Introduction

In January 2002, the Office of Teaching Advancement (OTA) was established by the then Vice-President and Provost in order to support and recognize teaching in all of its forms throughout the University of Toronto. Professor Ken Bartlett was appointed as its first Director and was joined in June by Pam Gravestock as Assistant Director. Accommodation for the office was created in Robarts Library, adjacent to the Resource Centre for Academic Technology (RCAT), incorporating the office of the Teaching Assistants' Training Programme (TATP).

In his response to the Provost's offer of the appointment, Ken Bartlett wrote that he saw the mandate of the office as nothing short of changing the culture of the U of T, by raising recognition of teaching excellence to a level equal to that of excellence in research. Our collective responsibility to our students and to the community is to ensure that knowledge is transmitted effectively and that the excitement of learning and discovery stimulated widely. To accomplish this, our gifted, experienced teachers should be celebrated and recognized, and our struggling or novice instructors supported and encouraged. This is a large but essential responsibility.

During our first year of operation what has emerged most clearly is the general commitment to excellence in teaching across the University. There is still debate about the complex relationships between teaching and research and about how teaching should be rewarded and fostered; but, the discussions are always collegial and always reflect the deep responsibility felt by our colleagues and academic leaders to their students. The issues that have emerged as a consequence of our broad consultations right across the institution are remarkably consistent and revolve around how best to advance the cause of teaching in general, how best to serve the disparate needs of our students and how best to assist junior colleagues or those with specific pedagogical problems. The old argument of whether teaching matters has been largely settled: what is left is to determine how excellence in teaching can be further advanced.

The initiatives described below witness for the mechanisms the OTA has developed to institutionalize and publicize this process. From fundamental documents of policy, such as the revised guidelines for the assessment of teaching, to individual one on one consultations with faculty, the OTA has contributed to the desired cultural transformation implicit in the creation of the office. By providing a leadership role at the University level and by serving as a focus for change and experimentation, the OTA enables academic divisions, individuals and institutional leaders to re-evaluate and celebrate the role of teaching in their various disciplines. The OTA functions, then, not as a prescriptive office with fixed instruments to be applied universally across the U of T but as a facilitator which recognizes the need to work within the culture and specific needs of the divisions of this complex university to produce success. Thus, the activities listed below fall into many categories, some university-wide, some divisional, some individual, some national or international in scope. Moreover, the clear and evident intent of this office has always been to work with the many other offices across the University charged with the

advancement of teaching excellence. Our remarkable success in this first complete year of operation is very much a reflection of the high degree of professional collaboration and cooperation we have received from our colleagues. We look forward to even closer collaboration in the future.

Activities

Over the past year the OTA has worked diligently to establish contacts and initiate collaboration with divisions and departments from across the University of Toronto. Those that we have met with to date include; the Employment Equity Office, the Director of Student Recruitment, the Director of Faculty Renewal, the Principal and librarians at UTM, the Director of the Teaching and Learning Centre at UTSC, the Coordinator of Writing Support, the Director of the Office of English Language and Writing Support, the Director of the Transitional Year Programme, Student Affairs, LGBTQ, Innis College faculty, the Dean of the Faculty of Law, the University Ombudsperson, the Faculty of Pharmacy, staff from the Central Library, the Resource Centre for Academic Technology, the Rotman School of Management, Accessibility Services, the Department of Philosophy, the Department of Chemistry, the School of Graduate Studies, the Centre for Faculty Development and the Department of Family and Community Medicine, the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Nursing, and the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering. The Faculty of Arts & Science, through the Dean's office and various departments, has worked with the OTA to address specific issues, such as responding to questions of gender influenced course/instructor evaluations, TA training, faculty learning communities, and graduate teaching mentorships.

More specifically, the Office of Teaching Advancement has participated in orientation sessions for new faculty administrators, the Environmental Studies Programme at Innis College, the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering, the Faculty of Nursing, the Resource Centre for Academic Technology, and the Office of Student Recruitment. The OTA also led 3 half-day workshops for the Faculty of Pharmacy's Teaching Associates in their Structured Practical Experience Program (SPEP).

The OTA has also initiated and hosted a number of university-wide events, the first: *Academic Integrity: Deterring and Detecting Plagiarism*, was held in November 2002. This highly successful event brought together over 120 faculty, staff and students from all three campuses to discuss and share experiences and best practices in dealing with the issue of academic integrity. The success of this event led to a follow-up session in January 2003, *Academic Integrity II: More on Deterring and Detecting Plagiarism*, and the production of an Academic Integrity handbook for University of Toronto faculty and graduate students (available at www.utoronto.ca/ota). The OTA continues to address the issue of academic integrity, acting as the UofT administrator and key contact for Turnitin.com, providing direct consultation and resource material for instructors and TAs, and by offering ongoing workshops.

Responding to the changing needs of our instructors, the OTA also hosted the first university-wide event focusing on issues associated with teaching large classes. *Meeting the Challenges of Larger Classes* (February 2003) brought together over 130 faculty from a variety of disciplines to share their experiences with other UofT instructors and TAs. Due to the high attendance and

the overwhelmingly positive feedback from this session, we have decided to devote annual workshops to this issue.

Throughout its first year, the OTA has worked closely with the Resource Centre for Academic Technology on a number of initiatives, including a Turnitin.com training workshop, a new faculty orientation session, the first Academic Integrity event, and most recently, the *Nexus Conference - Connecting Teaching, Technology and Inclusive Learning*. The Assistant Director of OTA was a member of the *Nexus* organizing committee, assisting with the planning, organization and logistical details for this event which brought together some 300 faculty and staff from UofT and other higher education institutions from across Canada and the United States. The OTA also sponsored and organized the closing plenary session at the *Nexus Conference*, entitled *Technology in Higher Education: No Significant Difference?*

The OTA has also worked in cooperation with the Teaching Effectiveness Centre at the Rotman School of Management. Shortly after his appointment, the OTA Director was invited to participate in a workshop for Rotman faculty. Regular meetings and consultation with the directors of this centre have led to collaboration on a number of events and initiatives, including: the co-hosting of a dynamic and interdisciplinary workshop, *Challenging the Rivalry of Teaching and Learning*, with Dr. Greg Light from the Searle Center at Northwestern University; Rotman participation in the OTA-hosted panel at the Nexus Conference; and ongoing discussions to develop strategies for the assessment of teaching effectiveness in the Faculty of Management.

In addition to those events aimed at large groups of faculty, the OTA Director has provided confidential consultation (at the request of individual faculty members) to instructors from a number of disciplines. The OTA has also provided advice, referrals and relevant information to a wide range of departments and divisions.

The OTA is an active member of the Educational Advisory Committee, Faculty of Arts & Science, and has been involved with a number of committees on campus. The Assistant Director has recently been a member of the organizing committees for both the *Nexus* and *TechKnowFile.03* conferences, and was also on the School of Continuing Studies Teaching Awards Selection Committee. She has also joined the Instructional Developers Organization and along with the Director of the OTA has recently become a member of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. In addition, we have consulted with faculty development offices across Canada and the United States and confer regularly with those on campus who share our mission (Teaching Effectiveness Centre at Rotman, Teaching and Learning Services at UTSC, Academic Skills Centre at UTM, and the Centre for Faculty Development at the Faculty of Medicine).

Over the course of the year many of the OTA's activities and initiatives have been mentioned in a number of publications, including: the Bulletin, the UofT Library Newsletter, the Toronto Star, the Strand, and the Varsity.

OTA Initiatives

The Office of Teaching Advancement continues to meet regularly with the Deputy Provost to discuss the development of the office, future initiatives, and collaborative efforts. The OTA has collaborated with the Provost's Office on the Academic Integrity event, the orientation session for new academic administrators and a workshop focusing on the orientation and management of stipendiary instructors. The OTA has also provided the Provost's Office with input on a variety of issues, including: offering a response to the Green Papers; recommending revisions to the guidelines for the evaluation of teaching effectiveness (including advocating the campus-wide adoption of a teaching dossier); recommending the formation of an Academy of Teaching and the offering of ESL training for faculty.

In consultation with the Provost's Office, the OTA has also begun to implement a number of initiatives. In September 2002 the OTA asked department chairs to nominate faculty to participate in our *Teaching Mentors Programme*. Although the initial response to our request was disappointing, with few departments responding to our call, in the end we have gathered together a number of dedicated faculty who will act as our "pilot" group to launch this programme over the course of the next academic year. The OTA Teaching Mentors will act as our liaison to divisions across campus, ensuring that information regarding teaching issues and events are shared with their colleagues.

Earlier this year the OTA began a campaign aimed at highlighting the University's long-standing commitment to teaching. The 175 Years of Great Teaching drew hundreds of nominations from faculty, staff, students, and alumni and we are in currently in the process of selecting the first group of representatives. In conjunction with the Department of Public Affairs, the OTA will develop a publicity campaign (primarily web-based) to highlight the nominees and their commitment to teaching.

The Teaching Assistants' Training Programme

Over the past year, the OTA has taken an active role in the Teaching Assistants' Training Programme. The TATP Directors regularly consulted and met with the Director and Assistant Director of the OTA to discuss programming, finances, and collaborative efforts. Although the TATP functions relatively independently of the OTA, its budget is administered through our office. The TATP Directors also provide the OTA with an annual report, and this year for the first time, produced a manual for future Directors. The OTA also plays an active role in the hiring of TATP Directors, with four new positions filled for the upcoming academic year. The Director of the OTA also delivered one of the TATP winter workshops on stimulating small group discussion.

The Current Year and Beyond

Over the course of the summer the Director and Assistant Director attended the annual conference for the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education where they participated in a wide range of workshops and events on issues such as faculty mentoring, encouraging academic integrity, and the challenges of large classes. This conference also provided a unique opportunity to meet with colleagues working in faculty and instructional

development offices from across North America. In addition, the Director of the OTA was invited to deliver the banquet address at an international conference on the subject of "A True Community of Teaching and Learning: Undergraduate Research Programs at the University of Toronto."

In addition to continuing work on many of the initiatives already in progress, the OTA is just completing its first full workshop series. This highly successful programme consisted of six sessions covering a variety of issues, including: *Creating a Teaching Portfolio*, *Designing Effective Assignments*, *Discussion Teaching Techniques*, *Working with TAs*, *Designing Multiple Choice Exams*, and *Leading Effective Labs*. This annual series will continue in the Spring term with a new slate of events on relevant topics such as *Designing an Effective Syllabus* and *Writing Letters of Recommendation*. This Fall will also see the launch of our "Talk about Teaching" series, a monthly drop-in session for instructors to share experiences and ideas with their colleagues.

The OTA is also currently involved in several other events to be held during this academic year, including a session on *Universal Instructional Design* and another on *New Course Design for a Changing Academic Environment* (both offered in cooperation with RCAT). In addition, the OTA will make a presentation to the Faculty of Pharmacy on *The Importance of Effective Teaching* and will offer a workshop to teaching librarians. Plans are also underway to host an event for all faculty on the issue of collaboration as well as one that will look at the large class experience from the perspective of students and faculty.

Earlier this term the OTA was involved in several orientation sessions for new faculty. The first in this series, planned and led by the OTA, was aimed at part-time, sessional and stipend instructors. In collaboration with the Office of the Vice-President and Provost, the Director of Faculty Renewal, and the Office of Research Services, the OTA also co-hosted sessions for new faculty and new mid-career faculty. In all three orientations the OTA organized sessions on teaching issues particular to UofT (academic cycle, course designations) and on those with a broader focus (developing teaching portfolios, supervising graduate students, motivating students, developing courses and designing course outlines, encouraging academic integrity, and so on).

The OTA is in the process of building a resource centre for faculty, providing a wide range of non-circulating material relating to current teaching issues and interests along with a variety of take-away handouts and pamphlets. A comfortable seating area, library and display case have already been set up for faculty interested in consulting these resources.

The OTA web site (www.utoronto.ca/ota), launched in August 2002, continues to grow and plans are in the works to expand the available resources, including a handbook for new instructors. The web site will soon include a section devoted to promoting and highlighting excellence in teaching at the University of Toronto. This section will feature highlights from the 175 Years of Great Teaching initiative, now titled Great Teachers from Our Great Past, with biographies of nominees. It will also include information about teaching awards and UofT award recipients.

Conclusion

The first complete year of operation of the OTA has been extremely busy and successful. The level of activity described above reflects in part the pent-up demand on the new office; however it also reflects the commitment of our colleagues and academic leaders in the area of teaching in all of its forms.

The University of Toronto has the clear capacity to be among the best public research and *teaching* universities in the world. The OTA exists to help deliver this promise and provide an institutional platform to achieve, sustain and celebrate this excellence.

22 October 2003

Kenneth Bartlett
Director,
Office of Teaching Advancement

Office of Teaching Advancement – Event Highlights

April 2002	Workshop for Rotman faculty
2002	Workshop for Instructors' Professional Development Day, School of Continuing Studies
12 July 2002	Workshop for UTM Teaching Librarians
15 August 2002	RCAT/OTA Orientation for new faculty
29 August 2002	Student Recruitment Training
4 September 2002	Orientation Session for Environmental Studies Instructors at Innis College
27 September 2002	Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering Orientation
8 November 2002	*The Joy of Teaching* Workshop for Teaching Associates in the Structured Practical Experience Program, Faculty of Pharmacy
15 November 2002	*Academic Integrity: Deterring and Detecting Plagiarism*
15 November 2002	*The Joy of Teaching* Workshop for Teaching Associates in the Structured Practical Experience Program, Faculty of Pharmacy
20 November 2002	*Turnitin.com Workshop* for the Department of History
21 November 2002	New Faculty Administrator's Event
22 November 2002	*The Joy of Teaching Workshop* for Teaching Associates in the Structured Practical Experience Program, Faculty of Pharmacy
17 January 2003	*Academic Integrity II: More on Deterring and Detecting Plagiarism*
20 January 2003	*Stimulating Class Discussion* workshop as part of TATP Seminar Series
27 February 2003	*Meeting the Challenges of Larger Classes Event*
4 March 2003	*Challenging the Rivalry of Teaching and Learning* with Greg Light (Director, Searle Center, Northwestern University), co-hosted with the Rotman School of Management
18 March 2003	OTA Teaching Mentors Lunch
14 April 2003	*Orientation and Management of Stipendiary Instructors* - Session for Academic Administrators
8 and 9 May 2003	*Nexus Conference*
13 and 14 May 2003	*TechKnowFile.03 Conference*
10 – 15 June 2003	Delegates at the STLHE Conference (Vancouver, BC)
17 July 2003	*Turnitin.com Workshop* for the Faculty of Nursing
21 August 2003	Attended the *Turnitin.com Conference* at York University
26 August 2003	*OTA Fall 2003 Workshop Series – Designing Assignments* (with Margaret Procter)
27 August 2003	*Orientation for Part-Time, Sessional and Stipend Instructors*
28 August 2003	*New Faculty Orientation Session* (with the Office of the Vice-President and Provost, Office of Faculty Renewal, and Research Services)
3 September 2003	*Orientation Session for New Mid-Career Faculty* (with the Office of the Vice-President and Provost, Office of Faculty Renewal, and Research Services)
18 September 2003	*OTA Fall 2003 Workshop Series – Working with TAs* (with Ken Bartlett and Rob Penfold)
30 September 2003	*OTA Fall 2003 Workshop Series – Discussion Teaching Techniques* (with David Dunne)
9 October 2003	Participated in the *New Academic Administrator's Training Session*

16 October 2003   *OTA Fall 2003 Workshop Series – Creating a Teaching Portfo*lio (with Teresa Dawson)

22 October 2003   *Universal Instructional Design event* (co-hosted with RCAT)

10 November 2003   *OTA Fall 2003 Workshop Series – Designing Multiple Choice Exams* (with Marty Wall)

14 November 2003   *New Course Design for a Changing Academic Environment* event for undergraduate coordinators (co-hosted with RCAT)

14 November 2003   *The Importance of Effective Teaching* – presentation for the Faculty of Pharmacy

5 December 2003   *Workshop on Effective Teaching* for teaching librarians (Instruction in Library Use Committee)