

St Stephen's College
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**An Executive Summary for Associate Faculty of the
Final Report (2008) of the
Evaluation and Assessment Sub-Committee**

Background

The Evaluation and Assessment Sub-Committee was established August 2007, as part of the College's strategic planning process. The committee was charged with evaluating the effectiveness of instructional and staffing models at St Stephen's College, "using end-of-course evaluation forms, committee input, and other information. This should involve the Board, Senate, Program Committees, Faculty, Dean, etc – to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for innovation". Members of the Sub-Committee were: Ralph Westwood (Chair), Betty Marlin, Rosemarie Cunningham, Earle Sharam and Kelly Parson.

Focus of the Review:

- **Student Course Evaluation Forms.** At the end of each course students routinely indicate their satisfaction with individual courses. The evaluation forms for courses offered in 2005, 2006 and 2007 were used.
- **Graduating Student Questionnaires.** In a similar manner, when students finish their programs they complete a questionnaire prepared by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) which indicates their satisfaction with their overall educational experience. Graduating Student forms from 2005 and 2006 were used.
- **Comments and Suggestions from Program Committees, Faculty, Senate and Associate Faculty.** Special meetings were held with each of these groups using a set of prescribed questions regarding their roles, strengths and limitations of the instructional model, areas for innovation and improvement, etc.

Findings:

- **Course Completion Forms**

The St Stephen's College Course Evaluation forms ask about: **student development, instructor ratings, course elements, overall rating, and textbooks and resources.** All course completion forms from 2005, 2006 and 2007 were reviewed (1,156 in total), representing course evaluations of approximately 300 individual students. The following chart summarizes student satisfaction ratings, where 1.00 represents complete satisfaction.

Evaluation Form Category	2005	2006	2007
- Student development	0.91	0.90	0.90
- Instructor ratings	0.93	0.90	0.89
- Course elements	0.88	0.85	0.84
- Overall course rating	0.91	0.86	0.81
- Textbooks and resources	0.74	0.81	0.67
<i>Total Forms Reviewed</i>	<i>517</i>	<i>420</i>	<i>219</i>

Teaching and learning components were rated very high. Lower ratings (0.67) were given for textbooks and resources (reading materials, audiovisual materials, and library resources). The reasons for the lower ratings were not clear.

- **Graduating Student Questionnaires**

The ATS questionnaires were completed by 8 graduates in 2005 and 14 in 2006. The number of forms is quite small and the ATS questionnaire is very generic, but it is a significant source of graduate feedback on key program elements related to: “**Progress with skills related to future work**”, “**satisfaction with the specific services and academic resources**”, “**overall experience during your graduate program**”. Graduates gave *high* ratings for the “services and academic resources” offered by the College, and *very high* ratings were given for overall graduate program experience, including “would come again”.

- **Meetings with Program Committees, Faculty, Senate and Associate Faculty**

Using a set of prescribed questions, meetings were held with each group. For Associate Faculty, a group meeting was convened (12 attended) while a survey using the same questions was offered to those who could not attend in person. Twelve surveys were returned. Key issues are listed, with the most frequent comments and suggestions made by the participants:

Strengths of the Associate Faculty Model

- Ability to draw on “experts” with a wide range of expertise and practical experience
- Flexibility to explore various topics
- Accessible from anywhere
- Students appreciate the practicality of the experimental model
- Small classes make for close relationships
- Being part of a community of learners
- Flexibility and freedom: can choose to teach or not in any given year
- Long-term people provide stability
- Cost-effective

Challenges of the Associate Faculty Model

- Developing a sense of community and belonging as peers
- Finding and orienting new Associate Faculty in the College ethos and course requirements
- Deliberate reinforcement and appreciation of Associates for what they do is needed: there is too little support and guidance from the College
- Courses must be marketed well in advance, involving the “community”, to ensure that needed courses are offered
- Course cancellations are frustrating for students and Associate Faculty alike, and bad for the College’s reputation
- Need stronger leadership with clear lines of mutual connection, responsibility and accountability
- Keeping the big picture in sight for self and others
- Small classes may not provide enough income to cover costs
- Ensuring the process for selecting and monitoring Thesis Supervisors is adequate
- Ensure community-practice based Associate Faculty are strong enough on current theory

Satisfaction with Program Committee Role

- Honour and joy of contributing to new ways of teaching and learning
- Seeing students do well as they apply their learning
- Giving something back in gratitude for one’s own life
- Value progressive theology, alternative approaches to academics
- Networking - students and potential employees
- Continuing connection with the college

Future Issues to be Addressed

- Attracting persons who embrace the SSC vision and mission
- Refocussing on the mission and purpose, and being proud of our academic excellence
- Attracting future students
- Acquiring accreditation (eg ATS)
- Need for greater visibility (eg signs) so that U of A undergrads know the College offers graduate programs
- Increasing the ways through which Associate Faculty can experience ownership of the programs and processes of the College
- Greater emphasis on research methodology
- Reputation for doing things differently is seen by some as detrimental, not beneficial

United Church of Canada Role

- Approving (core) Faculty and Board appointments
- Making a financial contribution to the College
- Attempting to keep the profile of College before UCC congregations within the Conference
- Defining educational needs through Presbyteries and Conference
- Initiating special programs to meet particular needs

College Role in Post-Secondary Education

- Continuing to lead the way in new initiatives in teaching/learning
- Providing a unique view of spirituality that appeals to many

Credentials and Accreditation

- Kinds of recognition: moral, financial support and public
- There are other forms of recognition besides formal accreditation

Can Associate Faculty Model be Maintained?

- It can be maintained
- Appears to be an very effective model
- Keep the focus on a high quality teaching model
- Be on the lookout for new resources

Satisfaction with Faculty/Senate Role

- Initiating and implementing new ways of teaching/learning
- Supporting the teaching and learning process

Satisfaction with Associate Faculty Role

- Joy of teaching: being part of a dynamic and forward-looking institution of learning
- Enhancing my professional journey
- Sense of being part of a learning community

Associate Faculty Satisfaction (combination of job satisfaction and remuneration)

- Yes: **14**, Partly: **7**, No: **4**

Reasons for becoming Associate Faculty at SSC

- Joy of teaching students who are motivated and eager to learn
- Share one's own expertise and experiences and passion for the subject
- Being part of something that is growing and evolving into something important

Other qualified people interested in being Associate Faculty?

- Yes: 7
- Was involved in finding Associates and found that people were delighted to be asked to teach a course at the College.

Recommend the Role to Others

- Yes: 12
- Impressed by the professional requirements that SSC asks of both teachers and students, and would have no difficulty promoting and representing the College

Other comments

- Currently the student end-of-course evaluations are done at the end of the face-to-face portion of the course and prior to the student completing the post-course assignment. This means they are providing feedback concerning about 60% of the learning experience: there should be a second brief course evaluation after completion of the post-course assignment.
- Thesis and practicum supervisor payments should probably be called an “honorarium”

Conclusions and Recommendations

We thank everyone who so generously shared their insights and suggestions; and the many students and graduates who completed course and graduating student questionnaires. We trust that this report is an accurate reflection of the combined view of the many caring and concerned people who by their enthusiasm and expertise seek to make St Stephen’s a thriving and effective learning community.

This is what we heard, understood and recommend:

A. Student Satisfaction:

1. Students are generally very satisfied with the quality of teaching and learning in the individual courses. And graduates are generally very satisfied with the quality of their graduate programs.

Recommendation: That the College acknowledges this and thanks the Faculty, Associate Faculty, staff and volunteers for their expertise, passion for learning, and commitment to the College, and that they proceed with confidence that this is a good foundation upon which to build.

Recommendation: That the Board and administration also proceed with confidence that the current practices are providing a good foundation upon which to build.

2. Regularly monitor student satisfaction.

Recommendation: That the current system of collecting student course evaluation forms be expanded to include an annual report to the Board on student satisfaction and quality of teaching and learning services.

B. Purpose & Image

1. The College needs a clear and well communicated vision and strategic plan to inform and encourage stakeholders to pull together in common purpose.

Recommendation: That when the strategic plan being developed by the Board is ready, a high priority be placed on communicating ways in which Senate, Faculty and Associate Faculty can implement the goals and responsibilities to promote and support College programs successfully.

Recommendation: That Senate take an active role in visioning, planning, and advising the Board on how the College should address issues such as:

- integrating theology and “the spirit” into the life and work of the College,
- ‘the spirit’ in work and the workplace,
- continuing and professional education for ministry personnel.

2. The public profile of the College should be enhanced so the public and other stakeholders have a better understanding of its purpose and what it stands for.

Recommendation: That a working group be established to advise the Board on such issues and concerns as:

- coordinating public relations information and who speaks to specific issues,
- timely and consistent information for potential students about ongoing program delivery and the quality and features of programs,
- cooperation with the U of A about common interests and promoting SSC courses,
- signage promoting the College to university students.

C. Associate Faculty Resources

1. Associate Faculty wish to be better informed about their role, the plans of the College, and related issues.

Recommendation: That action be taken to respond to Associate Faculty questions and concerns, specifically:

- recognition: by word and action confirming that Associate Faculty are integral to the teaching and learning process and are highly valued by the College,
- orientation: to orient new Associate Faculty to their role and the “SSC community of learners”, and update Associate Faculty role description,
- communication: to establish a process for regular information-sharing and networking within the College, and networking with each other. This should include access to the College website for updates on College planning and decision-making, course and program information, and related items. Other ways of maintaining regular contact may include: email, newsletters, chat sites, meetings (dinner with wine), etc.
- support: increased support in accessing AV supplies, and technical and administrative support, particularly for Associate Faculty working from a distance.

D. Curriculum

1. That an annual process of priority-setting be implemented to focus and coordinate the resources of the College

Recommendation: That the Dean and Faculty establish priorities by program area and these priorities be incorporated into:

- annual goal setting and reviews with Faculty so that “big picture issues” are examined and integrated into the overall College plan,
- faculty position descriptions so they are up-dated, clear, and comprehensive.

2. That an ongoing process be implemented to review curriculum components of College programs

Recommendation: That the Faculty, with assistance from the Program Committees:

- develop and provide guidelines and expectations for clinical supervisors,
- evaluate and develop a consistent process and criteria for thesis writing.

3. That action be taken to significantly reduce the frequency of course cancellations, which is a major concern to students, Associate Faculty, the Registrar and others

Recommendation: That the history of course cancellations be reviewed for the past several years to identify patterns and causes, and then strategies be implemented to minimize course cancellations with the intent of improving enrollments. (For example, can non-core courses be scheduled on a rotational basis so that all students know when courses will be offered and can plan accordingly?)

E. Reporting Back

1. Participants in the Evaluation and Assessment of Instruction review process need to know about the final report and what will be done about the recommendations

Recommendation: That the results of the Evaluation and Assessment of Instruction final report be widely circulated within the College by:

- providing copies to Senate, Faculty and the Program Committees,
- sending an Executive Summary to all Associate Faculty with a note of thanks for their input,
- placing the Executive Summary on the College website.

Evaluation and Assessment Sub-Committee
08 December 2008