

Learning Commons Meeting
October 12th, 1.00-2.30 p.m.
SMIL Screening Room, Scott Library



Agenda

1. Introductions

2. Discussion:

- Learning Commons Hub – Current Service Model
Changes afoot to be discussed including ways we assess service as it evolves
- Learning Commons & Future Strategic Priorities
What are the strengths of the existing model and areas for enhancement? What are priorities moving forward, and approaches to get there?
 - i. Include discussion of Learning Development Specialist position (drafts attached)

3. Other Business?

Learning Commons Heads Meeting Notes

Oct. 12 2016

Present: S. Bury (Chair), J. Kirchner, J. Rahmer, C. Salole, R. Sheese, K. Winningham

1) Welcome & Introductions

Members of the committee were welcomed by Sophie. Sophie invited members to introduce themselves, and explain how they themselves and their respective units are connected to Learning Commons.

A fruitful discussion ensued helping refresh all participants on important historical context for the Learning Commons at York. Looking forward, Catherine recommended that the Learning Commons partners should be part of the discussion about the new Markham campus. Joy responded that she agreed this should be a priority.

Sophie distributed a package of materials to attendees including the June 2015 proposal to the AVP Teaching & Learning for the Learning Commons & Student Support for EE/-E-learning, the Learning Commons Strategic Plan document (2014), the matrix document mapping EE competencies to academic literacies (2016), and the draft job ad for a YUSA position to support the Learning Commons in the form of a Learning Development Specialist (2016).

2) Learning Commons Hub – Changing Service Model

Review & Discussion of Current Changes

Sophie, with input from Joy, outlined the main changes afoot in the Learning Commons Hub at the current time. Input was encouraged including expression of concerns or recommendations for next steps.

- Joy and Sophie spoke to changes that are being piloted with the library's informational and research support services. This has included the relocation of services (on a pilot basis) to the main level of the library to facilitate a more integrated service of circulation/reserve, information and research help. This type of model is now common in academic libraries, and York has actually been behind the curve on this. The rationale for such an approach was explained, and partners' input to date was acknowledged. A number of questions were asked at the meeting about this new model, which were then answered by Joy and Sophie. It was agreed that the pilot is worth pursuing, and that partners should be kept informed, and consultation should occur as we move forward.
- Learning Skills Services (LSS) now have offices in the LC hub and work with a team of peers who assist with offering service at the LSS pod, and in delivering workshops. LSS consultations are available from Mona and Cathy's offices. In addition, the peers offer LSS service and triage service for partners from the Learning Commons

Welcome Desk (see below).

- The Information Desk has been rebranded as the Learning Commons Welcome Desk and is now manned by Learning Skills student peers who operate it for a large majority of day-time hours Monday to Friday. These peers have been trained to offer triage service for other partners in the hub. In addition, they offer basic services on behalf of Learning Skills Services at this desk.
- The ESL Open Learning Centre, directed by Geoff Lawrence, is now offering service hours in the LC Hub on a pilot basis. This service began in early October. Partners are supportive of this development.

Next Steps:

- Assess the ESL OLC pilot during 2016/17 through review of statistics, talking to facilitators about their experience, and by soliciting input from students who use the service. Sophie will liaise with Geoff Lawrence to implement this assessment.
- Assess the Learning Commons Welcome Desk service in consultation with LSS, especially Catherine, Cathy and Mona to determine how well this service point works, how the peer-model is received by students, and what needed enhancements may be necessary for future planning.
- Review signage in the LC Hub to see how it can promote clarity on the services offered by each hub partner and the concept of integrated service between the first and second floor service points. Using the design and approach adopted for AskUs and Research Assistance could achieve this goal. Sophie will follow up and bring a proposal to the LC Steering Committee.

3) Learning Commons & Future Strategic Priorities

This is a very important juncture for Learning Commons with the new UAP, IIRP priorities, and the emerging SHARP budget model. In addition the Libraries have a capital program plan underway with hopes for library renovation. Joy encouraged the partners to think about moving to a more formal administrative and operational structure for Learning Commons. It was agreed that many fruitful initiatives have occurred since the inception of Learning Commons but that much of this was based on goodwill and stakeholders volunteering their time and efforts. A discussion of relative strengths and weaknesses of Learning Commons in its current form ensued. Concerns about sustainability were raised, as well as limitations of the current configuration of space, and resource constraints.

Next Steps:

It was agreed that in the year ahead it would be useful to develop a proposal or framework for a re-envisioned Learning Commons model. Such a document could identify vision and

values as well as desired goals for a new model. It was agreed that the following elements would be key:

- Engage in a goals setting exercise
 - Expertise mapping might be a component here to ensure goals are attainable by existing partners or to identify expertise needed in potential new partners
- Seek student and partner feedback to inform priorities for a re-envisioned Learning Commons at York
 - Prepare a SWOT or similar analysis
- Engage in an environmental scan to learn about best practices and models
 - May include visits or interviews with innovative or successful Learning Commons models in Canada or the United States
 - Ensure that our own institutional goals come first and what we develop suits the unique York context
- Organize a retreat in first part of 2017 with partners to facilitate input on a new Learning Commons Framework

4) New Staff Position to Support the Learning Commons at York

This item is strongly linked with the agenda item above. Sophie distributed two drafts of the Learning Development Specialist position which was prepared under Mark Robertson's leadership with a substantial amount of funding to come from the VP Teaching & Learning. Joy advised that she has had ongoing conversations with Will Gage and support for a position continues to exist, though the library would need to top this up to establish a reasonable salary for a full-time contract position at the band level needed. She proposed, if this happen, that the tasks of this position be split to reflect this funding mix.

Meeting participants were asked for their input on the position elements in light of the above discussion and current priorities. It was agreed that this position needs to change to reflect priorities immediately relevant. It was proposed that the position would be best framed as a Project Coordinator role rather than a Learning Development Specialist. In time, it might be re-evaluated and revised to become the latter. As a result elements in the job description relating to project management and liaison, in particular, need to be expanded, while those in the area of instructional design and teaching can be lessened.

Meeting attendees agreed that much work would need to happen to support a strategic reenvisioning of Learning Commons including investigative work, planning and execution. The elements in such work are outlined above and will need to be worked in to a revised job outline. It was agreed that this needs to form the top priority moving forward. The Learning Commons Coordinator will need to lead and steward this work in collaboration with heads of partner units. An exact reporting structure for this proposed new staff position needs to be determined.

Next Steps:

- Sophie agreed to redraft the position description and share it with attendees at the meeting for their input.
- Catherine said she could help by sharing language from a project coordinator role currently being established within her area.
- Joy stated that she will follow up with Will Gage about this proposed change to the job description at an impending meeting she has with him and advise the group of the outcome.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm.