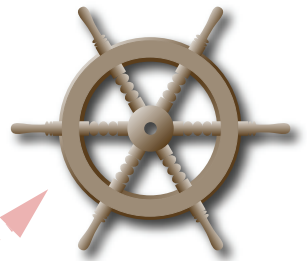


Charting Your Course FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



FLCP—celebrating a successful learning journey

by Ron Brunton, Executive Staff Officer, Research & Professional Initiatives

Six years ago the bargaining teams for the Nova Scotia Community College and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union suggested a bold and untried initiative that collapsed the faculty salary grid in a single experience ladder and created a joint committee to devise the procedure for the Faculty Learning College Portfolio (FLCP). The broad parameters of the FLCP were that it needed to reflect the diverse nature of NSCC faculty, it was to be a five-year learning journey, it needed to address the four currencies (Occupational, Organizational, Teaching and Learning, and Portfolio), it was to reflect rigorous and significant learning and it would culminate with a \$5,000 salary increase once the faculty member reached the top of the salary ladder.

An important realization for the members of the joint committee tasked with establishing the program was the recognition that a specific learning task had different meaning to different learners. For one learner any given task might represent a very minor learning experience and for another it might represent an extraordinary and very significant learning. Therefore it became clear that when faculty members submitted learning journey proposals, the goals articulated could only be understood

within the context of the learner's self assessment of where he or she was with respect to those goals.

A second aspect of the process that was challenging for everyone involved was to move away from the rigid connection between credentials and learning. The process needed to be defined by the journey, not the destination. The FLCP could not be a collection or list of tasks that were to be accomplished and therefore, might be accomplished in less than five years. The FLCP was to be a reflective learning process spanning five years. In other words, it takes five years to have five years of learning.

This is not to suggest that all learners learn at the same rate; in fact the FLCP reflects the opposite of this. What is accomplished by one person over five years will be very different from what is accomplished by another in that period of time. The critical question is whether or not the learning was significant for the learner.

At the same time, we wanted to ensure that the learning journey was neither insignificant or incidental. This process could not be equivalent to the process of doing the faculty member's assigned job for five years. It must require new and challenging learning.

All of this was new territory. We had no other employer-employee context to use as a template or model. We decided that the journey needed to be conscious; it required planning and forethought. The journey required goals that realistically would take five years (in aggregate), but open enough to allow for either growth or setbacks. And the process required deep reflection.

That was five years ago. The first proposals were approved with an effective starting date of January 2007. In January 2012, the 13 faculty members who commenced their journey five years ago made the final presentation to the FLCP committee. Although this was a "final presentation", everyone noted that it was not an end to the learning inspired by their FLCP process. They discovered new areas of interest, new directions to pursue established ideas, further questions to answer, new ideas to help their students understand either difficult concepts or other aspects of a trade, new techniques to expand as part of their own teaching, and above all else, a better understanding of themselves as learners. As one person stated, "*We often don't know what we know until we start looking and thinking about it. I see learning differently now.*"

The presentations served to highlight the range and diversity of the learning adventure experienced by these 13 people. The learning included academic pursuits such as a master's degree, the practical impact in the classroom of learning to use multi-media, the importance of culture to the learning context, the challenges of second language learners, insights into assessment for learning, how to contribute to the NSCC's organizational framework and resource infrastructure, and so much more, with many of these different components forming adjacent parts of each person's experience. They ranged from concrete to theoretical, often within a single journey.

In the end, what we saw was the realization of a vision. The NSCC and the NSTU wanted to develop a mechanism to recognize and support the best reflective learning across all learners. It was a tough and challenging journey for the participants and for the FLCP committee. However, what we saw demonstrated proof of this shared idea. In feedback, one of the successful participants stated, "*One frustration I used to have as a faculty member was that the college offered few avenues to grow professionally that didn't involve leaving the classroom for management. FLCP provides this opportunity.*"

So, hats off to the first FLCP cohort! Congratulations to Mary Lou Beaton, Pictou Campus; Marcel d'Entremont, Burridge Campus; Wendi Dewey, Akerley Campus; Ludger Dugas, Marconi Campus; Dennis Myer, IT Campus; Ed Petruskavich, Marconi Campus; Joy Reyno, IT Campus; David Russell, IT Campus; Marc Simard, Akerley Campus; Todd Verge, IT Campus; Lisa Walters, IT Campus; Ray Williams, Akerley Campus and Shelley Withers, Lunenburg Campus!

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