UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
CENTRE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

Results from the 2017 University Survey of Instructor Teaching Practices and Supports

Prepared by:
Alicia Cappello, Research Assistant, Centre for Teaching and Learning, University of Alberta
Janice Miller-Young, Academic Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning, University of Alberta

Overview

In November and December 2017, the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at the University of Alberta surveyed instructors about their teaching practices and perceptions about University support for teaching. The purpose of our survey was to understand the following at the University of Alberta:

1. How do instructors describe their teaching and learning practice and environment?
2. How do instructors perceive their faculties and departments regarding support for those who want to improve or change their teaching practices?

Our survey was adapted from one developed at the University of British Columbia, which has been used by several institutions in the Bay View Alliance (http://bayviewalliance.org/), as well as the American Association of Universities. Some questions were removed to suit our context or because we did not expect much variation in the data, while a few from another survey related to scholarship of teaching and learning were added (Wuetherick and Yu, 2016). These changes were minimal in order to keep the survey as short as possible while still informing CTL programming and enabling us to compare our results to UBC's (Bates et al. 2015; Briseño-Garzón et al. 2016). We also offered to provide Faculty-specific reports to all Faculties; Arts, Engineering, and Science expressed interest and have received confidential reports.

The survey asked instructors to describe their teaching practices, attitudes, and perceptions of support at the University. For questions related to teaching practices and attitudes, we asked instructors to respond by thinking of their largest class (in terms of enrolment) taught in the previous three years. Survey questions were a mix of multiple-choice, agree-disagree, and short-answer questions.

The survey was sent to all employees who had an academic-related job code in November 2017 (3621 individuals). A total of 559 instructors responded to the survey, but due to survey logic, most questions were answered by less than 559 respondents. All percentages outlined in this report are based on the number of respondents per question. Since the sample in our survey was not a random sample, results are not generalizable. We would guess that individuals who identify themselves as dedicated to quality teaching were more likely to respond to the survey.

Figure 1. Word cloud generated with the single words respondents used to describe their experiences with teaching and learning at the UofA shows a mix of positive and negative terms (N = 285).

Instructor and Course Profiles

Almost half of respondents (46%) have been teaching at the UofA between 5-15 years and 66% were professors.

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents by the number of years respondents have been teaching at the University of Alberta (N = 284).

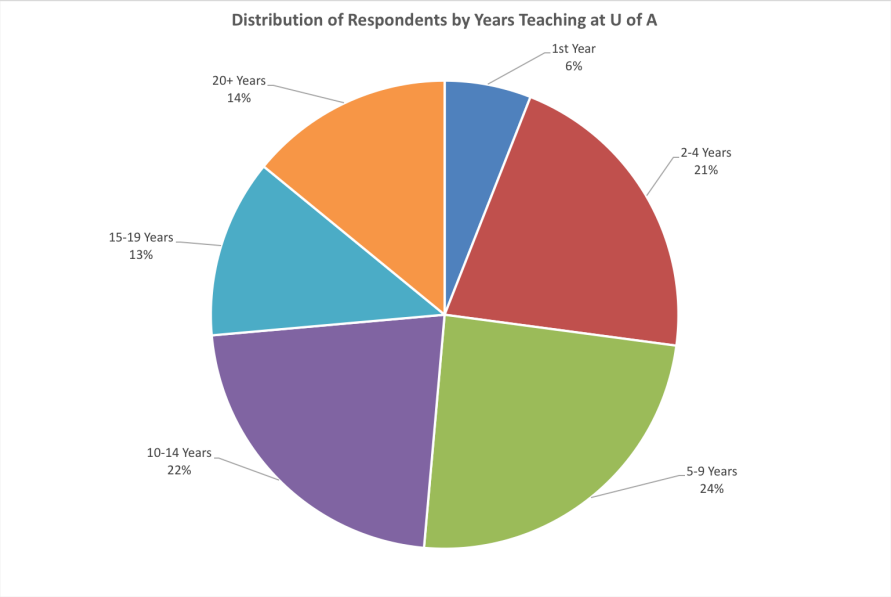
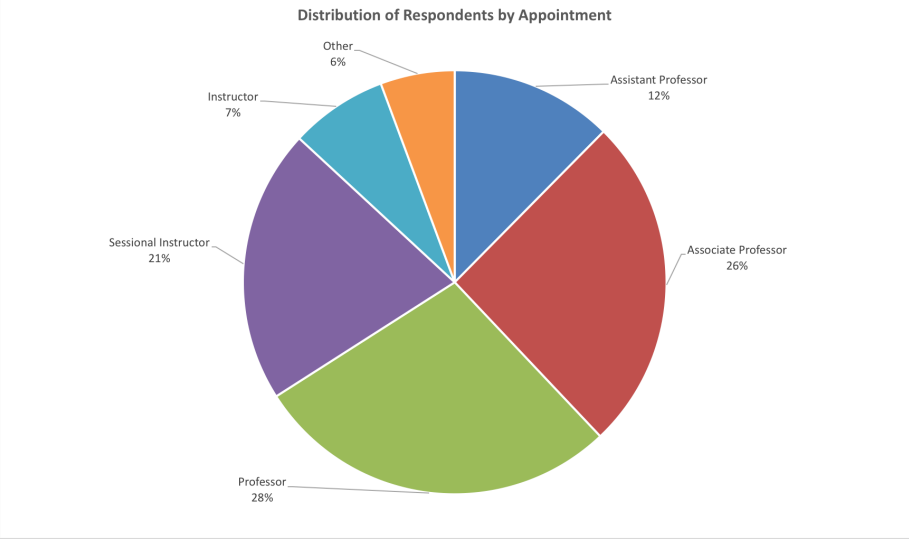
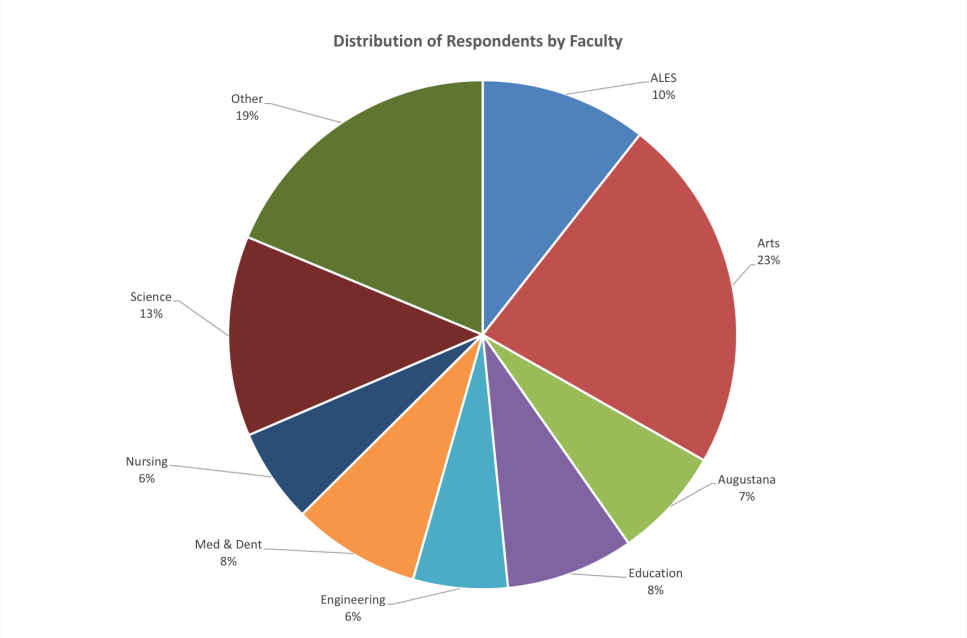


Figure 2: Percentage of respondents by their appointment/position at the University (as of the day they took the survey, N = 282).



Note: "Associate Professor" includes Associate Professors and Associate Clinical Professors. "Professor" includes Professors, Clinical Professors, Executive Professors, Industrial Professors, Teaching Professors, and Professor Emeriti. "Instructors" include Admin/Instructors, Instructors, Lecturers, and Senior Instructors. "Other" includes Adjunct Professors, Adjunct Associate Professors, Executives-in-Residence, FSOs, Grad Students, Librarians, PDFs, SOTSs, Support Staff, and Trust/Research Academics (all of which only had 1-2 respondents each).

Figure 3: Percentage of respondents by faculty (as of the day they completed the survey). "Other" includes faculties with less than 10 respondents – Business, CSJ, Extension, Law, Native Studies, Pharmacy, Phys Ed & Rec, Rehab Med, Public Health, St. Joseph's, and St. Stephen's (N = 283).



Undergraduate versus Graduate[1]

- 441 respondents have taught an undergraduate credit course in the past year
- 14 respondents have taught an undergraduate credit course in the past 2-3 years
- 50 respondents have taught a graduate credit course in the past 3 years

Class Sizes Taught

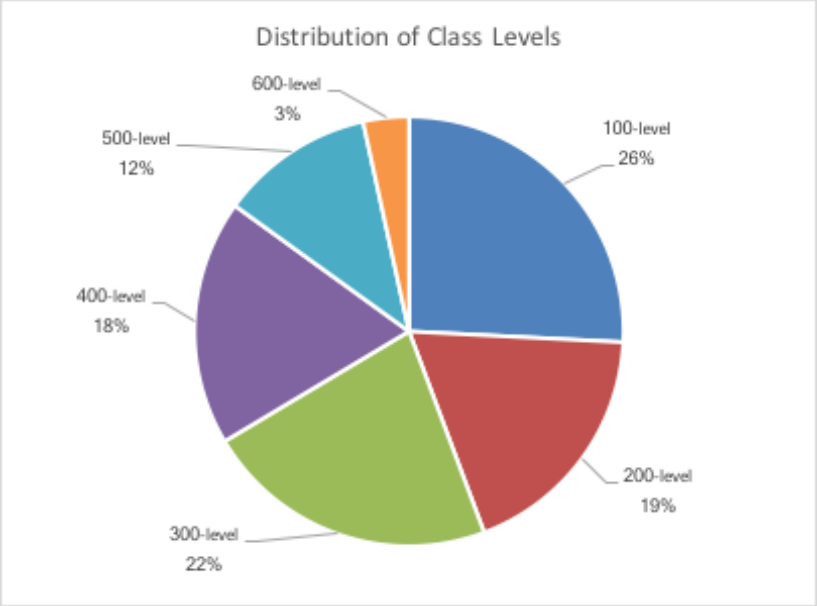
- 93 students – average "largest" undergraduate class taught (range 3-500)
- 36 students – average "largest" graduate class taught (range 3-125)

[1] These numbers are mutually exclusive.

Courses Taught

Respondents were fairly evenly distributed between the four undergraduate course levels. At the graduate level[2], respondents most often taught at the 500-level. 65% of respondents reported that the largest class they taught was a lecture section; other types of classes included labs, seminars, and clinics.

Figure 4: Based on the respondent's largest class in the last 3 years, this figure shows the distribution of class levels (N = 465).



Team Teaching and Collaboration[3]

- N = 465
  - 333 respondents, or 72%, taught the class alone
  - 81 respondents, or 17%, taught the course with other instructors AND collaborated with other instructors
  - 51 respondents, or 11%, taught the course with other instructors but did not collaborate
  - 2-30 instructors – range of the number of instructors in a team
- N = 443
  - 313 respondents, or 71%, developed teaching practices for the course on their own

[2] Respondents were not restricted to undergrad vs. grad course levels in this question, based on previously answered questions. This would explain why 50 respondents went into the survey based on teaching at the graduate level, yet 70 respondents indicated the class they were responding about was at the 500 or 600 level.

[3] Excluding teaching assistants.

- 10 respondents, or 2%, were not involved with developing the teaching practices for the course
- 120 respondents, or 27%, developed teaching practices collaboratively with faculty and non-faculty members

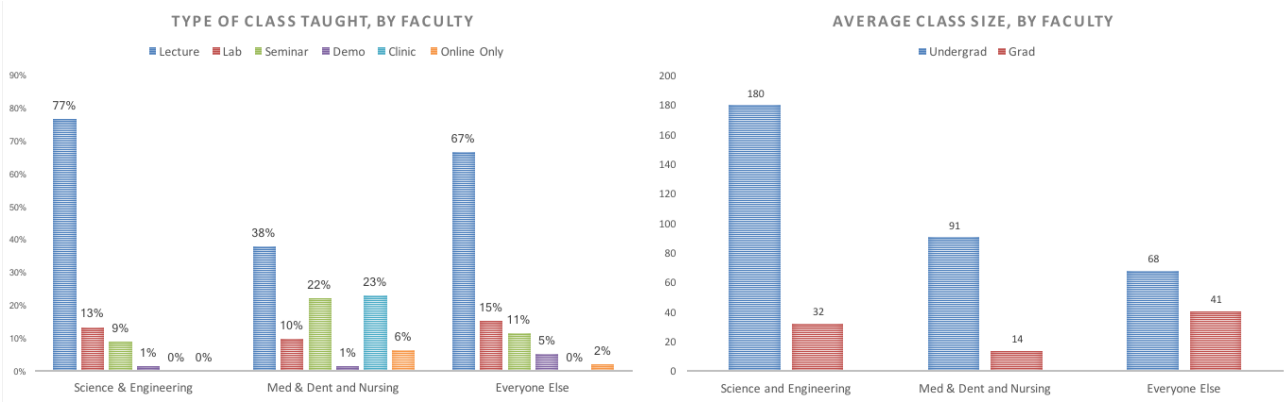
Comparisons to the 2014 UBC Survey (institutional results)

- The average class size for UBC survey respondents was 96 (although results do not indicate if this is undergraduate or graduate level courses, or both), compared with an average class size of 93 for U of A respondents.
- ***Only 16% of UBC respondents reported their largest class was at the 100-level, compared to 26% of U of A respondents.***
- 36% of respondents to the UBC survey indicated that their course was taught by a team, compared with 28% of respondents at the U of A.

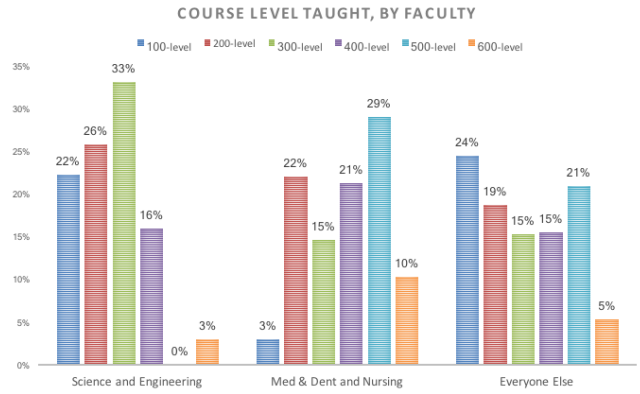
Course Profiles - Faculty Comparisons across UofA

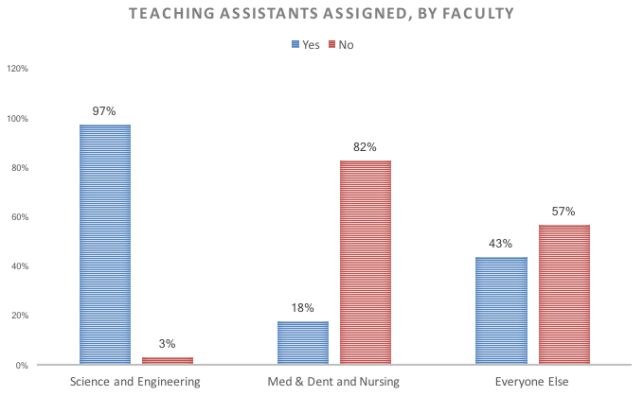
The following four charts show various course profile information by faculty group. The "Everyone Else" faculty group includes ALES, Arts, Augustana, Business, CSJ, Education, Phys Ed & Rec, Public Health, and Rehab Medicine[4]. Among the respondents, instructors in Medicine & Dentistry and Nursing were more likely to teach a graduate-level course with about 14 students and no TA, whereas Science and Engineering instructors were more likely to teach an undergraduate-level course with about 180 students using lectures and at least one TA.

Figure 5: Course profile information by faculty.



[4] All other faculties were excluded as they had 5 or less responses.

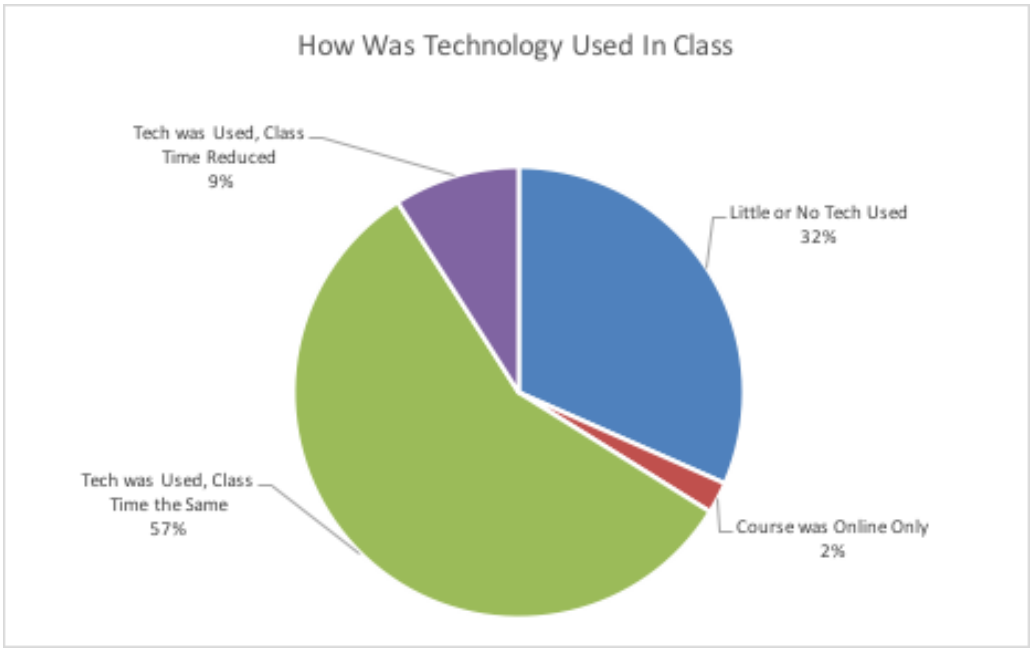




Technology Used in Courses

Respondents were asked if they integrated technology (other than eClass) into their class. For those who answered that little to no technology was used, we asked why this was so. For those who answered that they did use technology, we asked how they integrated that technology into their class.

Figure 6: Based on the respondent's largest class taught in 3 years, this figure shows whether technology was used to teach the class (N = 443).



Little to No Technology Used

Those who indicated they used little to no technology in their course commented that they did in fact use technology such as PowerPoint presentations, Google Drive, and email. They may not have considered these to be technology if they weren't using them during class time, or if they didn't consider them to be "new".

"I use overhead projector, you tube, CDs, blackboard."

"I used technology to supplement (not replace) face-to-face class time. We used Google Docs and Hangouts for group collaboration."

"I did use eClass, some video, and PPT. Pretty standard stuff."

Several respondents commented that they either did not know how to integrate technology or did not have time.

"Unsure how to incorporate into a large lecture. Lack of time to prepare/alter teaching material"

"I did not know of any way to use technology (aside from eclass)"

Do not have skills and have absolutely no time to build skills. Any free time must be devoted to research expectation."

Many other respondents commented that technology was not used because the material was better learned via in-class activities and discussion.

"Our focus is on personal experience and uses practitioners as guest lecturers to enrich the course learning."

"It focuses on group discussions and scientific thinking. Technology can get in the way of listening and thinking."

"It was my judgement that technology would not improve my teaching or the student's learning."

Technology Integration:

For respondents who indicated they integrated technology into their class, many responded that the technology they integrated included items like eClass, email, videos, PowerPoint slides, Google Forms, iClickers, YouTube, etc.

"I used powerpoint, videos, websites, and online polling to supplement and enhance the oral content of the lecture."

"Using film clips, online maps, guest speakers using Skype, anything I could think of to support the course material."

"I was using technology to teach a class synchronously - I had 12 students in person - and 7 who joined via adobe connect from around the world."

Some respondents indicated they used a variety of other technology in class to enhance learning, such as:

- 3D Printers[5] – used to print physical objects that were part of assignments.
- Document Camera* – used for viewing hard copies or physical items on the presentation screen.
- DropBox – online file sharing platform, used mainly for online assignment submission.
- High Fidelity Patient Simulation – computerized mannequins used in nursing and medical school to practice procedures.
- Kahoot – game-based educational software.
- Kaltura – online video platform used for communicating and collaborating.
- Padlet – online application for building collaborative websites.
- Prezi and Keynote – presentation software.
- Podcasts – audio recordings, usually with multiple episodes about a specific topic.
- PollEverywhere – online, real time poll software.
- SMART hardware and software* – interactive displays, whiteboards and collaboration tools.
- Socrative – classroom engagement tools, including online quizzes and discussion rooms.
- Tablets – used for interactivity between the presentation slides and class discussion.
- Teleconferencing* – respondents who indicated they used teleconferencing technology tended to be instructors who taught the same class on multiple campuses, at the same time.
- TopHat – classroom engagement tools, including real time polls and discussion software.

[5] 3D printers can be found in the U of A Library and can be used by students and faculty.
* These technologies must be installed in the classroom.

Teaching Practices

One set of questions asked respondents to indicate how frequently they use specific teaching practices for their classes and/or students.

Teaching Practice	Very Frequently	Frequently	Occassionally	Rarely	Never
I structure instructional time so students learn by listening to me or other experts.	37%	41%	16%	5%	0%
I expect students to spend a significant amount of time interacting with the course material in preparation for class.	27%	40%	25%	8%	0%
I encourage students to ask me questions during class and/or as questions arise.	76%	21%	3%	0%	0%
I encourage students to respond to questions posed by other students.	36%	27%	23%	12%	2%
I require students to work in groups.	36%	25%	18%	10%	11%
I structure instructional time so that students interact with one another about course concepts.	37%	25%	18%	12%	8%
I encourage students to use different points of view to make an argument.	32%	30%	21%	10%	6%
I provide opportunities for students to reflect on their own learning.	27%	36%	24%	9%	3%
I use the results of class assignments to determine the focus and direction of my instruction.	26%	32%	26%	12%	4%
I provide students with the opportunity to give feedback about the course material and my teaching practices throughout the term.	24%	28%	33%	11%	4%
I use student feedback throughout the term to determine the focus and direction of my instruction.	21%	27%	35%	13%	4%
I connect instructional activities to course learning goals, objectives and/or outcomes.	57%	32%	8%	2%	1%
I connect assessments and assignments to course learning goals, objectives and/or outcomes.	67%	24%	6%	2%	1%
I provide students with the choice as to how they will be assessed, what learning activities they complete, and/or what topics they will study.	6%	15%	24%	26%	29%
I include the use of open educational resources in my course.	16%	22%	26%	18%	18%

When the answers of "Very Frequently" and "Frequently" are added together, the majority of respondents indicated that they do all the practices listed at least frequently, **except for** the question "*I provide students with the choice as to how they will be assessed, what learning activities they complete, and/or what topics they will study*". The majority of respondents (55%) rarely or never engage in this teaching practice.

Experiential and Inquiry-based Learning Opportunities

Another type of teaching practice asked about in our survey related to experiential and inquiry-based learning opportunities provided to students. We provided the following examples of experiential learning opportunities: experiments, community-based learning projects, fieldwork, field trips, etc., and inquiry-based learning opportunities: student-developed questions, etc.

Time Spent on Teaching-related Activities

We asked respondents to indicate how many hours per term they spent on specific teaching-related activities, and also to rank how instructional time is used.

Respondents indicated that they spent between 4 and 1106 hours on the following activities per term[6]:

- 35% of instructor time is spent preparing for specific classes
- 25% of instructor time is spent marking assignments and/or exams
- 15% of instructor time is spent meeting with students outside of class
- 13% of instructor time is spent sourcing new content to replace or supplement the textbook
- 13% of instructor time is spent interacting with students online

For in-class teaching activities, respondents ranked activities in the following order, from most time spent to least time spent[7].

1. Lecturing or Presenting Course Content
2. Class Discussion
3. Small Group Discussion
4. Student-led Activities
5. Small Group Activities
6. Other Activities (not specified)
7. Student Peer Reviewed Activities
8. Exam, Quizzed, or In-class Assignments
9. Experiential Learning Activities

While "student peer reviewed activities" was ranked 7th, it also received the largest N/A response. Almost half of the respondents indicated that this activity was not applicable to the classes that they taught. In addition, 43% of respondents indicated "experiential learning activities" was not applicable (ranked 9th) and 38% of respondents indicated that "student-led activities" was not applicable (ranked 4th).

Expectations of Student Preparation

Respondents were also asked how they expect students to prepare for their classes. They were provided with twelve possible preparation activities and asked which activities they expect of students. Respondents were able to select as many (or none) of the activities listed. Based on the number of respondents who indicated they expect each activity, the activities can be ranked in the following order (from most expected to least expected).

[6] It should be noted that a typical full-time position at 40 hours per week (8 hours per day, 5 days a week) results in a total of approximately 2080 hours per year (or 640 hours during a typical 4-month term). Assuming respondents answered accurately, these results imply that some instructors are spending almost 70 hours per week on just these five tasks. Of the 316 respondents who answered this question, 8 indicated they worked more than 640 hours per term on just these five tasks. The average, however, is approximately 170 hours per term on these five tasks (or 11 hours per week).

[7] In addition to ranking each activity between 1 and 9, respondents also had an N/A option. When calculating the total ranking for all respondents, the counts associated with the N/A option were removed.

1. Review course material, but no assessments.
2. Work collaboratively on group assignments.
3. Review course material and complete assessments.
4. Write short papers or other brief assignments.
5. Write research papers or conduct major projects.
6. Work on problems or worksheets that do not contribute to a grade.
7. Work on reflective assignments like discussion boards, blogs, learning portfolios, etc.
8. Participate in experiential learning activities.
9. Work on problems or worksheets that contribute to a grade.
10. Design experiments, projects, assessment questions, presentations, etc.
11. Peer-review work and provide feedback.
12. Other activities.

For "other activities" respondents were able to write the activities they expected, those activities included: labs that needed to be completed before class, rehearsal for performance-related classes, completing online modules, and preparing for clinical procedures.

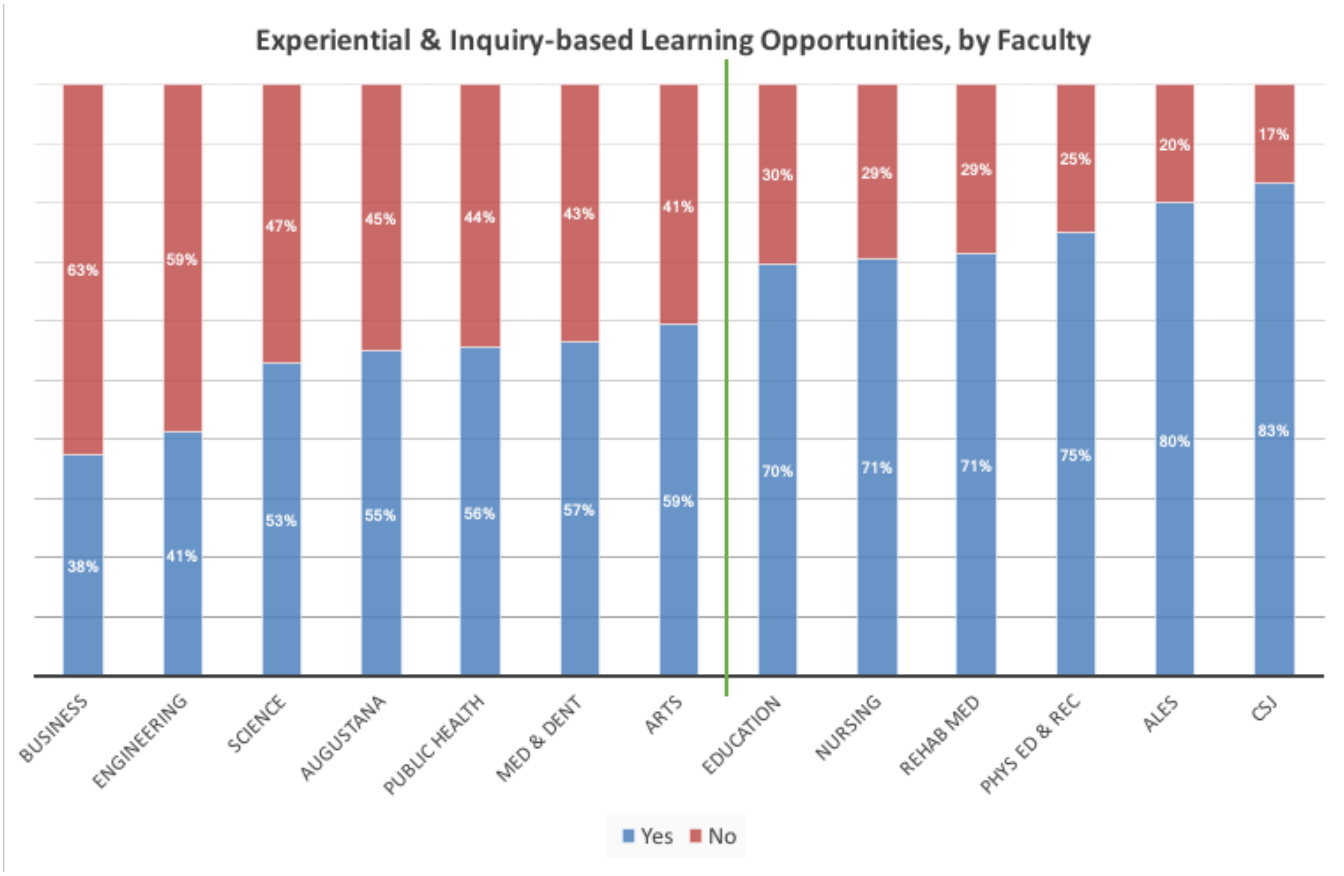
Comparisons to the 2014 UBC Survey

- ***26%*** of respondents to the UBC survey indicated they "Frequently" provide students with a choice as to how they will be assessed, what learning activities will be completed, or what topics will be studied. ***41% of UBC respondents*** indicated that they do this "Occasionally." This is compared to ***15% and 24% of U of A respondents, respectively***.
- 53% of respondents to the UBC survey indicated they provide students with experiential learning opportunities, compared with 61% of U of A respondents.
- UBC and U of A survey respondents reported spending similar amounts of time on teaching preparation activities during a term.

Experiential & Inquiry-based Learning Opportunities - Faculty Comparisons

In asking about experiential and inquiry-based learning opportunities for students, we provided the following examples of experiential learning opportunities: experiments, community-based learning projects, fieldwork, field trips, etc., and inquiry-based learning opportunities: student-developed questions, etc. For the U of A as a whole, 61% of respondents indicated they provide their students with experiential and/or inquiry-based learning activities in class (represented by the vertical green line) and responses varied by faculty.

Figure 7: Percentage of respondents who do and do not offer experiential and inquiry-based learning opportunities to their students, by faculty.



However, given that experiential learning was ranked lowest for in-class teaching activities, and considering some respondents' comments, it is not clear that there is a substantial amount of time spent on experiential learning in large classes.

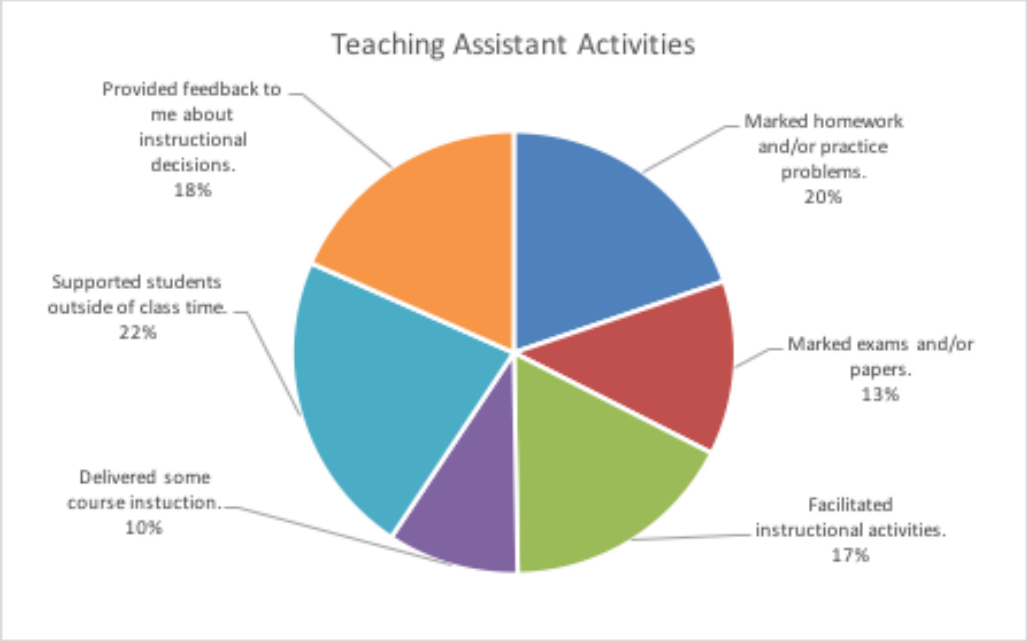
"3 hours of my course (i.e. one class per semester) is used for a field trip where we visit different communities in Edmonton using a series of questions tied to curriculum to guide student observation & learning. I also use role modelling in my course for students to engage in a case study exercise and design an intervention during the last 4 weeks of term. Guest lecturers from Faculty and also from the practice field are used about 5 times throughout the semester with never more than 2 hours of lecture to 1 hour of small group activity/discussion of concepts."

Teaching Assistants

One question in the survey was dedicated to Teaching Assistants, or the lack thereof, and the activities normally assigned to TAs by respondents. The question was answered by 317 respondents who were allowed to select as many answer options as applied to them.

Just over half of the respondents (51%) indicated that they did not have a TA for the course being referenced in the survey. This means the remaining TA-related activities applied to 49% of the respondents (or 155 respondents). Because these 155 respondents were able to select more than one activity, a total of 354 activities were selected by these respondents.

Figure 8: Types of activities performed by TAs (49% of the respondents, N = 317).



Fifty-four (54) respondents, or 17%, provided a written comment as to the other activities performed by their TAs. Those activities include:

- Staffed a help desk.
- Ran the labs.
- Proctored exams.
- Developed content for and instructed seminars.

Comparisons to the 2014 UBC Survey

- ***53% of respondents to the UBC survey indicated that they seek feedback from their TAs when making instructional decisions, compared to 18% of respondents from the U of A.***
- ***35% of respondents to the UBC survey indicated that TAs delivered some course instruction, compared to 10% of respondents from the U of A.***
- ***61% of UBC respondents indicated they had TAs, as opposed to 49% of U of A respondents.***

Teaching-related Research (Scholarship of Teaching & Learning, SoTL)

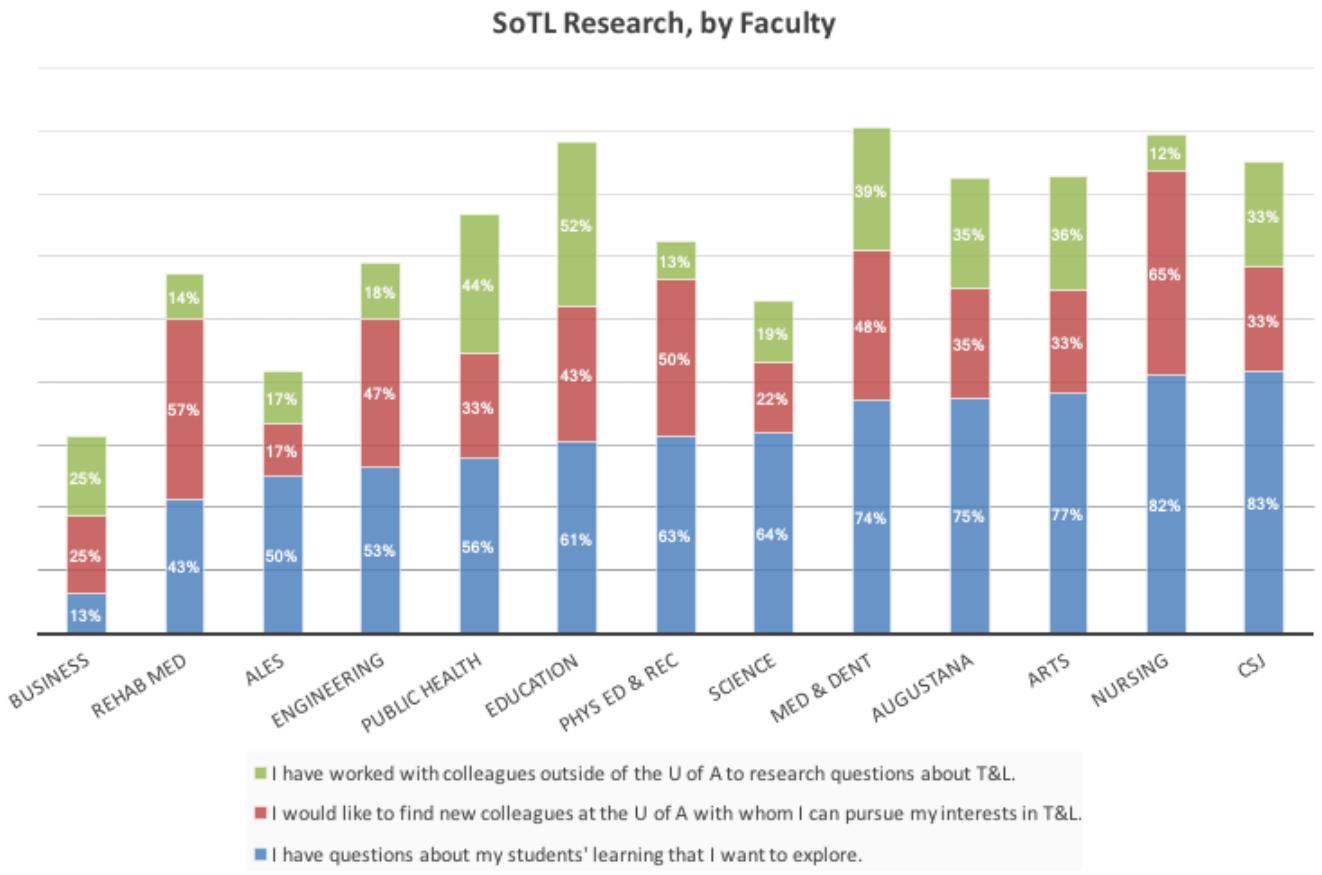
Respondents indicated a high amount of interest in scholarship of teaching and learning. They were asked to indicate which of the six statements were true for them and could select as many of the options that applied to them. The six statements are listed below in order of how many respondents indicated the statement was true for them.

1. I have questions about my students' learning that I want to explore – 66%.
2. I have researched questions about teaching and learning within my own classroom – 58%.
3. I have worked with colleagues at the U of A to research questions about teaching and learning – 51%.
4. I would like to connect my interests in teaching and learning to a recognized body of research – 39%.
5. I would like to find new colleagues at the U of A with whom I can pursue my interests in teaching and learning – 36%.
6. I have worked with colleagues outside of the U of A to research questions about teaching and learning – 28%.

Teaching-related Research – Faculty Comparisons

Nursing (82%) and Campus-Saint Jean (83%) were the faculties with the highest percent of respondents who wanted to explore SoTL topics, both of which are **well above** the university average of 66%. Nursing is also the faculty with the highest percent of respondents who want to work with other U of A colleagues on SoTL research projects.

Figure 9: Percentage of respondents, by faculty, who have engaged in teaching-related research (SoTL).

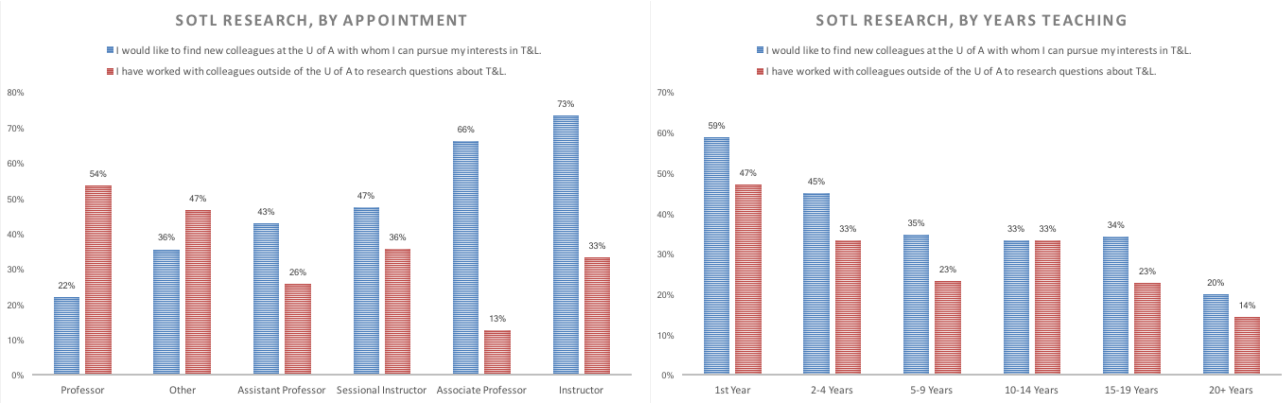


It is also interesting to note that:

- The statement *I have questions about my students' learning that I want to explore* also had the **highest average** response (61%) of the six SoTL statements included in the survey, indicating that more instructors are interested investigating student learning than have already done so.
- Medicine & Dentistry respondents had the **largest ratio** of positive responses per respondent to all six SoTL statements (i.e., each respondent provided a positive response to an average of 3.35 statements).

Research shows it is important for instructors to have colleagues with whom to discuss teaching and learning, and in particular, to have significant interactions with trusted colleagues. Thus, we examined how many respondents have collaborated in their SoTL work and how many were interested in finding new colleagues. There are some important differences between the professorial ranks and instructors in terms of their interest in finding and collaborating with colleagues on scholarship related to teaching and learning.

Figure 70: Responses to SoTL research statements by current appointment and the number of years teaching at the U of A.



Perhaps not surprisingly, due to where they are in their careers,

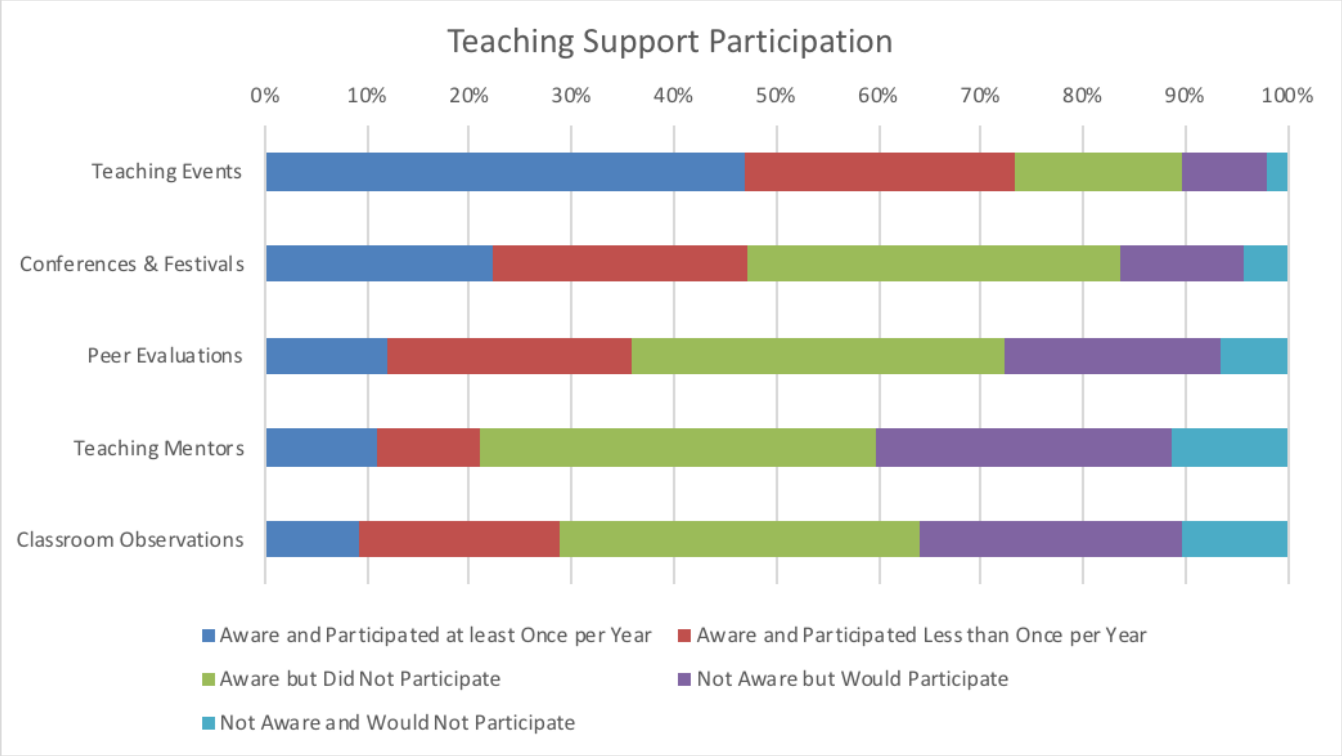
- Professors had the **highest** response to the statement *I have worked with colleagues outside of the U of A to research questions about T&L* at 54%, and the lowest regarding wanting to find new colleagues with whom to pursue T&L interests (22%). Associate Professors reported the lowest collaborations with colleagues outside the UofA at 13%, but all levels of professors and instructors expressed interest in finding new colleagues at UofA.
- Instructors and respondents who are in their first year of teaching at the U of A had the **highest** response to the statement *I would like to find new colleagues at the U of A with whom I can pursue my interests in T&L*. While interest declines with increasing number of years, presumably because they have met people over time, 34% of all respondents who have taught at the U of A for 15-19 years are still interested in finding new colleagues with whom to pursue their T&L interests.

Teaching Support

One major component of the survey included questions regarding the type and usefulness of teaching support that respondents received from the University.

One question listed five types of personal supports available to U of A instructors and asked respondents to indicate their familiarity with the support and whether they had used it in the past.

Figure 8: Awareness of and participation in various teaching support activities (N = 301).



The activity with the most participation from respondents is Teaching Events; 73% are aware and have participated at some point. These events can include lectures, workshops, seminars, clubs, etc. Several respondents indicated they participate in a Teaching Interest Group within their faculty.

Considering our University's policy for multi-faceted evaluation of teaching, there was a fairly high percentage of respondents (> 20%) who said they were not aware of, but would participate in, peer evaluations and classroom observations. The least utilized support activity is Teaching Mentors[8]; 79% were either not aware or were aware but did not participate.

[8] The availability of teaching mentors and peer evaluators will differ by faculty.

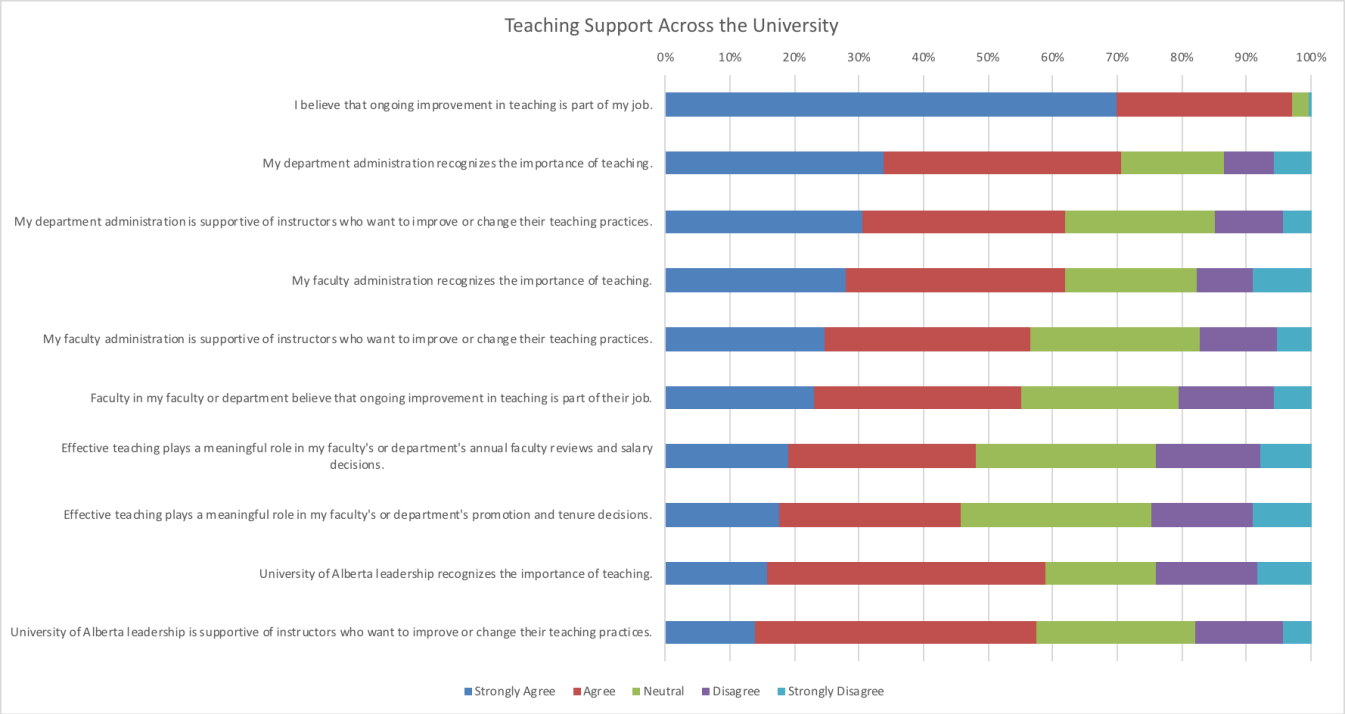
Teaching Support Participation – Faculty Comparisons

- The **majority** of respondents from **most** faculties (except ALES, Business, and Public Health) indicated they were aware of and had participated in teaching and learning conferences and festivals.
    - Augustana, CSJ, Education, Medicine & Dentistry, Nursing, Physical Education & Recreation, Rehabilitation Medicine, and Science respondents were **above** the institutional average of 46% of respondents who were aware of and had participated in conferences and festivals.
- The **majority** of respondents from Arts, Medicine & Dentistry, Public Health, and Rehabilitation Medicine indicated they were aware of and had participated in peer evaluation activities. And all were above the U of A average of 33%.
- The **majority** of respondents from Medicine & Dentistry and Rehabilitation Medicine indicated they were aware of and had participated in teaching mentor activities. They were both above the U of A average of 22%.
    - Arts, Augustana, and Nursing were also **above** the U of A average for being aware of and participating in teaching mentor activities, but the **majority** of respondents from these faculties had never participated in these activities.
- The **majority** of respondents from Arts, Augustana, and Rehabilitation Medicine indicated they were aware of and had participated in classroom observation activities. These faculties were also above the U of A average of 24%.
    - Education and Public Health were also **above** the U of A average of respondents who were aware of and had participated in classroom observations, but the **majority** of respondents from these faculties were aware of these activities but had never participated in them.

Teaching Support Perceptions – University, Faculty, Department

Respondents were asked their opinions on whether the university, faculties and departments support them and their teaching practices. Overall, "Agree" was the most common response amongst all statements listed. And the combination of "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses significantly outweigh the combination of "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" responses for every statement.

Figure 12: Levels of agreement with the statements about various support respondents receive at the university (N = 299).



Compared to responses to questions about the importance of teaching, responses (for "Strongly Agree" and "Agree") were much lower when it came to the statements regarding effective teaching playing a meaningful role in annual reviews and salary decisions, and promotions and tenure decisions (48% and 46%). In fact, the statement *Effective teaching plays a meaningful role in my faculty's or department's promotion and tenure decisions* received the highest response rate in the "Neutral" category, the only statement with such a distribution.

Comparisons to the 2014 UBC Survey

- 55% of respondents from the UBC survey indicated they knew about and accessed UBC's Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, compared with 65% of U of A respondents.
- Statements about overall university, faculty-level, and department-level administration support for teaching improvement activities are very similar between UBC and U of A (no more than 5% differences for "strongly agree" and "agree"). On average, ***respondents at both institutions strongly agree that their local contexts (department, then faculty) recognize the importance of teaching more than the University leadership, but less than half agree that teaching plays a meaningful role in salary, promotion, and tenure decisions***.

Challenges & Changes Comments

At the end of the survey, respondents were provided with four chances to give open-ended comments on the various aspects of teaching and learning at the U of A. One of these open-ended questions asked: *What do you consider to be your biggest challenge to teaching? What changes could the U of A make to help you overcome these challenges?* Over 280 respondents provided a written response to this question[9], including:

- Not enough time (to teach, prepare, mark, etc.).
  - *"I don't have enough hours in my day to prepare properly and neither do the students"*
  - *"I'd say cuts. I want to teach well, but I am paid little, receive limited support, and the workload is crushing."*
  - *"Time required to do the job right"*
- Large class sizes.
  - *"dealing with increasing enrollments and resources not increasing proportionately"*
  - *"Student engagement in larger classes."*
  - *"Number of students-hard to create assessments and classroom activities that are always effective with over 100 students. Unsure if changes could be made-a reality of a large professional program"*
  - *"Class sizes are too large which limits the ability to properly assess students and include blended learning or hands on work."*
- Lack of resources for teaching (including TAs, training, classrooms, etc.).
  - *"inadequate departmental/faculty funds for TAs to help with meaningful marking"*
  - *"The University could help by providing more TA support or allowing for smaller classes"*
  - *"not enough training before teaching"*
  - *"there are no collaborative spaces on campus where students can engage in active learning; without space for creativity, we cannot expect our students to be creative"*
- Being a sessional instructor (less support, less pay, career issues, etc.).
  - *"There are some problems with timing of administrative requirements for sessional instructors. The sessional instructor should be provided with keys, office space and course access earlier than a few weeks prior to teaching. When students are in distress there are many different resources available but it can be confusing when so many different contacts are required for a single student in distress. If one contact was available it would make more sense."*
  - *"More support for sessional instructors such as a temporary office"*
  - *"Not having a permanent teaching position where I know what I will be teaching consistently from year to year to allow me to plan and develop new content that I know can be built upon from year to year instead of prepping a new course and only teaching it once. Have more Career Stream positions for teaching faculty."*
  - *"I don't have enough time as a contract instructor to a) give my students the feedback they want and b) experiment with new approaches in the classroom. The irregular nature of my employment is by far the biggest challenge I face."*

[9] Comments have been copied directly from the survey data, they have not been edited for spelling or grammar. Identifying information has been removed.

- Balancing research and teaching responsibilities.
    - *"Teaching is seen as inferior to research. Important researchers are highlighted by the university and given promotions while teachers are looked down upon as unimportant necessities."*
    - *"Time - balancing the time needed for good teaching against the need to spend time on research and service."*
    - *"lack of time to prepare new and innovative approaches. Research is king in my faculty and it is prudent to spend more time on research endeavours (grants, papers) than teaching."*
- Lack of importance placed on teaching for tenure and promotional decisions.
    - *"Lack of merit-based increases based on teaching accomplishments."*
    - *"Reliance on student evaluations as the only metric of success"*
    - *"IDQ used for promotion. Stop using an outdated performance indicator."*
- Lack of focus by students.
    - *"student motivation and engagement; there are already sessions offered that address this and do help"*
    - *"Students who are woefully unprepared"*
    - *"Students' different levels of entrance knowledge. International programs and english requirements."*
    - *"getting students to become enthusiastic about learning"*
    - *"A majority of students seem to expect to accumulate knowledge (that anyone can look up on their phone) as their core task and resist higher levels of learning and thinking, particularly if the evaluation of it cannot be supported with simplistic rubrics. It would help to have more consistent messages (including from other courses) that acquiring and repeating facts is not actually very useful in the workplace."*

Influences

Two open-ended comment questions focused on things that had influenced respondents when it came to their teaching practices. One question asked about factors that had a positive influence on their teaching, while the other question asked about factors that had a negative influence on their teaching. 290 respondents provided feedback on positive influences and 281 respondents provided feedback on negative influences. Those responses include:

Positive Influences

- *"Empathy"*
- *"Relationships I have with other faculty members (and colleagues from other institutes) that I developed prior to joining this faculty."*
- *"Support from my department."*
- *"CTL and department and faculty financial resources provided to improve teaching materials. Attending lectures by others on teaching practices."*
- *"First, my students and their enthusiasm and inquisitiveness. Then my own teachers, formal and informal. Then the inspiring teachers among my colleagues."*
- *"students genuinely appreciate your dedication to teaching"*
- *"I was allowed to tailor my course however I wanted."*
- *"good library"*

- *"Having good TAs! Having constructive feedback from engaged students."*
- *"My faculty is very open to trying unique teaching practices and are very willing to share resources, support each other, etc."*
- *"my desire to improve, not being afraid of trying new things."*

Negative Influences

- *"Burdened by poor teaching methods of older, tenured senior faculty who see teaching as a burden."*
- *"Lack of funding and how out of touch senior U of A administration is with challenges and opportunities actual instructors face."*
- *"Fellow faculty who are not in a position to (time, or interest-wise) to develop their own teaching - I often feel singled out and ostracized by others, "Who does he think he is? Does he think he's better than us?" It is not always the academic collaborative environment that I had hoped it would be."*
- *"Lack of recognition for teaching and a continued OVER emphasis on research publications and grants."*
- *"No reward system, no career advancement, lack of enthusiastic support in teaching practice"*
- *"restrictions in teaching and assessment (such as final exam worth 30%), classrooms with no natural light"*
- *"Teaching Load. Politics in Department and University. Always talking about cuts."*
- *"1. having my department admin pressuring me to pass more students without even looking at my coursework to assess if it is appropriate or not 2. hearing similar stories from colleagues 3. having my chair put comments from ratemyprofessors.com and reddit on my FEC evaluation"*
- *"Departmental lack of interest in teaching, poor or nonexistent instruction at the departmental level."*
- *"Hurtful student comments."*
- *"Colleagues"*
- *"worry about contract renewals"*
- *"Micro-management"*
- *"lack of university pedagogy training during my Ph.D."*

Comments

The last open-ended comment question asked respondents if they had any other general comments they wanted to include. 92 respondents had something more to say, including:

- *"Perhaps a welcome package for new sessional instructors (with information about teaching resources, professional development, and University resources) would be very helpful."*
- *"I would like to see more inter-faculty interaction and sharing of teaching/learning approaches and assessment ideas."*
- *"The students are fantastic and have made all the efforts I put in - hours of finding ways to make the course fresh, relevant, melding popular videos, comedy, news stories, ritual objects, in class activities etc, into class- worthwhile. It is the students who have motivated me to keep doing my best as I constantly get so much positive feedback, kind comments on my teaching style and they try very hard in their work and I can tell that they have really learnt a lot. Seeing those students learn and progress that far and consistently come to class with a positive attitude and desire to learn makes it worthwhile."*
- *"It is hard to be an effective teacher today. I am surrounded by an environment that lifts up research at the cost of teaching, by teachers who do the absolute minimum (reusing assignments and test banks, getting TA's to mark midterms, etc) because there is no recognition or job security, and an administration who has very little teaching experience dictating ways to teach that won't work in my particular classes. I feel part of my job as a good teacher is to fight against the university's attempts to make learning harder for students."*
- *"We need to simplify the learning environment: over the last two decades it has become increasingly regulated, overloaded, and complex. Less is more..."*
- *"I would use CTL more if it wasn't so focused on teaching large science and social science courses."*
- *"I came from Europe to UofA and found it outdated regarding teaching and learning. There has been some improvement but it's like dragging colleagues into the 20th never mind the 21st century. In many European countries you are required to a course before you are allowed to teach even at postsecondary level or at least produce a portfolio supporting your teaching experience. I was amazed at the lack of knowledge of colleaguse about basics like learning style and curriculum development."*
- *Over the past few semesters, the number of students who have been using Student Accessibility Services in my classes has been increasing at an alarming rate. While I have a very small sample size, I worry that this increasing rate may be pervasive. We need to figure out if/why there is a pattern."*
- *"I am really pleased with the teaching resources on campus (TLEF, CTL, etc), however, I think there is opportunity in advancing the culture."*
- *"Teaching - and learning - at the university is my dream job! Although I know I have had the occasional encounter with students who are frustrated or discouraged, or even mean-spirited, these rare occasions are overwhelmed with the positive interactions with so many students that in the end, make it a wonderful experience. I guess I am passionate about teaching in this field of expertise. :)"*

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Committee on the Learning Environment and in particular, Stanley Varnhagen, for input on the survey and question design.

Bibliography

Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M. C., & Norman, M. K. (2010). *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching*. John Wiley & Sons.

Bain, K. (2011). *What the best college teachers do*. Harvard University Press.

Bates, S., Han, A., Briseño Garzón, A., Whitehead, L., Birol, G. (2015) *2014 Teaching Practices Survey: Expanded Insights*. Retrieved from https://ctlt2013.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2015/09/TPS_report_FINAL.pdf

Briseño-Garzón, A., Han, A., Birol, G., Bates, S., & Whitehead, L. (2016). Faculty Perceptions of Challenges and Enablers of Effective Teaching in a Large Research-Intensive University: Preliminary Findings. *Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching*, *9*, 133-144.

Roxå, T., & Mårtensson, K. (2009). Significant conversations and significant networks–exploring the backstage of the teaching arena. *Studies in Higher Education*, *34*(5), 547-559.

Trigwell, K., & Prosser, M. (2004). Development and use of the approaches to teaching inventory. *Educational Psychology Review*, *16*(4), 409-424.

Trowler, P. (2008). *Cultures and change in higher education: Theories and practices*. Macmillan International Higher Education.

Wieman, C., & Gilbert, S. (2014). The Teaching Practices Inventory: a new tool for characterizing college and university teaching in mathematics and science. *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, *13*(3), 552-569.

Wuetherick, B., & Yu, S. (2016). The Canadian teaching commons: The scholarship of teaching and learning in Canadian higher education. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, *2016*(146), 23-30.