



2014 Teaching Practices Survey: Expanded Insights



a place of mind
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology

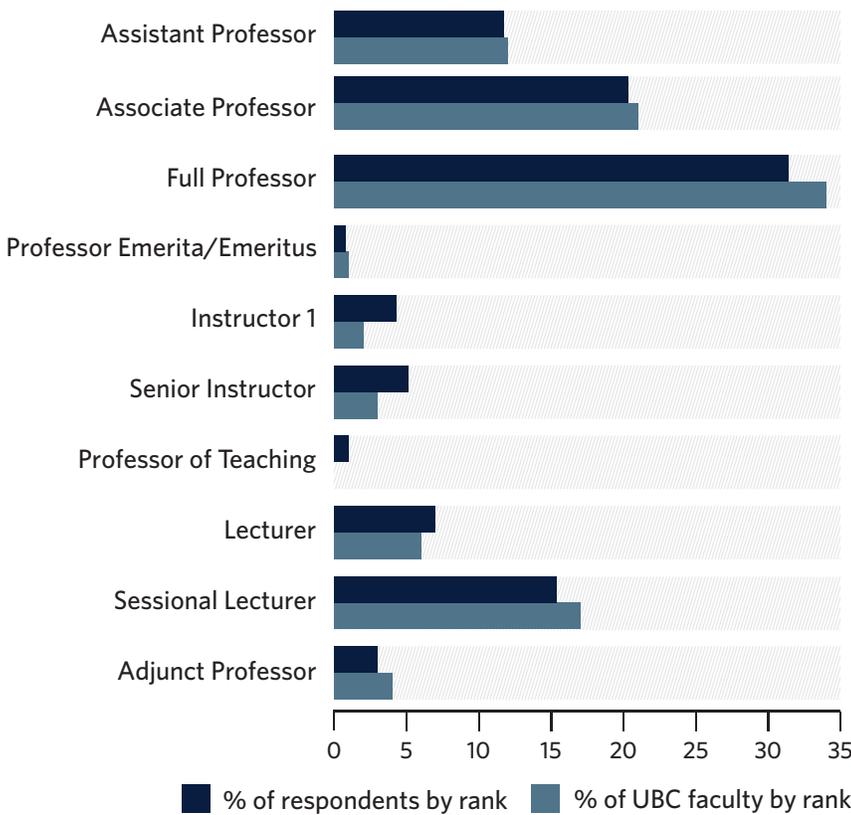
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BACKGROUND & RESPONSE RATE

In October 2014, CTLT partnered with the Science Centre for Learning and Teaching to survey faculty across campus about their teaching practices, attitudes towards specific practices and perceptions of support for teaching. The goal of the survey was to measure the impact of initiatives intended to influence teaching practices (such as Flexible Learning and the Carl Wieman Science Education Initiative), to provide data to inform strategic planning of both campus-wide and faculty-specific teaching and learning centres and to inform a larger research project exploring factors that influence faculty to change teaching practices.

The Teaching Practices Survey was adapted from a tool used to investigate the teaching climate at UBC in 2008 as a part of the Lasting Education Achieved and Demonstrated (LEAD) initiative. The 2008 LEAD survey had already been adapted by a number of institutions in the Bay View Alliance as well as the American Association of Universities. The research team drew questions from the various iterations of the LEAD survey and then validated the 2014 version with faculty and staff from across campus. This was then vetted by a team of Associate Deans.

Figure 1

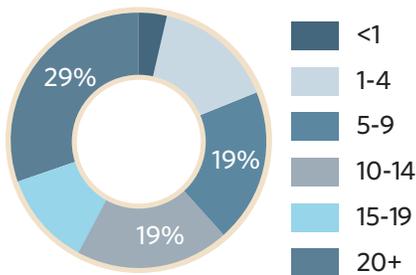


In order to allow for variations in context and timing, a unique instance of the survey was run for each of UBC's 11 Faculties. Surveys were administered using UBC's approved online survey tool and paper copies were made available to participants who requested them. Email invitations to participate and reminders were sent on behalf of and signed by each Faculty's Associate Dean. No incentive for participation was offered. All 11 faculties participated in the 2014 survey. A total of 1,177 respondents participated, resulting in a 23.5% overall response rate¹. The distribution of responses based on teaching stream and rank closely resembles the UBC distribution as reported in the 2013 Equity Report² (see Figure 1). This gives us confidence the sample is representative of the overall population.

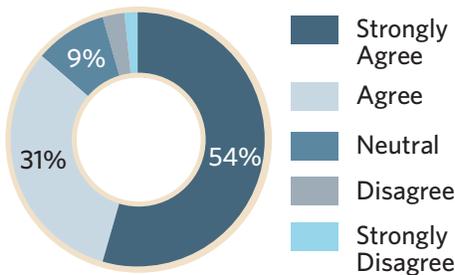
PARTICIPANT PROFILE

The largest group of respondents reported having 20+ years of teaching experience. Most respondents strongly agreed that teaching was a personal priority they believed that ongoing improvement in teaching was part of their job. The library was the most widely accessed support unit, and the copyright office was the least known. Teaching development events such as talks, workshops or seminars were the most widely utilized form of professional development, with 72% of respondents reporting participation.

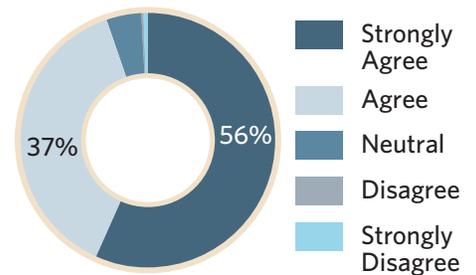
Years of teaching experience (at university level)



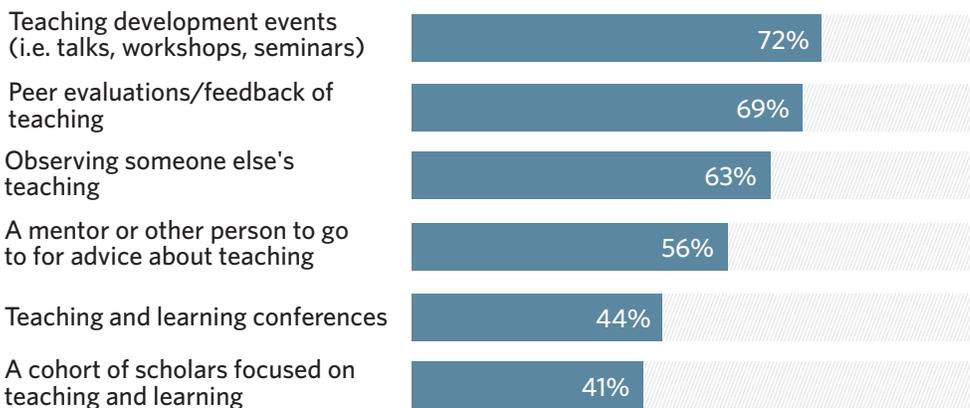
Teaching is a priority for me.



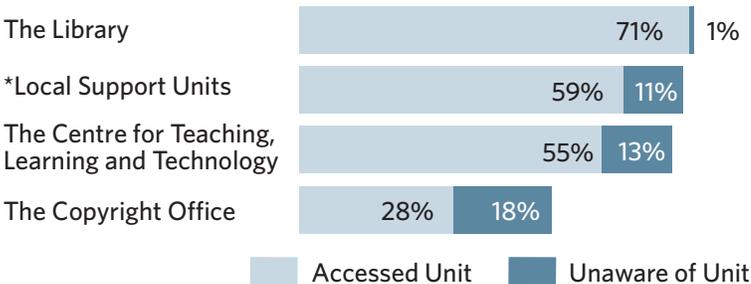
I believe that ongoing improvement in teaching is part of my job.



Reported levels of participation in the following professional development activities:



Participant access and awareness of support units:



*local support units were named in the survey.

PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING PRACTICES

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed with the importance of:

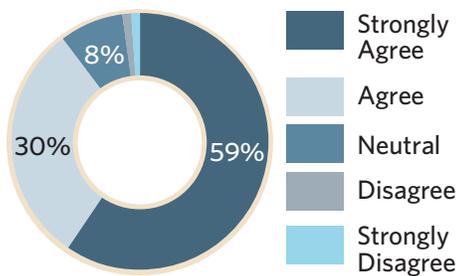
- 97%** Conveying enthusiasm for the subject.
- 96%** Encouraging students to be active participants in learning.
- 95%** Providing real life examples of the concepts you are teaching.
- 93%** Understanding what motivates students to learn the course material.
- 89%** Students taking courses that challenge them to integrate what they've learned over the course of their studies.

Respondents were less sure about the importance of:

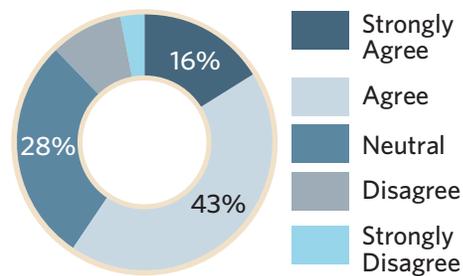
- 78%** Social interaction's role in the learning process.
- 67%** Explicitly addressing student preconceptions (cultural values, past learning experiences).

Active and Passive Learning

Participant agreement with "Active learning is an effective way to promote student learning."

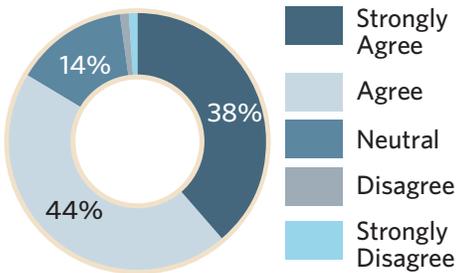


Participant agreement with "Lecturing is an effective way to promote student learning."



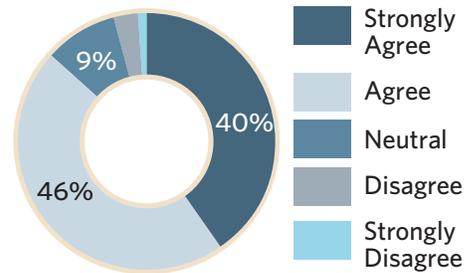
Evidence-Based Practice

Teaching effectiveness is enhanced by using evidence about student learning to refine teaching practice.



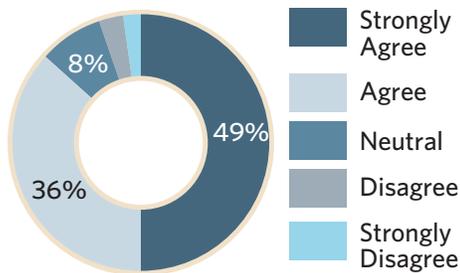
Learning Goals

To teach effectively requires establishing and communicating learning goals.

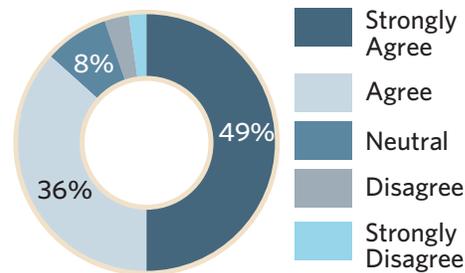


Resources

Even without more resources, I believe it is possible to improve the effectiveness of one's teaching.



Even without a smaller class size, I believe it is possible to improve the effectiveness of one's teaching.

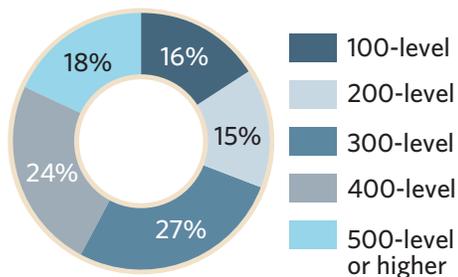


TEACHING PRACTICES IN HIGHEST ENROLMENT COURSE

Participants were asked to provide information about their highest enrolment course. Here is a summary of the results.

Course Profile

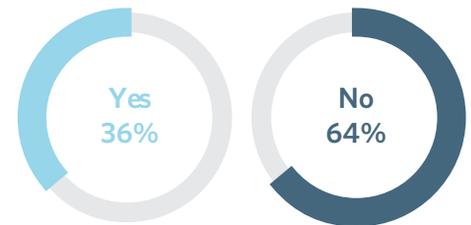
Course level



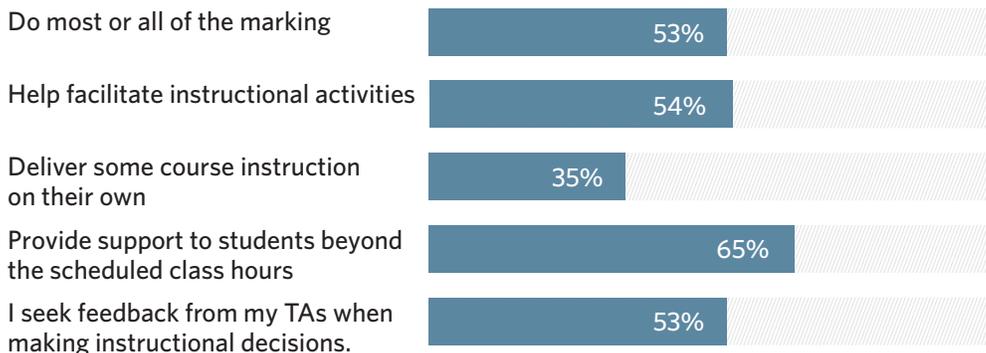
Average Enrolment



Is the course "team taught"?

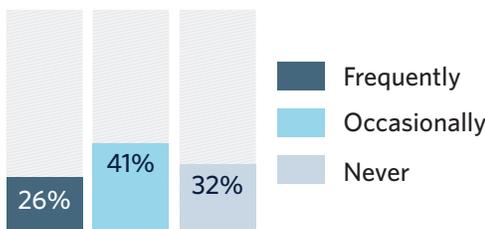


61% indicated having TA support. Here are the roles TAs play in those classes:

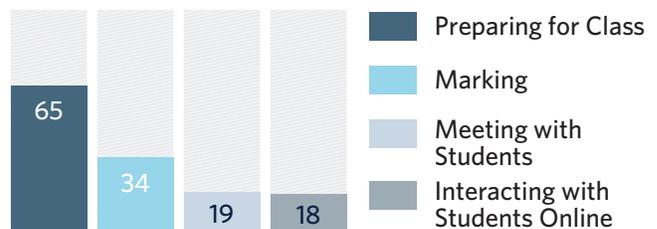


Practices

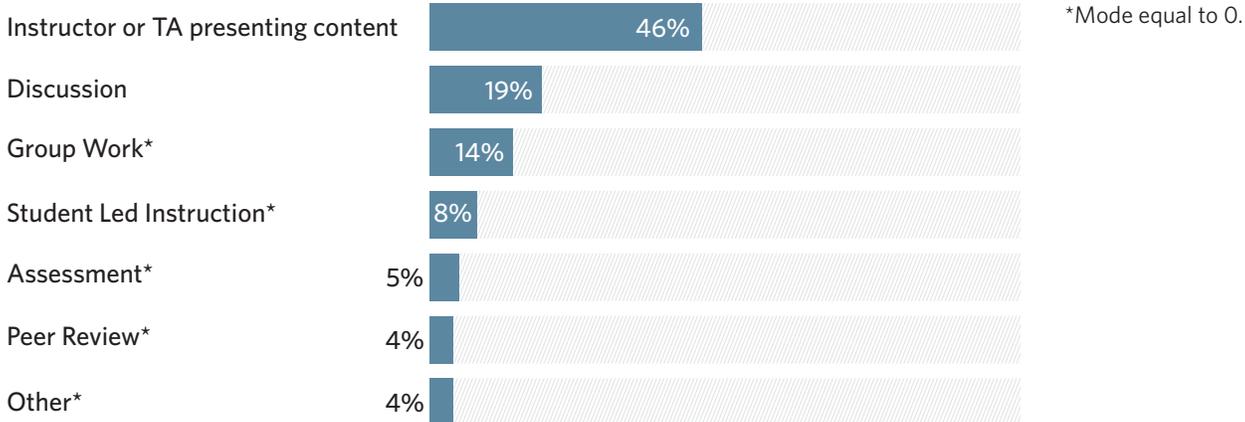
I provide students choice in some aspect of my course, such as how they will be assessed, what learning activities they complete or what topics they will study.



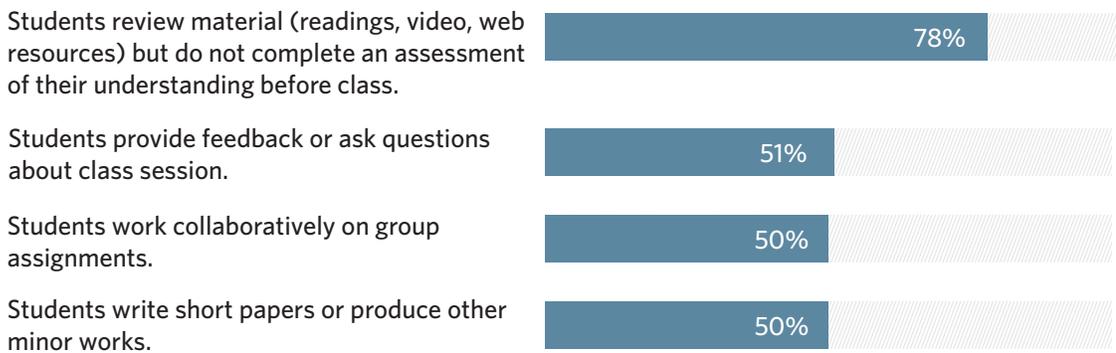
Hours spent on teaching-related activities:



How instructional time is used:



Out of class activities:



94% of participants explain course or module learning goals/objectives/outcomes to students

93% frequently encourage students to ask questions, either during lecture (for on campus courses) or as they occur (for online and hybrid courses)

62% frequently structure instructional time so that students regularly interact with one another about course concepts

58% frequently encourage students to respond to questions posed by other students

57% frequently encourage students to use different points of view to make an argument

53% provide experiential learning opportunities to students

36% frequently encourage students to seek multiple approaches to a problem/question

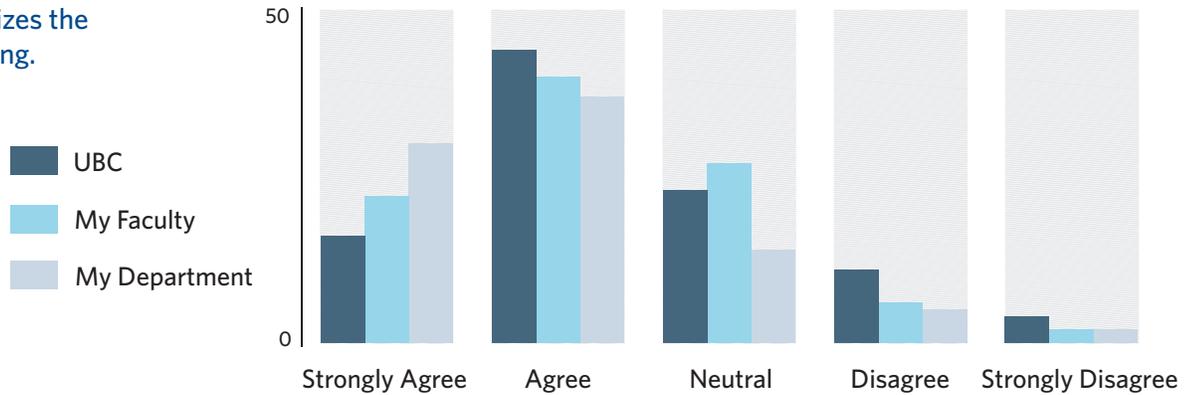
30% frequently provide opportunities for students to reflect on their own learning (e.g. reflective blogs, learning portfolios, etc.)...**and 39% never do**



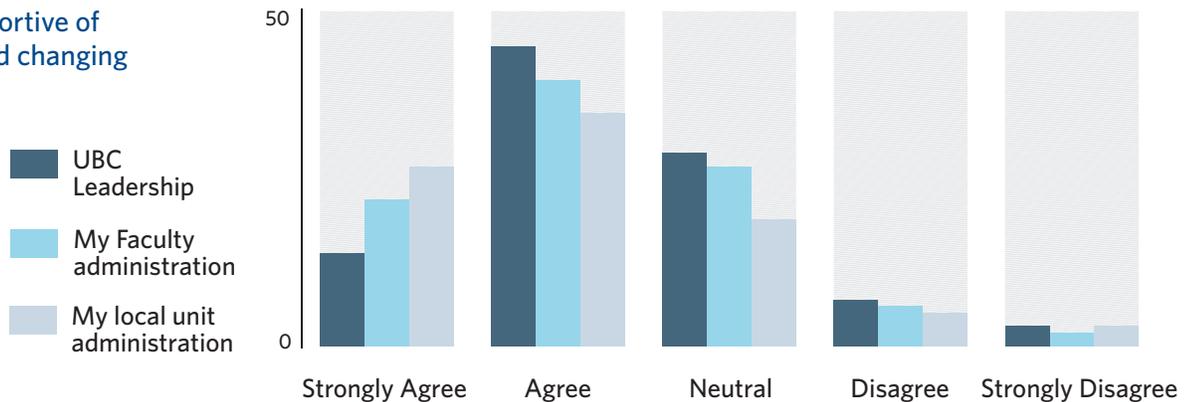
PERCEPTIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR TEACHING

Survey participants were asked about their perceptions of how their department, their Faculty and UBC both valued and rewarded teaching.

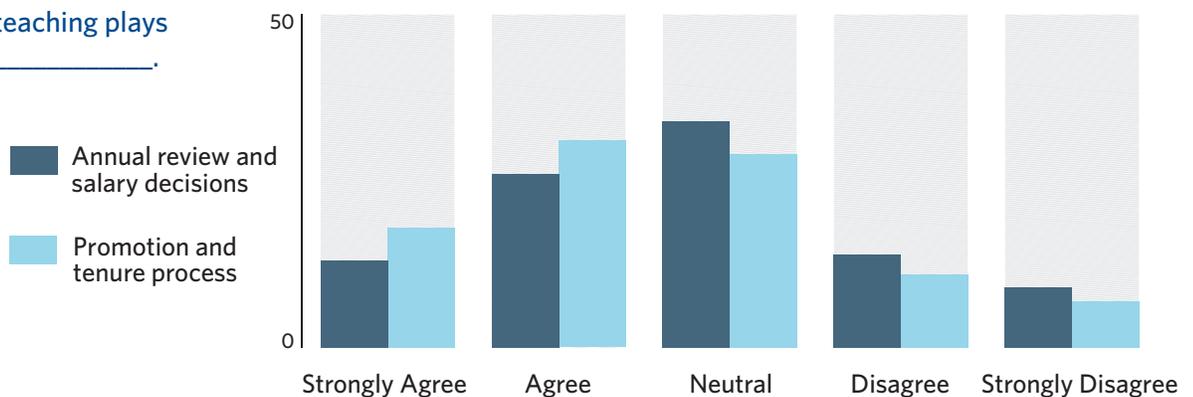
_____ recognizes the importance of teaching.



_____ is supportive of faculty improving and changing teaching practices.



In my unit, effective teaching plays a meaningful role in _____.



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM RESPONDENTS

Participants were also asked what changes could be made at UBC to help them teach more effectively, and to describe one factor that had improved their teaching. The top five themes from participant responses have been used to develop recommendations for both UBC leadership and faculty.

Recommendations for UBC, Faculties and Departments:

1. Consider smaller class sizes

"The increasing class size is ... prohibitive to maintaining the high standards of teaching I expect of myself. UBC should address class size!"

2. Develop a culture that values effective teaching as much as research

"A culture change that appreciates the REAL value of the teaching mission of the university."

3. Provide more support and resources for teaching, including TAs

"Better access to resources. Currently, I'm expected to pay for any class materials I use - including photocopying. Better access to technology resources."

"More TAs - this simple thing would substantially help with our growing programs."

4. More time to devote to teaching (less competing demands)

"Free up some of my time so that I can devote more of it to teaching. I see a trend to reduce administrative support and require faculty to spend more and more time doing bureaucratic /administrative work that before was done by admin support. Reversing this trend is crucial to allow faculty to devote more effort to high quality teaching."

5. Update technology in classrooms, and consider options that allow for more flexibility in teaching practices

"Updated classrooms - still in chalkboard rooms teaching! Wider availability of technology teaching tools from which to choose and easily access."

"More classrooms appropriate for team-based learning."



Recommendations for Faculty:

1. Whenever possible, discuss your teaching practices with colleagues and seek (or be) a mentor

“My teaching has improved because I meet informally with other educators and talk about approaches to learning and how to improve communication in the classroom.”

“I have learned enormously by consulting with more experienced faculty members regarding the problems I was facing as a junior instructor.”

2. Seek, review and act on feedback from students

“I value the student feedback that I get through the university course evaluations. I have made changes to my teaching style based on the feedback.”

3. Seek professional development for teaching practice

“As new faculty I attended workshops and a teaching intensive and they made a great difference.”

4. Practice!

“Trial and error. There is no substitute for hard won experience.”

5. Use technology

“New media and technology enhancements has improved my teaching and has opened up new teaching opportunities.”



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank everyone who provided feedback and participated in the survey; UBC Vancouver Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President Enrolment and Academic Facilities, Dr. Angela Redish; staff members at the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology and at the Science Centre for Learning and Teaching; Deans and Associate Deans at UBC Vancouver; and external collaborators Jim Greer (USASK), Daniel Bernstein (KU) and Emily Miller (AAU).

We would also like to thank Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology team members Terri Kennedy for developing the design and layout of this report, Wendy Chan for providing copy editing, and David Brabbins for programming the companion website ctl.ubc.ca/tps-report.

Footnotes:

¹ Response rate does not include Sauder School of Business, since the number of Sauder faculty invited to participate is not known.

² 7% of respondents are not reflected in the graph. These include respondents who self-identified as Postdoctoral Fellow, Teaching Assistant, Grad Student, Other, or who did not respond to the question.

