From the Editor: Our First Newsletter

This is the first newsletter of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. The Society is in fact a much more informal -- even irregular -- organization than its rather grandiose name implies. It has neither a constitution, nor a president, nor even an executive committee. It does have a modest budget, and does include a group of individuals who meet occasionally and are willing to devote time to such activities as organizing a conference -- or putting together this newsletter. In fact the Society's conferences anticipate the sponsoring organization itself by some four years. The first conference was held in Guelph in 1981 with the theme 'Teaching and Learning in the 80s'.

Subsequent conferences have been held at Lakehead University, the University of Windsor, the University of Western Ontario, and the 1985 conference will take place at the University of Ottawa. These events have been planned by a small group of enthusiasts, committed to the idea of improving the quality of teaching and learning in higher education. Local conference organization has been handled by the instructional development office in the university concerned, and attendance at the conferences has slowly but steadily increased.

The idea of using the annual meetings as a basis for a society was first mooted among the members of the largely self-appointed programme committee for the 1984 conference in London, that included Ab Moore, Mei-Fei Elrick, Terry Gillespie and Don Macintosh from the University of Guelph, Christopher Knapper and Bill Shalinsky from Waterloo, Ron Sheese from York University, Allan Blizzard and Dale Roy from McMaster, and Bill Newby, Harry and Shirley Murray and Bonnie Haaland from Western. It was decided to use $5.00 of the conference registration fee to help launch the society: thus all those attending the conference and paying the fee became charter Society members -- whether they were aware of it or not! There was some debate about the name of the new organization (the same name would also be used for the annual conferences). The focus on teaching and learning in higher education was obvious, but should we not also add 'Ontario', or at least 'Canadian'? Throwing national modesty to the winds for once, and using the rationale that an organization with no assets had nothing to lose, we decided to use the all-embracing name you see at the top of this page. As far as we know there is no other organization using this title, though there are a number of societies elsewhere in the world that have a similar concern with teaching and learning in colleges and universities. The most well known are perhaps the British Society for Research into Higher Education, the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia, and the Professional and Organizational Development Network in the United States. We hope to exchange information with these organizations and bring news of some of their activities to Society members in future newsletters.

In the short term the Society's activities will be limited, in keeping with our modest resources. The major event of 1985 will be the Ottawa Conference. Another initiative is the launching of this newsletter. This first issue is inevitably something of a makeshift affair. We are including news about the Ottawa Conference, with details of some highlights from the preliminary programme. There is a list of forthcoming meetings and seminars that focus on aspects of teaching and learning, both in Canada and abroad. A number of colleagues from Canadian universities have submitted news items on activities in their own institutions (these of course have been specially solicited, but we are most anxious to receive similar news items from any of our readers). Lastly, we are including as a special bonus insert a listing of teaching improvement (instructional development, if you prefer) centres in Canadian universities. We welcome your comments and contributions.

Christopher Knapper,
University of Waterloo,

STLHE, Teaching Resource Office, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3G1
Exciting Programme for Fifth Conference

The University of Ottawa, in the nation's capital, will host the Society's Fifth Annual Conference on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, taking place from June 16 - 19, 1985. The conference programme is now complete (Society members should already have received details), and includes over 50 different sessions involving more than 100 speakers. For the first time some sessions will be offered in French, reflecting Ottawa's status as a bilingual university in a bilingual city. Presentation formats include panel discussions, workshops, demonstrations, and poster sessions. Throughout the programme the emphasis will be on informality and audience involvement which has been an attractive feature of previous conferences. Topics covered in the sessions range widely over a number of themes and issues related to teaching and learning in higher education. These include faculty evaluation, training of teaching assistants, student learning styles, self-directed student learning, small group teaching, interdisciplinary instruction, teaching by telephone, adult education, distance learning, teaching thinking and problem-solving, teaching writing skills, advising and counselling students, student assessment, technology and teaching (including sessions on the electronic blackboard, videotex, interactive video, computer-based learning, and computer literacy), and a variety of sessions focussing on clinical teaching. For those who would like to progress from taking part in workshops to actually organizing them there is a full day session on designing effective workshops.

A highlight of the conference will be an opening keynote session on 'The Great Brain Robbery and the Bovey Express' in which a panel will discuss recent accusations about the declining quality of university undergraduate education in Canada during the past decade. The conference also includes a number of social events, including an opening reception sponsored by the University's Vice-Rector and a Tuesday evening banquet that it is hoped will include presentation of the annual OCUFA teaching awards.

Registration for the conference costs $75.00 before May 11th and $90.00 afterwards, which includes a wine and cheese reception, banquet, lunches, and coffee, tea, or juice during breaks. There is a special daily rate of $15.00, and students can register for the whole conference for $20.00, excluding meals. Very reasonably priced university residence accommodation is available near the conference site. Registration forms can be obtained from the conference convenor, Patrick Babin, at 621 King Edward Avenue, Ottawa K1N 6N5.

Listing of University Teaching/Learning Units

Enclosed with this newsletter is a list of instructional development units and committees in Canadian universities. This was recently compiled by the Society based upon responses to a mailed questionnaire to all universities across the country. The purpose of the exercise was to try and identify individuals, offices, or units with a special responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and learning in the institution. For a number of years an up-to-date listing of such contact people in Ontario Universities was maintained and distributed by OUPID (the Ontario Universities Programme for Instructional Development). Since OUPID and its successor organization (the Office for Teaching and Learning of the Council of Ontario Universities) was disbanded in 1982 no new listing has been published, and a number of us have made do ever since with a yellowing sheet which has become progressively more inaccurate. We believe the enclosed list is a comprehensive guide to teaching and learning offices and committees in universities across the nation. Response to our survey was high, and many people wrote to say they were looking forward to receiving the list. (If you know of any additions or mistakes, please let us know.) What emerges from the survey is a concentration of formal units in Ontario and Quebec. Some of these are in fact quite large, with half a dozen or so professional staff. In the Maritime and Western Provinces we can count only two or three units, although a number of universities have committees on teaching and learning.

We are in the final stages of preparing a similar list for Canadian colleges. This will be circulated with a future issue of this newsletter.

News from the Universities

In each issue of the newsletter we hope to include news about teaching and learning at colleges and universities throughout Canada. In this issue we are including descriptions of the work of instructional development centres in a number of Ontario universities. Our thanks to the units concerned for responding so quickly to the editor's invitation. In future we would like to include news from as many institutions as possible, both colleges and universities, and we certainly do not intend to restrict this column to institutions with formal teaching and learning centres. We encourage your contributions.

University of Guelph

The Office for Educational Practice at the University of Guelph consists of six units: Instructional Development, Technical Operations, Illustration Services, Media Production, Print Publications and the Telidon Page Creation Centre. These units exist to facilitate and
The Instructional Development Centre is a small office with a campus-wide mandate to enhance teaching and learning at McMaster University. The staff of the office includes a full-time director/consultant, one full-time consultant, a part-time consultant, and a full-time secretory. The Director of the Centre reports to the Vice-President (Academic) through the Chairman of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL). The Chairman of the Committee is a faculty member appointed for a 2-year term.

The Centre attempts to fulfill its mandate through the following in-house activities:
- workshops for faculty and teaching assistants to assist in the acquisition of knowledge and skills related to teaching. (Some of these are led by the staff of the Centre; others are led by outside experts);
- seminars describing new initiatives in teaching, many led by innovative McMaster faculty members;
- mini-courses which blend information about teaching skills with progressive practice in those skills (e.g. Course-Design, Working in Small Groups, Lecturing);
- consultation with individual faculty members on projects initiated by the faculty member, including support of a grant application to the UCTL;
- private and confidential help for individual faculty who wish to review their teaching efforts;
- maintenance of a current library of resources related to enhancing university teaching and learning;
- the publication of articles, books and newsletters to help the university community keep current in teaching practice;
- where new skills have been identified as helpful, training of faculty and teaching assistants in those skills (new evaluation techniques, use of microcomputers, etc.);
- administrative and research support for the activities of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning including: support of projects (TA Day, Evaluation of Teaching Report, etc.); administration of Teaching and Learning Grants program.

University of Ottawa

The Teaching Resources Service, responsible for instructional development at the University of Ottawa, celebrated its sixth anniversary on February 1, 1985, according to its coordinator, Patrick Babin.

As part of its mandate, TRS, through a Grants Committee, awards mini-grants to professors who want to use innovations in their teaching. $150,000 has been budgeted for that purpose by the Board of Governors. At least 80 professors have benefitted to date.

A strong and active Senate Committee on Teaching Resources sets policy for TRS; it is made up of a representative from each Faculty. The Media-Users Subcommittee coordinates the various media services on campus.

This spring, TRS is sponsoring a two-day teaching clinic which will provide a smorgasbord of pedagogical activities for the whole university, including part-time professors and TAs.

Another exciting development is the establishment of the Office of Educational Development in the Faculty of Health Sciences with Dr. Bernard Lefebvre as director.
The commitment of his professors is mind boggling! Not only do they volunteer for a three-day off-campus pedagogical workshop, they also pay a registration fee, room, and board.

**University of Waterloo**

The Teaching Resource Office at the University of Waterloo was established in 1976 with a mandate to provide advice to the faculty on teaching and learning, their evaluation and improvement. The office presently has a staff of three: two academics (Christopher Knapper and Bill Shalinsky) and an administrative assistant (Wendy Macintosh), supplemented by part-time student help.

On-going activities of the TRO include publication of a newsletter, consultation on teaching with individuals, departments and other groups, coordination of the University’s Distinguished Teacher Award Programme (each year three teachers are honoured by a presentation at Convocation, a permanent citation in the university calendar, and a monetary award), maintenance of a comprehensive library, organisation of seminars and workshops, and some research activity.

The TRO Library contains over 5,000 books, articles, and reports on various aspects of teaching and learning in higher education -- all catalogued on a computerized data base that can be consulted by anyone in the university with access to a terminal. The library includes the former OUPID collection of resource materials, which was donated to the TRO when the Ontario programme was disbanded. Material from the TRO Library can be loaned to other institutions on payment of a small fee to cover postage, mailing, and/or copying costs.

Research undertaken by the office focuses on applied educational problems that are of direct concern to the university. Recent examples include a survey of the characteristics and attitudes of correspondence students, a study of the reasons for non-enrollment by students who fail to follow up an initial inquiry about the university’s distance education courses, and an investigation into the factors influencing Grade 13 students decisions about post-secondary education.

The TRO policy is to work through established departments and programmes, and hence few general workshops are offered. However a large number of collaborative activities take place -- for example training of teaching assistants in conjunction with a large number of individual departments, brown bag seminars on educational computing run in conjunction with the University’s Computers in Education Committee, regular workshops on marking run for the Correspondence Programme, training in effective lecturing and presentation undertaken for a number of academic units, and a proposed seminar on sabbatical leaves, to be co-sponsored with the Faculty Association.

---

**University of Western Ontario**

The Educational Development Office at Western began this academic year under the direction of a new Coordinator. Dr. Howard R. Woodhouse replaced Dr. Bill Newby in September, 1984.

As has become a tradition with our office, we ran our fall orientation program for new and current faculty and graduate students. This year’s Perspectives on Teaching drew an audience of approximately 130 individuals, and featured such sessions as ‘Self-Directed Learning’, ‘Fostering Intellectual Curiosity in a Time of Pragmatism’, ‘Conducting Seminars and Discussion Groups’, ‘Teaching Women Students’ and ‘The Case Method of Teaching’. As a new edition this academic year, we offered a series entitled ‘Four Workshops on Teaching’, during the months of January and graduate grants attracted participants from several faculties on campus. Future plans include workshops specifically geared to graduate teaching assistants.

Dr. Woodhouse undertook the task of improving liaison between the Educational Development Office and Deans and Department Chairmen on campus, and has met with most faculties to discuss the developing role of the office. The confidential teaching consultation service is once again active, with a dozen members of faculty taking advantage of the opportunity to take an in-depth look at their teaching. In addition to this service, the office continues to act on requests from departments and faculties with regard to teaching and evaluation procedures. And finally, the office has continued publication of our thrice-yearly newsletter.

**Reflections**

Future roles for the office include a heavier emphasis on empirical research, a continuation of series of workshops throughout the year, and promotion of our services to all academic units on campus. We will also continue our involvement with the introduction and promotion of computer-aided instruction at the University of Western Ontario.

**University of Windsor**

So far during this academic year the Program for Teaching and Learning at the University of Windsor has run four workshops. Before classes began in September we ran our annual sessions for New Faculty and Sessional Instructors, and for Teaching Assistants. In November a noon-time session on Preparation of True/False and Multiple Choice Exams was held, and a new venture was a recent hands-on workshop on Instructional Media for Teaching Assistants. Two services which the office has continued to offer are the Academic Visitor Programme, and Classroom Videotaping Services, both designed to assist faculty improve their teaching style. Our Guidelines for Teaching Assistants has been updated as well as the I.D. Consultants booklet, and a new booklet, Resources and
Sources. has been produced and distributed to all faculty members. The Program for Teaching and Learning has been involved also in discussions leading up to the development of a permanent student counselling service on campus. Future plans include a seminar for prospective sabbaticants, a workshop on stress and its management, and a visit by Mei-Fei Elrick from Guelph to conduct her workshop on supervising graduate students.

Teaching and Learning Improvement -- Some Ideas to Try

In each newsletter we hope to have some practical advice on teaching and learning that faculty may use to improve the quality of their instruction. We are grateful to Dale Roy from McMaster University for the following contribution, and welcome other submissions for future issues.

York University

The Educational Development Office at York University provides programmes and services to faculty members, graduate students and administrators. In 1984-85 the Office sponsored four seminar series: on microcomputers for faculty members in the humanities, social sciences and fine arts; on the use of media in the classroom; on women's studies; and a series for teaching assistants. Many of the events are jointly sponsored by the Educational Development Office and an academic department or faculty. During the Fall term, a half-day workshop for new academic administrators and a one-day conference on teaching in women's studies were held. The Director worked with a class of MBA students on presentation techniques and a third year research methods class in sociology on the development of a course evaluation system. The Office provides faculty members with the opportunity to have a class videotaped for self-evaluation purposes.

The Resource Centre of 5,000 books, articles and journals is an important part of the Office. Tables of contents of new books and journals, copies of conference papers and articles as well as conference information are circulated to faculty members and administrators. This year over 700 items have been borrowed from the collection.

The Office also works on special projects such as the development of a review process for academic departments. Publications include a quarterly newsletter, Orientations, a manual of on-campus resources for teaching assistants, a handbook for teaching assistants who are foreign students, and a guide to special libraries. This year annotated bibliographies have been compiled on faculty stress and burnout, professional growth and development for faculty, graduate education, chairing an academic department, and microcomputers in teaching.

Refining a Course

History. In the early 1970's, the University of Massachusetts developed a system whereby an individual instructor could carefully examine a course. The process apparently met a need, since it was quickly adapted and offered at many American and Canadian Universities. The program proved to be extremely beneficial to those who took part, but because of the substantial time required to collect information, it was made available to a very select group of faculty. At McMaster, this meant that at most six instructors could take part in any given year. It seems our own experience was not unique; faculty at the University of Washington revised the original process to greatly reduce the time required, and yet to maintain nearly all of the components that made the original idea so helpful.

The Program. In essence, the course instructor, the students in a particular class, and a third party come together with the intention of modifying the course. Since the instructor has final responsibility, he or she must initiate the process and set boundaries on what parts of the course might be modified.

1. The instructor and the third party meet to discuss the process;
2. The third party collects information about the course during a regular class early in the term (see below);
3. The instructor and third party meet to consider the information collected and to discuss course changes;
4. In the next regular class session, the instructor presents plans for course change;
5. The instructor and third party meet to review progress.

Collecting Information From Students (30 minutes of class time)

- The third party describes the process to students (information is anonymous, available only to the instructor, and will affect the course this term);
- Students are divided into groups of five and asked to arrive at a consensus on the following questions:
  1. What specific parts of the course work well?
  2. What parts of the course need to be refined?
  3. What suggestions do you have for bringing about course improvement?
- After allowing for 10 minutes of discussion, each group is asked to report. The third party records
statements, seeks clarification, and records level of consensus.

Rationale: (if it is so simple, how come it works?)
1. The decision to modify the course is made by the right person, namely by the instructor in consultation with his or her students.
2. Information about the course is collected at a time when it can be useful, rather than after the course is finished.
3. An open discussion of how things are going creates the expectation that everyone involved wants them to go well. (Caution: this can work against the process if there is no desire to act on at least some of the information collected.)
4. No attempt is made to make judgements or to evaluate the course -- all efforts are directed towards the future shape of the course. (As a matter of fact, this particular process fails to generate any so-called hard data.)

5. The neutral third party can promote honest and clear statements about the course but is not in a position of authority in terms of either instructor or students.
6. Initial testing of ideas in small groups means that peer pressure eliminates the comments of those few students with personal grudges or unrealistic expectations of a university course.
7. Students are encouraged to recognize their contribution to the success of the course and are more motivated to make that contribution if given an opportunity to influence the future of the course.
8. The point of the exercise is the future of the course and not simply the instructor's teaching.