respective sharing of practices via case studies as cornerstones in the development of our own conceptual teaching commons. Our image of the LTM is not static but ever evolving and expanding. This perspective opens the door for us to continue exploring the next iteration of our Learning and Teaching Model and to bring new faculty, staff, and students into the discussion. In our review of the institutional educational frameworks, we noted that there are examples of universities that have been extremely committed to the task of continuously revisiting, revising and, even, re-generating their own institutional models of learning and teaching. Although the processes of doing so remain rather unexplored from a scholarly perspective, the efforts to integrate this kind of intention into the fabric of the institution's pedagogical culture is both noteworthy and laudable. We look to these institutions for our own inspiration to keep our institutional model alive and evolving.

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