

Educational Leadership Myths

Between November 2017 and February 2018, a small team within the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology (CTLT) and with the collaboration of Dr. Simon Albon, conducted interviews with eight UBC faculty members to ask about their experience of articulating the impact of their educational leadership (EL) activities. During these conversations, we also discussed ideas about EL that may be more or less “true.” This prompted us to create a resource that specifically addresses some of the common myths about EL. We recognize that the list of myths below is incomplete and welcome you to send in additional ideas to [Isabeau Iqbal](mailto:lsabeau.lqbal@ubc.ca) at lsabeau.lqbal@ubc.ca.

MYTH 1

If you're an excellent teacher, you're an educational leader.

In fact...

- EL is more than excellent teaching; it starts with scholarly teaching and builds over a career.
- EL is about making an impact on teaching and learning beyond your own classroom: this can be with other students, your peers, your department and/or faculty, your institution or discipline and beyond. Such impacts can be, for example, on people, practices or processes pertaining to teaching and learning.
- EL is context specific and takes many forms. Taking a leadership role in influencing educational change is central to all activities considered EL.



“[EL] is work that goes a step beyond being an [excellent] teacher. It may be unconventional, innovative and can have an element of risk. When I am working out of my comfort zone, I feel I am working in the realm of educational leadership.”

SENIOR INSTRUCTOR,
FACULTY OF SCIENCE

MYTH 2

Because institutional documentation for reappointment, promotion and tenure decisions comprises a clear listing of all EL activities, the process you engage in to document your own EL activities will be straightforward.

In fact...

- Telling your EL story requires careful thought and takes time. Your CV and teaching dossier tell the story of who you are as an educator and educational leader; don't underestimate the effort required to create these documents.
- It is easier to tell your EL story when you: start early and are intentional; establish your area(s) of EL focus and build your story over time; and think carefully about the EL story you want to tell.
- Documenting teaching and learning activities for reappointment, promotion and tenure decisions is more than lists of EL activities in CVs and teaching dossiers; gathering evidence of impact is equally important.



“So to [tell your story] be thoughtful and intentional early on. It's not the kind of thing you can do the summer before the CV and dossier go in. You can't fabricate it!...so start early, keep up with your CV and don't underestimate the magnitude of the task.”

SENIOR INSTRUCTOR,
FACULTY OF SCIENCE



MYTH 3

The activities in the UBC Collective Agreement (CA) and Senior Appointments Committee (SAC) Guide comprehensively define what is and what isn't EL.

In fact...

- UBC takes a deliberately broad view of what constitutes EL activities; those in the CA¹ and SAC guide¹ are representative rather than comprehensive and are not meant as a checklist.
- What constitutes EL is context specific; though some activities can clearly be categorized as EL, regular discussions with colleagues and administrators (e.g., Heads, Deans) are important for establishing what counts as EL and the types of evidence required. Remember, however, that we are building our collective understanding of EL and the answers to your questions will not always be readily apparent.
- Key questions to ask to decide if an activity can be considered EL might be: "Who has been influenced or impacted as a result of this activity?" "What departmental processes and priorities have emerged or changed?" "What products have been created as a result of this, and who uses them?"



"Some faculty have told me that departments struggle because faculty are supposed to publish and they don't know what [other evidence] to look for. So the biggest challenge and biggest freedom has been that you can design your own EL path. The challenge then is making your story make sense."

**PROFESSOR OF TEACHING,
FACULTY OF ARTS**

MYTH 4

Only faculty in the EL stream can undertake EL activities or roles.

In fact...

- EL activities can be undertaken by faculty members at any rank and appointment; EL faculty do not hold a monopoly on EL activities.
- EL is a requirement for promotion in the EL stream. Listing your EL activities is certainly important but equally important is gathering the critical evidence that documents both your EL work and its impact.



"We don't want to [suggest that EL is only for EL faculty] because a lot of research-stream faculty are doing wonderful work. In the past we have always thought of research-track faculty as engaging in EL."

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,
FACULTY OF ARTS**

¹Recall that the Collective Agreement is a legally binding document whereas the SAC Guide is a guide only.