

## 1. Personal Information

### Contact Information:

Nominee: Steve Musson

Email = [smusson@langara.bc.ca](mailto:smusson@langara.bc.ca)

Phone = (250) 427-4123

Note: I am currently an online instructor (January – April) and teach from my home in the beautiful mountain resort town of Kimberley, B.C. in the Southern Canadian Rockies.

### Educational Background:

Bachelor of Arts (Political Science) from the University of British Columbia (granted 1984)

Master of Arts (Adult Education) from the University of British Columbia (granted 1994)

### Current Position:

Faculty, Recreation Studies Department, Langara College (Vancouver, BC, Canada)

I have been teaching at Langara College since 1990 (Continuing Studies)

I have been teaching in the Recreation Studies Department since 1995 (20 years!)

### Author of:

School-Age Care: Theory and Practice (1999) (Second Edition)

Leading by Design: A Guide of School Age Care for 9 – 12 Year-olds (1997)

New Youth Challenge (1989) (Second Edition), co-authored with M. Gibbons

### Institution's Media Relations Contact information:

Wendy Watson,

Communications Officer

Langara College

[wwatson@langara.bc.ca](mailto:wwatson@langara.bc.ca)

604-323-5884

## Office of the Provost and Vice-President, Academics & Students

February 2, 2015

STLHE College Sector Educator Award Committee  
McMaster University  
Mills Library, Room 504  
1280 Main Street West  
Hamilton, ON L8S 4L6

Dear Committee Members:

**Re: College Sector Educator Award Nomination: Steve Musson**

It is an honor and a pleasure to provide this nomination letter in support of Mr. Steve Musson, Langara College (Vancouver, BC) and his submission for the "College Sector Educator Award".

Langara College provides students access to a multiplicity of study areas that enrich their learning experiences through the contributions of faculty. I understand this award recognizes and celebrates the accomplishments of individuals who demonstrate, promote and support teaching excellence through peer development.

I want to highlight activities where Steve demonstrates his commitment and enthusiasm for teaching excellence and peer development. As a faculty member with over 20 years of teaching experience, Steve has developed unique and innovative programming that reflects current changes in recreation education at Langara. His methods emphasize student and faculty interactions as well as individual learning processes. He strives to ensure the programs at Langara offer the best education possible.

Steve provides peer coaching and support through formal faculty development programs and collaborates with our Educational Technology (EdTech) department and the Teaching Curriculum and Development Centre (TCDC). He is a regular presenter at faculty workshops sponsored by the Langara Employee Development Centre (LEDC).

Steve is an advocate of utilizing available technological tools. His interest for technology in education is demonstrated by his development of the "Go Forth" pedagogy for several on-line courses in the Bachelor of Recreation Management. He also created a model for on-line instructor evaluations accessed by the Recreation Studies and School of Management for their on-line courses.

In addition to mentoring, coaching and supporting his colleagues in the Recreation Studies department, Steve's dedication to teaching and learning extends directly to students. He pioneered a creative and innovative approach to student engagement through on-line tutoring.

Steve's extensive knowledge and expertise in recreation studies and in building a learning organization have been tapped numerous times. In October 2014, he led a training and development session at the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association Conference in Regina. Closer to home, he was co-facilitator at the May 2014 British Columbia Parks and Recreation Symposium held in Kelowna.

Steve's commitment to educational excellence extends beyond the Langara community. He offers his time, knowledge and expertise throughout the Metro Vancouver community. He has taught skill courses and led outdoor programs for organizations such as Rocky Mountain YMCA, the Boys and Girls Club, West Vancouver Parks and Recreation and UBC Hockey School.

Thank you for considering Steve for the College Sector Educator Award. We are proud of our faculty and fully support his application. I extend an offer to contact me if additional clarification is required.

Yours truly,



Brad O'Hara, Ph.D.  
Provost and Vice-President, Academics & Students

BSO/JR/dm

### 3a. My Statement of Philosophy

My statement of philosophy is divided into three sections:

- The impact I want to have on students,
- My role as an individual Instructor, and
- My role as a member of a teaching team.

#### The Impact I Want to Have on Students

I have a teleological approach to teaching. This means that I put a lot of focus on the purpose of my teaching, both at a general level and at a specific (lesson plan) level. At the general level I have three basic purposes almost regardless of the specific topic or lesson.

When I teach I want to create a culture where students feel that they have permission to think deeply -- about the subject matter and about themselves. I half-joke in the first week of my “Foundations of Leisure and Recreation” course that “You will all be philosophers by the end of Week Five”. They mostly just laugh nervously, then check the course outline to make sure they are in the right class. But you know, by the end of Week Five most of them are posting stuff in D2L that even they find amazing! They have gained the confidence to think deeply.

When I teach I want to help students better understand the “Whys” behind their skilled action (and the “Whys” behind skilled action in recreation leadership generally). I want them to value a sense of purpose in what they do. And I want to show them the purposes (and ideals and aims and values) of high quality recreation leaders.

When I teach I want to create conditions for ‘perspective transformation’ (Mezirow, 1990). Teaching about leisure and intrinsic motivation in a society that over-values work and extrinsic rewards lends itself nicely to perspective transformation. Most students choose the discipline of Recreation Studies because they have a compelling (by somewhat vague and uninformed) sense that leisure, recreation, play, and spirited action is important in their lives, and they want to share that phenomenon with other people. The perspective transformation that I aim at in my teaching is subtle. I do not get them to change their perspective 180 degrees from their original view. Rather, I get them to see that they were right all along! I want them to see that there is something incredibly important about leisure, recreation, play and spirited action. I also work to get them to see that “It’s not about the activities” and that, while fun is a big part of high quality recreation, “meaning” is an even bigger part. In high quality recreation leadership we help to create meaning. And that is usually an important change in students’ perspectives in our programs.

## My Role as an Individual Instructor

Because I have a teleological approach to teaching I continually ask myself: “Are my actions moving me toward my goals as a teacher?” “Am I achieving (or at least approaching) my purpose?” This entails a lot of personal and professional reflection. I engage in what Brookfield (2006) refers to as critically reflective teaching, and what Langer (1997) refers to as mindful teaching. To put it simply: I think a lot about my teaching. I always have. I have reflective journal notes dating all the way back to the very first course I taught in the program over 20 years ago. Here is an excerpt from my journal:

After some struggle (Sessions 1-4) it finally came together in Session #5 (January 19, 1995). I reviewed the ‘Beliefs/Goals/Objectives’ handout, and presented the ‘Self-Design’ graphic on the overhead projector.

Then we went outside to play ‘group juggling’ (as an example of an activity with a deeper purpose than just having fun). It was a hit! Lots of laughing. Their eyes were focused and lively. As the activity was in progress I stood back and I knew that the whole course had just taken a giant step forward.

I also journal about things that don’t go well – about confusions I have, and about lost opportunities, etc. The point is that I am critically reflective. I write about the things I’m trying to accomplish, and I reflect on my progress (or lack thereof) toward those educational aims. I continually revisit and revise my underlying assumptions about good teaching.

I am also committed to improving as an Instructor. I do this chiefly through the process of ‘deliberate practice’ (Ericsson et al, 1993). Good teaching is not just a matter of working hard, nor is it a matter of natural talent. Over the long haul good teaching is a matter of intentionally working on what I am not good at. Almost paradoxically, good teaching is a matter of forcing myself to be a less-than-talented learner. In an article connecting deliberate practice and good teaching, Dunn & Shriner (1999) point out that:

“... there is something that experts do over and above ordinary learning that accounts for the fact that they become and remain experts ... Experts continue to look for and tackle the complexities of a domain, rather than reduce problems to situations that can be handled with routine procedures”. (pp. 631-632).

When we practice the art of teaching we can operate from three different zones. We can operate from our Comfort Zone, and simply practice what we know (and grow stale). We can operate from our Learning Zone, and practice what we don’t-know-yet (and develop as professionals), or we can operate from our Panic Zone (and simply burnout) (Colvin, 2010). One of the ‘secrets’ of deliberate practice – and thus one of the secrets of good teaching – is to make a habit of avoiding operating from your Comfort Zone.

One example of me operating from the Learning Zone is my current self-directed learning project involving making course-related videos with a GoPro camera (the kind extreme skiers, mountain bikers, skydivers, etc. wear on their helmets). I call it a “young person’s camera” –

mostly because my 56 year-old eyes cannot read half of the LED functions on the camera. I don't think like a GoPro camera. For me, learning how to use the camera is painful and time-consuming, or as Dunn & Shriner would say: it is "effortful" (1999, pg. 632). But here's the thing – I feel that digital video holds a lot of promise in terms of online teaching and learning. It is a mode of expression that captures the imagination of many students. Students can tell stories through their videos. And this is important because learning is storied. So I trudge outside and make a fool of myself – an old man with young person's technology. Why? Because that's what I need to learn. Because that's what I need to deliberately practice. There's very little point in me practicing what I already do well. A good teacher always asks: "What is the next challenge in my professional development?"

There is an apparent paradox involved in being a good teacher. On the one hand you are supposed to be an expert with a deep knowledge of your discipline. The community-at-large expects you to "know" stuff. But on the other hand, to remain an expert – to be an on-going master of the art of teaching – you need to continually challenge yourself with what you don't know (e.g. dealing with new technology). You need to stay a struggling learner. To work with this apparent paradox I have coined the term 'good-and-improving teacher' in my reflective journal. The term is meant to honour both the 'knowing' aspect of good teaching and the inquiring-learning-struggling aspect that is key in sustaining good teaching over time.

### My Role as a Member of a Teaching Team

On one level good teaching is a very personal and individual endeavor (see the section above). As Palmer (1998) says: "We teach who we are". That notwithstanding ... at its very best, good teaching is a 'team sport', a collective endeavor. It is the result of a number of teachers working in concert (like an orchestra). For optimal, long-term development a good teacher must learn with, and from, other good teachers.

A good-and-improving teacher can engage in deliberate practice alone, as an individual. But it is so much better to engage in deliberate practice within a community of like-minded good-and-improving teachers. As Benefiel (2008) points out: "Souls need one another in order to flourish" (pg. 18). Mission-driven work in education is a collective enterprise. There is a level of camaraderie and esprit de corps that makes deliberate practice more sustainable, and, ultimately, more effective.

There is a special kind of motivation that is gained from journeying on the path toward mastery with other good-and-improving teachers. This collegial aspect of teacher improvement is absolutely vital. It turbo-charges individual efforts.

Senge (1990) talks about the phenomenon of 'team learning' – the ability of a group to learn together. Put in simple terms – there is something important that Instructor X can only learn as a member of a collegial group. There is something important that Instructor X cannot learn on their own, no matter how hard they try. As I have already mentioned, at its best, good teaching is the result of a collective effort. It is not a one-person show. There is a key aspect of

mastering of the art of teaching that can only come through the coordinated efforts of a committed group.

As good-and-improving teachers we must learn about ourselves. But we must also learn about each other, about those with whom we teach. Students learn best when they are taught by a number of Instructors who are integrated, coordinated, and collectively intentional.

Even though we usually teach 'in silos' (i.e. in courses that segment a discipline), we need to learn how to teach together. We need to learn how to teach as a team. After more than two decades of college teaching I firmly believe that students learn best when their Instructors are colleagues rather than merely co-workers. Colleagues have a shared vision and collective aspirations. Colleagues have an understanding and an appreciation for the purposes of the people they teach with. Colleagues help each other learn about themselves as individuals and as members of a team. Colleagues are diverse and idiosyncratic and operate from their own personal visions (Senge, 1990), but they do all this wrapped in a shared vision of good teaching and good learning.

## References

Benefiel, M. (2008) The Soul of a Leader.

Brookfield, S. (2006) The Skillful Teacher.

Colvin, G. (2010) Talent is Overrated.

Dunn, T.G. & Shriner, C. (1999) "Deliberate Practice in Teaching: What teachers do for Self-improvement" in Teaching and Teacher Education, 15 (1999) 631-651.

Ericsson, K.A et al (1993) "The Role of Deliberate Practice in the Acquisition of Expert Performance" in Psychological Review. Vol. 100, No. 3, 363-406.

Langer, E.J. (1997) The Power of Mindful Learning.

Mezirow, J. (1990) Fostering Critical Reflection.

Palmer P.J. (1998) The Courage to Teach.

Senge, P. (1990) The Fifth Discipline.

### 3b. Reflections on Sharing Knowledge & Peer Support

In this document I will reflect on some of my principles of good teaching as they relate to examples of leading and supporting peers. The overall purpose of this document is to describe some of the thinking behind my practice as an unofficial mentor and as an occasional session leader for various professional development activities within the department and the college.

The Nomination Package asks for “examples” (in the plural) of my efforts to share knowledge and support my peers. But I am going to make the bulk of my case using one example. If I was ‘forced’ to cite several examples I would make a list of all the walks around the Langara Golf Course trail with Janet or Shannon, all the breakfast meetings with Dana, and all the office chats with Joanne and Erin, etc. But I am going to use one main example because it brings together all of these professional development conversations into one identifiable event that all of my Recreation Studies colleagues attended. This particular example also allows me to reveal a significant number of my underlying assumptions and goals regarding good teaching and how teachers get even better.

As a teacher, one of my primary intentions is to work as a member of a high-performance team. I have no desire to be a one-man show – I want to be part of an “orchestra” of teachers.

To a large extent my leadership role within the Department has been an unofficial one. I have tried to mentor. I have tried to lead by example (e.g. this is what it looks like when someone is excited about their teaching topic, this is what it looks like when an experienced and skilled teacher struggles, etc.). One of my biggest accomplishments as an unofficial leader and peer-supporter has been to help create “a culture of inquiry” instead of “a culture of knowing” (Lang, 2012). There are certain times when we, as a faculty group, must put down our masks-as-experts and a share with each other unmasked, as learners, as fellow pilgrims on a path. As Palmer (1998) suggests, sometimes as teachers we must replicate the process of learning, rather than seek to be the spot-lit expert in the process of knowing.

Over the past 4 or 5 years the Recreation Studies Department has got into the constructive habit of carving out time to really share with each other. And we have worked on becoming “good listeners” – listening to each other’s stories of challenges and frustrations and each other’s stories of successes and improvements. We now no longer rush to “fix” each other’s problems. We share, we listen, and we get to know each other. And in that process we have learned how to learn as a group – and even deeper, we have learned how to learn as this group (Ready, personal communication, 2013). Speaking in the context of post-secondary faculty development, Kasl & Elias (2000) assert that: “... if an individual can learn, so can a group, organization, or community” (pg. 230). And this is what we were (and still are) trying to do. We have slowly learned how to evolve together by listening to each other.

Group learning is not a new concept for us. For decades we have run our Diploma Program as a cohort model. We have long believed that the students who struggle and strive together end up with higher quality learning. We know that individual students learn more when they are



part of a group that evolves into a community. We have seen the positive power of the cohort model dozens of times.

So it is somewhat surprising that it took us decades to realize that the faculty were also a cohort. Students should not be learning-silos, isolated and separated from each other. And, by the same token, faculty should not be teaching-silos (but, for the most part, they/we tend to operate in silos). There is something important that each instructor can only learn as part of a group. Another way to say this is that, as instructors, we need to sometimes get out of our courses and into our program.

About 4 or 5 years ago a few of the faculty (myself included) began to realize that the conditions were right for us to evolve from a collection to a collective – from co-workers to colleagues. And we began to sow the seeds for genuine and authentic faculty professional development. We wanted to grow, and more importantly, we wanted to grow together.

We used Senge's (1990) concept of "a learning organization" as a conceptual starting point. We intentionally set out to create a team that:

- trusted one another,
- complimented each other's strengths and compensated for each other's limitations,
- had common goals that were larger than individual goals, and
- produced extraordinary results (Senge, 1990, pg. 4).

This is now a very good description of the Bachelor of Recreation Management (BRM) working group, and a fairly accurate description of the department as a whole.

It was decided that in May of 2014 the department would have an off-campus retreat day. I was asked to facilitate the morning session dedicated to helping us move toward the vision of becoming a learning organization. But where to start?

I decided to start at the core -- with Palmer's idea that "We teach who we are". He says:

Teaching ... emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together (1998, pg.2)

The phrase "for better or worse" is an important part of the quotation above. It is not that we only teach who we are when we are teaching well. We teach who we are all of the time. That is, when we teach well we are teaching from who we are, and when we teach poorly we are also teaching from who we are. It's not like we have a choice – our teaching will always be a reflection of something from deep inside. The only real choice is whether or not we want to work hard to figure out the best parts of who we are and then use those to intentionally inform our teaching, or whether we leave the whole process up to happenstance. As teachers, one of our fundamental choices is whether to engage in the 'deliberate practice' of self-knowledge, or to teach as fakes and fugitives.

So we began the morning retreat with a series of exercises to enhance each instructor's self-knowledge as it relates to their teaching. Here is a brief sampling of some of the exercises:

Activity #1: Your Two Sentences Worth

Adapted from D. Pink Drive (2009)

Imagine that you, as a College Instructor, are an historical figure (because you are, and will be). If everything went well for you in the next 3 years, what two sentences would encapsulate your work as an educator?

In other words, try to encapsulate your educational leadership (your teaching) in two clear sentences.

These two sentences could appear in your biography ... or you would state them in your autobiography.

Activity #2: An Image that Motivates

Share with us an image (picture, graphic, piece of art, etc.) that represents or symbolizes an important aspect of your teaching. And then either explain it with 2 to 4 written sentences, or share your thoughts verbally with us.

Activity #6: A Direct Statement

In 4 to 7 sentences create a statement dealing with any or some or all of the following:

- why I am a teacher (as opposed to being a plumber, or a real estate agent, etc.)
- why I teach in post-secondary
- why I teach in Recreation Studies (either the field or the specific Department)
- what brings me great joy as a result of my teaching job

The overall purpose of the first part of the morning was to help faculty articulate their personal visions of good teaching. We were revealing to each other some of the core aspects of WHY we teach (as a profession), WHY we teach recreation (as a discipline), and WHO we are as teachers. And this process was facilitated by the special kind of "listening" that I mentioned earlier in this document. We were speaking from our core as colleagues – and even more important than this – we were *listening to each other as colleagues*.

Once we had shared some important points about our personal visions, we moved on to see what points could be built upon to create what Senge calls a "shared vision". The overall purpose of the second part of the morning was to "unearth shared 'pictures of the future' that foster genuine commitment and enrollment rather than [mere] compliance" (1990, pg. 9). The main idea here was to (and still is to) create a shared vision wherein there is a high level of

commitment to a collectively defined, desired future state of affairs that not only reflects each instructor's personal vision, but also goes beyond that. At its highest, a shared vision contains an element where each member of the team wants every other member of the team to achieve their own personal visions in such a way that the group energy, ideas and results are consistently greater than the sum of the parts.

I think the retreat went well. I learned a lot about myself, my beliefs about good teaching, and about the colleagues who are working toward the same overall goals as I am. I have continued the peer-support process by leading a few more professional development workshops, and by simply 'having excited conversations' with my colleagues.

As an unofficial mentor and occasional workshop leader I am never really sure how my efforts and antics are perceived. And I never really know how I have influenced the other faculty (there's no Final Exam for that). However, I am a confident person so I mostly just trust that my peers have learned something important from our conversations.

So I want to end this reflection-peppered story (laced with underlying assumptions) by deferring to the letters of support that some of my colleagues have submitted. At the time that I am writing this document (late January, 2015) I have not read those letters, and perhaps I never will. Those letters will likely provide the most accurate ending to this story.

Like most of my teaching ... I want the "proof to be in the pudding". Those letters and testimonials are the pudding. Like most of my teaching ... I am now wise enough to know that what's truly important isn't what I do as a teacher, and further what's truly important isn't what I actually say in any given conversation, but what the learners do after the conversations.

Enjoy the pudding!

The pudding ... The supporting of peers (through the sharing of knowledge) is an important criterion for this award. As such, we have included some of the voices of those peers in what we're calling the "Addendum to 3b: The Voices of Peers".

### Addendum to 3b: The Voices of Peers

#### **Peer Testimonials: The Proof in the Pudding**

1. From Janet Ready, Faculty and Department Chair, Recreation Studies Dept.

When we learned of the STHLE College Sector Educator Award, the Learning and Teaching Priority Action Group (part of the Academic Plan at Langara College) immediately thought of putting Steve Musson's name forward for Langara College. Then we carefully read the application and realized how much work was required from Steve. We contacted him to say that we felt this award was a really good fit and we would like to support his application – but

he would need to do a lot of the work. Steve read through the application and felt it was a worthy process of articulating his teaching philosophy and finding examples that supported that philosophy – he embraced the integrity of the application questions and the deep thinking that it required. That is Steve. The Learning and Teaching Priority Action Group at Langara College is very proud to support and endorse Steve Musson in this nomination.

### **Creating a Rocketship**

Steve and I co-teach RECR 4400 Applied Major Project, the Capstone course in the Bachelor of Recreation Management. We designed the course together and it was one of the most thoughtful, collaborative and deep learning experiences I have had as a faculty. Steve approached the course design with a lot of purposeful questions about how to engage the learners in the on-line environment, how to encourage them to think deeply and how to provide hand rails for students when they needed them in the course. We started the calling the course the “rocketship” as we were creating it because it was the capstone course and we wanted the students to have a significant learning experience. Steve was the engineer of the rocketship – I was the keen apprentice – and the learning that I gained from designing that course has influenced how I approach all of my other courses.

We are in our fourth year of teaching the rocketship – and I continue to learn from Steve’s “voice” and “presence” in this on-line course and his strategies for engaging students and getting them to want to think deeply!

### **Pioneering**

Steve seems to be at his best when he is on the pointy end of the rope, breaking trail, or just plain pioneering as an instructor. He comes up with great teaching ideas and then goes off and explores them – and shares his findings with our department and the college. From my role as Department Chair, he is a great guy to have on the team. His ideas are innovative and grounded in Adult Learning Principles with a strong connection to our Recreation telos. He recently worked on an Applied Research Project for the Recreation Studies Department that explored an On-line Recreation Pedagogy. Here is an excerpt from the research proposal:

On the surface, teaching Recreation on-line may seem like a paradox – as recreation educators we continue to explore this “contradiction” between a view of on-line-as-passive, and recreation-as-active. This proposed research project will try to untangle this knot – and move our faculty and department forward in exploring engaging and active ways to connect to students on-line (Musson, Oct. 2013)

His work on this research project, his findings, and how he shared them created exciting momentum for the faculty in the Recreation Studies Department. His research inspired us to apply the strategies to our courses and started thoughtful, pedagogical discussions within our faculty team.

The Department bought a “go-pro” camera at Steve’s request and that camera has been trail running, skiing, snowshoeing, surfing, hiking and mountaineering – collecting video footage for Steve to use in videos for his on-line courses. It is the way he uses the video footage to engage the students within a clear philosophy and pedagogical purpose that make Steve’s pioneering valuable work.

Steve has also pioneered strategies for using mobile devices in courses, posters, and videos and produced a music video with the first year recreation students. He recently scripted and shot video for some promotional videos that go straight to the “why” of us as instructors in the Recreation Studies Dept. All of his pioneering is deeply grounded in a strong philosophy of learning and teaching.

### **Building a Community of Learners**

When I became Department Chair four years ago - Steve and I had a lot of conversations about what Peter Senge calls a “learning organization” and what it would take to get our department going in that direction. If becoming a learning organization can be likened to a road trip – Steve’s work in our department were the wheels on our bus. He made it OK to be learning and struggling as an instructor within our department. (My experience as an instructor in post-secondary education was that you needed to be the expert and not show any weakness) – so this was completely refreshing – and provided the example I needed to do my own experimenting and struggling in my own teaching – and we shared those experiments and struggling at faculty meetings and it opened the door to the other faculty in the department to share their own ideas, struggles, successes and failures....and together we are becoming a learning organization.

At our recent department retreat, Steve facilitated the morning session, and he encouraged us to examine the core of our teaching – and that examination as a group (with solid facilitation) within our faculty team was exactly what we needed to identify how we could continue to be a learning team with a clear purpose.

### **Lighting the Spark**

The gift that Steve has is that (when he’s not breaking trail out in front), you get the feeling that he’s there right beside you in the “trenches” of teaching. His attitude is, “yes, this is hard, but it is good hard, it is worthy hard, and we’re working hard together”....and then he shares a perspective or quote that speaks to the core of what you’re wrestling with and it becomes a worthy challenge and you want to bring your best to it.

In this way, Steve lifts people up. He lifts up students and gets them to want to think deeply and work hard. He lifts up faculty in giving permission to be authentic in our struggles. He shares strong learning and teaching foundations for us to build on with our own ideas in our courses. He lifts me up as the Department Chair to be authentic in my leadership and to

experience the excitement of being part of a learning organization. His enthusiasm for teaching and all of the parts of it lights a spark.

---

## 2. From Cyndy Chwelos, Faculty, Recreation Studies Department

Steve has operated as a peer to peer teacher mentor in the 10 years I have been instructing at Langara in the following ways;

1) Modeling his philosophical approach to post secondary teaching where he works with the paradigm of received knowledge/constructed knowledge. Steve favors the Dewey approach (constructivist theory) and has imparted that wisdom to me through workshop delivery on a college level and sharing strategies through a department retreat.

2) Sharing Resources: Steve has shared important texts that inspire my teaching practice. This past December, I attended a workshop Steve was co-leading. I believe, his background in adult education provides resources that I have never heard of. I immediately purchased these texts and poured over them over the holiday season. These texts, are my current touch points on increasing student engagement in the class and has increased my confidence as an educator.

---

## 3. From Joanne Edey-Nicoll, Faculty, Recreation Studies Department

Steve is intentional in his teaching and differentiates himself from other faculty by giving selflessly to support his peers to explore about how they can become their 'better selves' in teaching.

He challenges his colleagues to clearly articulate 'why' we teach and to think about our purpose, causes or beliefs.

Both in his classroom and on on-line, Steve demonstrates his belief that teaching must be engaging, inspiring and thought provoking. He blazes new trails for himself, his students and his colleagues by using technology as a teaching tool.

Steve has a unique 'sense of wonder' that he has carried with him throughout his teaching career. He enthusiastically shared his views with his colleagues.

His enthusiasm is infectious and his passion for teaching is evident in the

workshops he has held for his peers, both at the College and through the Professional Provincial Association (British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association).

---

For more “proof is in the pudding” evidence, please also see the three Letters of Support in Section 6.

### References

Kasl, E. and Elias, D. (2000) “Creating New Habits of Mind in Small Groups” in Learning as Transformation. Jack Mezirow and Associates (ed.s)

Lang, A. (2012) The Power of Why.

Palmer P.J. (1998) The Courage to Teach.

Pink, D. (2009) Drive.

Ready, J. (2013) Personal communication.

Senge, P. (1990) The Fifth Discipline.

#### 4. Evidence of Sustained Teaching and/or Peer Leadership Activities

The purpose of this document is to provide evidence that I have a sustained and consistent record in terms of mentoring, peer-support and leading sessions designed to share knowledge about good teaching and teacher-improvement. This document will incorporate sections 4a-4d in the Nomination Package.

My efforts in terms of promoting good teaching and teacher-improvement fall into three categories:

- Unofficial mentoring of peers,
- Leading professional development sessions at the college and elsewhere,
- Scholarly activities and creative approaches.

##### Unofficial Mentoring

Mentoring is sometimes a difficult thing to keep track of. Sometimes you know when you're doing it, and sometimes you don't. Often it is just an off-hand comment that you make that has the most impact on a colleague. But there are also times when you are intentionally role modeling, and being quite deliberate in your discussions with colleagues.

My longest-running mentoring 'project' involves my breakfast meetings with Dana Maslovat. They have been occurring about once every two months or so for the past fourteen years. The first time I had a breakfast meeting with Dana he was the Department's Instructional Assistant. He is now the Chair of the Kinesiology Department, and a very good instructor.

The topics of teaching, and how we improve as teachers has been the consistent thread that has run through every meeting (that's why it's a 'meeting' and not just 'having breakfast').

In December of 2014 this mentoring relationship was the driving force behind Dana and myself co-teaching a professional development workshop for the combined Recreation Studies Department and the Kinesiology Department. We began the workshop by describing the breakfast meetings (mostly Dana's version of how they went from his perspective as a protégé), and then we presented a series of ideas about good teaching and teacher-improvement that came out of those meetings.

For the past 5 or 6 years I have also talked a lot about good teaching and about professional development with Janet Ready. These conversations have mostly taken place during walks around the Langara Golf Course trail. We have had in depth discussions about her development as an educator, about my development as an educator, and about the ways in which the entire department can evolve into a 'learning organization' (Senge, 1990).

I have also been fortunate enough to have some very inspiring office conversations with Shannon Wall, Joanne Edey-Nicholl, Cyndy Chwelos, and Erin Wilkins. I have shared a small, cramped office with Shannon, Joanne, and Cyndy (all 4 of us!). And I have to admit that, despite some of the drawbacks of sharing a small, cramped office with 3 other instructors, that office 'forced' us into close quarters and actually facilitated some amazing idea-exchanges.



I led an evaluation of one of Erin's online courses back in 2011, and have had a number of constructive conversations with her regarding the topic of teacher improvement since that time.

### Leading Professional Development Sessions

I think it is fair to say that I enjoy mentoring more than any other form of professional development. But once in a while I feel compelled to share my ideas about good teaching and professional development with a wider audience.

Here is a brief summary of some of the teacher professional development sessions that I have designed and led in the recent past:

Panel Member for **"Best Practices in Online Teaching & Learning"** -- for Educational Technology Department, December 2009

**"Engaging Online Discussions"** – for Educational Technology Department, December 2010

**"Mobile Learning and Teaching"** -- for Educational Technology Department, May 2012

**"John Dewey Gets an iPhone"** – for Educational Technology Users Group, @ Selkirk College, June 2013

**"Staff Training & Development"** – for the BC Parks & Recreation Assoc. Symposium, April 2014

**"Teaching from the Core"** – for Recreation Studies Department Retreat, May 2014

**"Staff Training & Development"** – for the Saskatchewan Assoc. of Recreation Professionals, October 2014

**"Good Teaching & Teacher Improvement"** – Combined session for Recreation Studies Department & Kinesiology Department – December 2014

**“Pedagogic Principles and the Use of Digital Video”** -- for Educational Technology Department, December 2014

### Scholarly Activities & Creative Approaches

From 2009 – 2011 I was a part of a group of faculty who designed, and then implemented Langara’s Bachelor of Recreation Management Program. I was part of the group that made the initial application to the Provincial Ministry, and I also designed the curriculum for three of the courses.

I have been a member of Langara’s Bachelor of Recreation Management (BRM) working group ever since we launched the program. This is a creative group of faculty who work hard to design and deliver high quality online education to recreation students looking to earn a Bachelor’s Degree.

I was asked to pioneer the very first peer instructor evaluation of an online course within our department. Since that time the template and the format of that evaluation has been adopted and refined by other faculty in the department.

In 2010 I was awarded a research grant to explore the potentials of mobile technology and online learning. That research culminated in two of the workshop sessions listed in the previous section of this document (i.e. **“Mobile Learning and Teaching”**, and **“John Dewey Gets an iPhone”**).

It was during that research project that I also developed some creative approaches to “learning as story-telling” with the help of WordPress blogs.

In 2013 I was awarded a research grant to explore creative and innovative online strategies for the Recreation Studies Department. That research culminated in one of the workshop sessions listed in the previous section of this document (i.e. **“Good Teaching & Teacher Improvement”**).

I have also been actively and informally experimenting with the use of digital video for online courses. This work culminated in student-submitted video assignments in Rec 2295 in November of 2014, and in one of the workshops listed in the previous section of this document (i.e. **“Pedagogic Principles and the Use of Digital Video”**).

## 5. Evidence of Consistent Excellence in Teaching Practice

The purpose of this document is to provide evidence that I have been a good-and-improving college teacher for a number of years.

Because I have been teaching at the college for over two decades, it has been a long while since I have had a formal evaluation from my peers or my students. Therefore I will provide some evidence in the form of informal comments and online posts from students. There is also likely going to be a goodly amount of evidence of excellence in my teaching practice from the letters of support that my colleagues have submitted to this application.

I am going to present two student comments ... not because they are positive, but because they reveal something important about the effect that my teaching can sometimes have on students.

The first student comment came to me in the form of an unsolicited email that a student sent me about a month after he had taken Recreation 1160: "Foundations of Leisure & Recreation" from me. It is a mixed-mode course. In the lectures I present theories of leisure and recreation. These lectures are supported by online discussion questions (D2L), and by assignments using WordPress blogs. The students tell 'stories' in their blog posts – stories that illustrate and illuminate the course-related theory.

The student that sent this email is an avid photographer, and had never used a blog before. The email is copied between the two solid lines below, followed by some additional commentary by me (after the second solid line) ...

---

Hi Steve!

I hope you had a great Christmas and New Years! I just wanted to let you know that thanks to your class and the blog section specifically, I have started my own photography blog!

All the blog work we did in class gave me the confidence to start my own!

Thanks for everything, I really enjoyed your class and the discussions included. It really opened me up to a world of new ideas and philosophies!

See you around campus!

PS: Here is the link to my blog if you want to check it out! [gphotoblogs.wordpress.com](http://gphotoblogs.wordpress.com)

---

This comment from the student is particularly valuable to me for three reasons:

- It connects with the sense of permission and confidence that I want to help my students gain (see document titled: “3a. My Statement of Philosophy” in this Nomination Package),
- It connects with my view that what’s most important is what the students do with the course material after the course is over (see document titled: “3b. Reflections on Sharing Knowledge & Peer Support”),
- I am excited about the way that many students respond to the way that I structure my online discussions (D2L), and that they “open up” to “a world of new ideas and philosophies”.

The next student response was part of her “Reflection on Learning” Section for an online assignment in Recreation 3160: “Leisure Theory and Applications”. For the past 3 years I have been pioneering what I call a “Go Forth” pedagogy for online learning. Essentially the “Go Forth” pedagogy involves theory pieces in the form of online readings, and then the students “go forth” into the community and look for real-life instances of parts of the theory. These instances are told as stories with certain words and phrases typed in red to highlight the connection between the theory and the story. The pedagogy is enhanced by the use of blogs (which are well-suited for story-telling, and by the use of digital images and/or video). The stories really “come alive” – and more than this – the theory also “comes alive”.

An edited down version of the student’s Reflection Section is copied between the two solid lines, and then there is some additional commentary from me:

---

#### Reflection on Learning:

Prior to this assignment I had read the essays and thought that I understood them. It wasn’t until I went out into the community and actually opened my eyes and looked around, did I really and truly understand the concepts.

I was able to look at several recreation-related situations that I have seen a million times, but now in a completely different way. Parents watching their kids has a new meaning for me, a dance group is not just a dance group, and just because a facility is built does not mean people know how to use it.

It wasn’t until I was told to “go forth” that I began to realize that I was seeing things very differently than I did before the course. I went into a few situations with a plan about which concept I would see and write about. But I learned quickly that other concepts were far more prominent and relevant! When my eyes were open (opened) some of the concepts that I hadn’t initially selected “applied themselves” to what I was witnessing.

---

As I have mentioned in the document titled: “3a. My Statement of Philosophy”, I want to facilitate certain form of perspective transformations within my students. With this assignment in particular I want students to see various concepts from leisure theory “come alive” in their community tours. I want students to “see with new sets of eyes”. To me, that is one of the signs of good education. This comes out quite nicely in the student’s comment that she has seen certain recreation-related that she had seen “a million times” in her practice, and now see them in a completely different way.

I am submitting the two student comments (and my commentary) as evidence of consistent excellence in teaching practice. Upon reflection, I am not 100% convinced that anyone can provide ‘proof’ of consistent excellence in teaching practice. In my experience excellence in teaching is not akin to a ‘destination’ (we never actually arrive at excellence), it is more like a constant journey – filled with almost as many ‘failures’ and ‘experiments-gone-awry’ as it is with successes and accolades. For me, excellence in teaching is all about working hard to stay on the path. I know that “staying on the path” might not sound glorious, but, then, for some of us, it doesn’t have to.

# Langara.

THE COLLEGE OF HIGHER LEARNING.

February 3, 2015

STLHE College Sector Educator Award Committee  
Mills Library, Room 504  
1280 Main Street West  
Hamilton, ON L8S 4L6

Dear Committee Members:

**Re: College Sector Educator Award Nomination: Steve Musson**

It gives me great pleasure to write this letter in support of the nomination for Steve Musson for the STLHE College Sector Educator Award. I have had the pleasure of knowing Steve for more than 15 years as a valued colleague, mentor and friend.

Steve is a passionate and joyful instructor and one of the most thoughtful and creative educational thinkers I have ever met. He is also one of the most generous people I know when it comes to sharing his insights and enthusiasm.

It's always a delight when I (or one of my colleagues) hear from Steve along the lines of "I've been thinking about..." and "so can we meet to talk about it?" A visit from Steve full of his latest ideas, theories, and proposed actions becomes the highlight of my day. I, along with others, have from time to time also been the lucky recipient of one of Steve's notorious "discussion papers" in which he proposes an extension of existing educational theory, or a completely new theory. Steve's theories are always deeply rooted in praxis, and these papers generate lively discussion and argument, deep sharing, honing of the theory, and provide inspiration to us all to apply new approaches to our teaching practice.

I have also had the pleasure of working with Steve on institutional and multi-institutional grants and again observing his creativity and generosity. One exemplary project, entitled "Situational Learning with Mobile Devices", piloted the extensive use of mobile devices for course delivery and student participation. While developing and adapting Situational Learning Theory to support the use of mobile devices in the field, Steve also explored some unique concepts of "near-field" learning. His insights were shared with members of three other post-secondary institutions throughout the pilot project. At the same time, Steve participated in a Langara College initiative to promote the use of mobile devices as a tool for learning among Langara College instructors. We later presented both theory and practice to colleagues at a Langara professional development event and at a provincial conference. I have subsequently heard from several of the conference participants that Steve's contributions inspired them not only to incorporate mobile devices in their teaching strategy, but to do so in a thoughtful way which supported sound educational practice.

In another recent example, Steve has been an innovator in incorporating instructor created video resources and student digital media assignments in his courses. As usual, Steve has developed a

framework of concepts to explain the importance of these types of resources and activities. His sharing of this framework with me has helped me to better support other instructors and through them, students, in advocating for the use of media and digital media assignments in their courses. And once again, Steve has generously shared his insights and experiences with faculty directly through workshops at Langara College.

Steve never stops thinking, creating and learning, and always makes sure he has lots of company on his journeys of exploration. He has inspired many to incorporate not just new practice, but new ways of looking at the entire experience of education. I strongly endorse Steve's nomination for STLHE's College Sector Award. I cannot think of a more worthy recipient.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Bradshaw', written in a cursive style.

Jacqueline Bradshaw

Educational Technology Advisor  
Instructor, Library & Information Technology &  
Division Chair, Social Sciences and Business

# Langara.

THE COLLEGE OF HIGHER LEARNING.

February 2, 2015

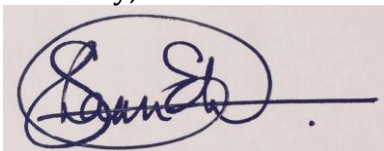
It gives me great pleasure to write a letter of support for Steve Musson for his nomination for the College Sector Educator Award.

Steve Musson is one of those instructors who impacts every person he comes into contact with. Students, faculty, staff, administrators – you name it – everyone is affected by Steve's passion, energy, and ideas. But those of us who have taught alongside him at some point in the past 20 years are the luckiest of all, for we have also been the recipients of Steve's mentoring and idea sharing on a daily basis, and have been carried along in his quest for teaching excellence.

I have been teaching at Langara College for 8 years, and in that time, Steve has been my colleague and my (unofficial) mentor. He has mentored us all, at some point. Steve is a collaborative instructor who constantly challenges us to think hard about our own teaching and ways we can constantly improve. He does this in informal ways – in the hallway after a class, as we debrief what just went on, to try to make sense of why it was such a success, or such a failure; and in formal ways – such as the Professional Development session he orchestrated this past December, where he brought faculty together to discuss ways to improve and evolve our overall, long-term teaching. At faculty meetings, he challenges us to ask the right questions, to get to the heart of what we do as recreation educators. Whether formally or informally, Steve is always supportive, inquisitive, and deliberative in his thinking.

This award, it would seem, was designed for Steve Musson. His deep thinking about teaching and pedagogy have enriched us and inspired us as a faculty, and made us better instructors because of it. His efforts to promote and support our faculty's development with regard to teaching excellence deserve to be celebrated and recognized by this prestigious award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Shannon Wall", enclosed in a blue oval. A horizontal line extends from the right side of the oval.

Shannon Wall  
Instructor,  
Recreation Studies  
Langara College



To Whom It May Concern,

RE: Steve Musson

For the past 5 years I have had the pleasure and privilege of working with Steve Musson at Langara College in the Recreation Studies Department

Steve is a mentor and a true inspiration. His charisma and critical thinking skills are infectious, and his humble brilliance and dedication to improving his teaching skills and the skills of others- exemplary.

Steve has been my peer evaluator for two course/instructor evaluations. The evaluations he facilitated were thoughtful, thorough, and were some of my most valuable learning experiences as a post-secondary instructor. The reflection and insight that Steve provoked has helped me communicate my knowledge, passion, and course learning objectives in a creative and professional manner while honoring my unique teaching style and personality.

Steve has lead our department in numerous faculty meetings and professional development sessions. After these sessions I feel empowered, refreshed, and excited to teach, and motivated to continually improve and challenge myself as an instructor.

It is my pleasure to provide a recommendation for Steve Musson, as he is an ideal candidate to receive the College Sector Educator Award. Steve brings out excellence in is students, peers and is a respected leader in the development of pedagogy at Langara College.

If you have any questions regarding Steve's abilities or the positive impact he as had on the Recreation Studies Department, please feel free to contact me.

Kind Regards,

Erin Wilkins  
Faculty- Langara Recreation Studies and School of Management