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Engaging in a Collaborative Project as a Team-Building Strategy During a Period of Organizational Change¹

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An emerging trend in North American higher education institutions is to merge teaching and learning centres with other units on campus. The authors share their team-building process during a time of organizational change through a series of individually written reflective pieces. The importance of active communication and the perceived losses and gains emerge as common themes from the essays, but the authors' overall experience of engaging on a collaborative project helped define what made them a team. A survey of the literature on organizational change shows that they cycled through Rousseau, Aubé, and Savoie's sequence of effective teamwork behaviours.

There is an emerging trend in North American higher education institutions to merge teaching and learning centres with other units such as instructional technology and audiovisual centres (McDonald & Stockley, 2010). On July 1, 2010, the Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth (TAG) and the Office of Learning Technology (OLT) at the University of British Columbia (UBC) merged to create the Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology (CTLT). Both the former units, TAG and OLT, centrally supported faculty members, staff, and students in achieving their teaching and learning goals in different but complementary ways. The merger was an opportunity for the university to provide a deeper

resource base to achieve the teaching and learning goals laid out in its long-term plan, entitled *Place and Promise*.

Mergers can create an environment of uncertainty for staff members who are expected to continue fulfilling their responsibilities in an unfamiliar environment (Giffords & Dina, 2008). The transition may require staff to modify their assumptions about their workplace as well as change their behaviours and processes (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Questions will be asked, including the following: Who will I be working with? What is the transition process like? How will this change affect me? Some of these questions can be answered easily, while others need time to unravel themselves.

Staff at CTLT had to adjust to a new reality that included different policies and new or revised job responsibilities. In addition to these adjustments, the combined staff at CTLT also needed to establish relationships with their new colleagues. A case in point is the situation experienced by the authors of this article. We—Isabeau Iqbal, Jan Johnson, Lydia Jones, Roselynn Verwoord, and Zack Lee—came together as part of the Facilitation and Process Design (FPD) Team, a small team nested within the larger Teaching and Learning Professional Development division at CTLT. Though we shared a history of working together in different capacities, we had never been part of the same team. We were suddenly faced with defining our new identity and determining how we wanted to work together in a way that satisfied our collective but undefined needs and goals (Frost & Gillespie, 1998).

Since the merger, one of our goals as the FPD team has been team building. Over the past year, we have been attempting to answer the questions “What makes us a team?” and “How do we become a team?” both individually and as a group. Roselynn suggested that one way we could engage in these questions was to write this article collaboratively through a series of reflective essays. The pieces, though personal in nature, have collective themes and threads that weave through them, showing a shared experience of team building between the five of us. Writing this article was illuminating because it helped each of us discover that we are concerned about the same issues, have similar needs, and are working toward common goals in the context of our work at CTLT.

This article both embodies and describes the teamwork strategies and behaviours we adopted as we set about creating a new team within a new unit. It actually constitutes the first collaborative project the FPD team has undertaken together—engaging in teamwork to write about teamwork. It also describes our affective experiences of institutional change and team formation, referencing scholarly literature on the subject as well as

analyzing our personal reflections on change. Since mergers are becoming increasingly common, we describe our specific institutional context, chronicle our team-building process, present our personal reflections, analyze the reflections for common themes, and offer some general conclusions about team building in the context of organizational change. We seek to share our experience with staff at other teaching and learning centres that are experiencing the need to build teams during times of organizational change.

The History of Two Units

The Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth had been the central teaching and learning centre at UBC since 1987. With a mission to foster quality teaching and learning across the university, TAG offered innovative and creative programs and services that supported faculty, staff, and students in a diverse range of skill areas and issues. Numerous teaching and learning workshops were offered throughout the year, and TAG also organized an annual Learning Conference for the university community. Communities of practice—on portfolios and sustainability, for example—brought people from different disciplines to share their experiences, discuss issues, and learn from their peers. Programs that centered on specific teaching and learning topics such as global citizenship and equity were offered to support the university's strategic plan.

TAG comprised 23 staff members that included a mix of administrative staff, faculty associates, and graduate and undergraduate students. Though staff regularly collaborated on projects, teamwork was on a case-by-case basis, and no standing teams existed. The basic unit of the organizational structure was the individual rather than the team. Operating in a collaborative yet relatively flat structure, everybody had specific areas of responsibility but found support from other colleagues. Jan focused primarily on process design and facilitation, working with the UBC community and beyond in areas such as course design, curriculum review, and self-assessment of teaching. Isabeau, while completing her Ph.D. in Educational Studies, coordinated a community of practice on the peer review of teaching and an initiative that recognized the professional development activities of individuals in the teaching and learning community on campus. Lydia, a Ph.D. student in German Studies, managed the TAG Resource Room—a collection of books, articles, newsletters, and other resources on teaching and learning. Roselynn, a Master's student in Educational Studies, worked on developing several communities of practice in the areas of facilitation, course design, and portfolios.

TAG built relationships and worked closely with other units at UBC to facilitate, tailor, and expand their programs and services. One such example is the Office of Learning Technology. OLT was the product of another merger in 2002 and was recognized as the central university teaching and learning with technology unit that focused on innovations and improvements to the learning environment, enriched and supported by technology. Working collaboratively with faculties, they designed and offered more than 125 distance learning courses from a variety of disciplines. Several teams provided development and support for the various learning technologies supported at UBC, such as blogs, wikis, and the learning management system. Workshops and conferences were organized to help faculty, staff, and students find ingenious ways to use new technology in their teaching and learning.

OLT was composed of more than 40 individuals, including instructional designers, web programmers, facilitators, and graduate and undergraduate students. Staff worked within a structured team-based environment, each team having a different but complementary focus. The basic unit of the organizational structure was the team. As part of the Marketing and Communications team, Zack was responsible for coordinating the logistics of OLT-hosted conferences as well as providing marketing design for websites and print materials. His work slowly transitioned into co-facilitating training workshops and designing resources for institutionally supported learning technologies.

Over the years, the synergies in both units' missions led to partnerships on a diverse range of projects that included, but were not limited to, online resources, face-to-face workshops and communities of practice. Staff from both TAG and OLT regularly worked together; they enjoyed an ongoing complementary relationship and brought their own experiences and strengths to collaborative projects.

Prior to the merger, TAG's director was completing his second five-year term. During his last year, the Centre underwent an external review to assess the unit's effectiveness, impact, and overall future direction. Several of the committee's recommendations called for a closer relationship with OLT, including better coordination with partner units, effective integration of technology and pedagogy in the programs they offered, and for TAG to play a coordinating role in bringing together the different technology initiatives at UBC. In order to inform the search for a new director, the review committee also recommended a set of qualities and characteristics that potential candidates should possess. Among the items listed was "proficiency in a vision for the role of technology in the advancement of teaching and learning."

An international search for a new TAG director was, unfortunately, left incomplete when the chosen candidate declined the position due to personal reasons. At this point, senior leadership at UBC saw an opportunity to act upon on some of the recommendations from the external review. Since both TAG and OLT centrally supported excellence in teaching and learning, the university moved to bring the two units together into a new organizational structure. Currently, the Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology employs more than 60 individuals, including instructors, faculty members, full-time staff, and undergraduate and graduate students. To support several cross-functional roles, CTLT works within a team-based structure comprising 6 divisions:

- *Aboriginal Initiatives*, responsible for bringing together, integrating, and supporting the different initiatives to better understand Aboriginal issues in a multicultural environment;
- *Communications Operations*, responsible for the financial, human resource and administrative aspects of CTLT;
- *Distance and Blended Learning*, responsible for designing and supporting many of the distance learning courses at UBC as well as providing instructional design services;
- *Strategic Curriculum Services*, responsible for partnering with units across the university to support innovation and excellence in curriculum development and renewal;
- *Teaching and Learning Professional Development (TLPD)*, responsible for the development, implementation, and evaluation of professional development and community of practice programs offered by CTLT;
- *Teaching and Learning Technologies*, responsible for the support and evaluation of technology tools used on campus.

The authors of this article make up the Facilitation and Process Design (FPD) team, a smaller group within TLPD. We are responsible for designing, facilitating and documenting program planning, evaluation and related processes, fostering communities of practice, providing facilitation services, and resource development.

The other four of us started to report to Jan as she became the manager of the FPD. Zack transitioned into a new role that focused on educational resource development. Isabeau, Lydia, and Roselynn have the same responsibilities as they had previously, but they have had to navigate their way through the changes brought upon by the merger. The novelty of the situation gave us an opportunity to define who we are and what we do. The months immediately following the merger were intentionally taken up by efforts to define what makes us a team. We engaged in collaborative exercises, such as setting our team's goals and participating in the planning of the TLPD team retreat. Despite our formal designation as a team, our different but interrelated roles with the new structure afforded us minimal opportunities to work together as a team. It was our engagement in the collaborative project of drafting this article that got us working together and getting to know each other. As Lucas (2010) notes, creating and adopting common interests is required in becoming a successful team. By setting a common goal of publishing an article about our experience of a merger and team building, we found ourselves enacting precisely the effective teamwork behaviours that are described in the literature on team building. As a result of this process, we have also found ourselves feeling and acting more like members of a team.

Cycling Through Teamwork Behaviours

Since the CTLT merger, we have engaged in intensive formal team mission analysis to reach what Rousseau, Aubé, and Savoie (2006) term a "collective interpretation and evaluation of the team's purpose, including the identification of its main tasks and the cooperative environmental conditions and team resources available for carrying out the mission" (p. 459). Jan facilitated a series of team meetings that culminated in a table identifying the newly minted FPD team's main tasks. As previously mentioned, Roselynn suggested that we collaboratively write an article about our experiences of building a new team after an institutional merger for submission to this journal. We unanimously agreed that this was a goal that aligned with several aspects of our team mission: to create learning resources for personal and professional development, to share our work, and to model CTLT's values. We set about planning our execution, quickly reaching a consensus that the approach that would most fully capture our experience would be a collection of short personal essays, one by each team member.

Using our intuitive knowledge and considerable previous experience of working in teams in other contexts, we later came to find that

in the process of writing this article, we had cycled precisely through a sequence of effective teamwork behaviours identified, defined, and classified by Rousseau et al. in their 2006 synthesis of 29 existing teamwork frameworks. Our initial steps of determining our team's primary tasks and choosing to engage in a collaborative project fits in with a subset of teamwork behaviours, termed as *preparation of work accomplishment* and consisting of *team mission analysis, goal specification, and planning*. Our next steps of volunteering individual tasks and negotiating around our current responsibilities align nicely with Rousseau et al.'s (2006) next subset of behaviours: *task-based collaborative behaviours*. Specifically, these are termed *coordination, cooperation, and information exchange in their framework*. Coordination entailed integrating our contributions to the project to ensure timely task accomplishment. We divided up the tasks according to our aptitude, enthusiasm, and availability and set a series of meetings and deadlines with the understanding that these would change as the article progressed. We also set up media to facilitate information exchange: regular meetings, e-mail, a wiki page, and shared Google documents. The use of these information exchange devices later required intervention in the form of team adjustment behaviours for greater efficiency and will be discussed later.

The first task was identical for each team member: to write a short reflective essay on our individual experiences of the merger and our experiences of creating a new team in the newly created space. We did not discuss beforehand what or how we were planning to write, leaving the assignment very open-ended. We submitted the reflections by the agreed-upon deadline and took some time to read our teammates' reflections. As we began to work with the reflections, we engaged in *work assessment behaviours*. Rousseau et al. (2006) explain that "as team members make progress toward task completion, the monitoring of their performance and their environment enable them to make sure that they are doing the right thing" (p. 552). These activities include *performance monitoring* and *systems monitoring*, wherein the former refers to team members keeping track of fellow team members' work while carrying out their own, and the latter refers to team members' keeping track of resources and environmental conditions. Performance monitoring was carried out by updates at meetings, e-mail, and electronic notifications on Google Docs and the UBC Wiki. Since the most precious resource involved in this project was time, systems monitoring meant protecting our own time as well as that of our coworkers and engaging in so-called *team adjustment behaviours* like helping one another perform their roles (*backup behaviours*).

Team adjustment behaviours are those that seek to remedy problems

identified via the *work assessment behaviours* discussed above. They simply refer to behaviours that help with the completion of tasks through improvements in efficiency. Following Rosseau et al.'s (2006) synthesized framework, these team adjustment behaviours are *backing-up behaviours*, *intra-team coaching*, *collaborative problem solving*, and *team practice innovation*. The outcome of work assessment behaviours determines which team adjustment behaviours are necessary. We did not engage in all of the behaviours identified in the synthesized framework but can cite examples of when we did. Backing-up behaviours are those that constitute helping others perform their roles. When Isabeau, for example, had limited time to create a table of peer reviewers' comments, Roselynn stepped in and agreed to take over the task for her. Team practice innovation refers to team members' activities designed to invent and implement new and improved ways of doing their tasks. A prime example was when our project took the form of technical solutions to difficulties in information exchange—this ultimately included using technology that was new to some members of the group, like creating a page on the UBC Wiki that we could all edit.

What follows is a presentation of our reflections in their entirety; they represent our individual voices and demonstrate the ways in which we each responded differently to the question "What are we doing to become a team?" The resulting pieces, though personal in nature, have collective themes and threads that weave through them, showing a shared experience between the five of us. Writing this article was illuminating for everyone. It helped us discover that we are concerned about the same issues, have similar needs, and are working toward common goals. The reflections are included here, unedited, in their entirety.

Five Reflections on Institutional Change and Team Building

*Isabeau Iqbal, Educational Developer:
On Flexibility and Hierarchies*

The CTLT merger has brought about many changes to the processes we previously undertook to accomplish our work. As I have grown my understanding of what this (our) new centre does, I have had to adjust to different ways of working with my colleagues.

In the past, we, the staff, had tremendous flexibility on how we carried out our work. We generally acted swiftly upon our inspirations and collaborated easily to materialize our ideas. In my opinion, we still have

a great deal of flexibility, but it has to “fit” within a structure of increased hierarchy. A flat structure is not ideal, nor is one with spiraling staircases and numerous landings. Thus, currently, to advance a project or initiative, one is required to gain approvals from managers (of which there are multiple levels) and to crosscheck with members of other teams (for instance, the marketing team and operations team). Plans need to be articulated in business terms, and they develop at a different pace. By different, I do not necessarily mean more slowly. Rather, I refer to something quite intangible—a dip in energy that is brought about by having to follow new rules, ones that we are not yet accustomed to and perhaps don’t fully understand and/or endorse. So, even though I support the move to formalize some of our processes and appreciate that a greater part of our work will be documented and captured in the institutional memory, I lament the diminished control over my/our work and environment. I also recognize that, as with most of the other changes I have experienced since the merger, I will adapt and, ultimately, feel less unsettled by all the newness.

*Lydia Jones, Resource Room Coordinator:
Reflections on Forming a Small Team
Within a Newly Merged Teaching and Learning Unit*

After the merger, my job was replaced with what initially felt like a hauntingly familiar simulacrum. It’s similar to popping what looks like an almond into your mouth and having it turn out to be made of marzipan—not bad and not totally unlike what you expected but still a disorienting surprise. From my perspective as a part-time graduate student staff member, the merger was abrupt. It was presented illogically, as the final outcome of a long, involved, international search for a new director, which brought members of our former Centre together for long, thoughtful meetings to define ourselves as a unit and describe adequately what kind of leadership would benefit a unit like ours most. The candidates came, we went to the job talks, we debated their relative merits, and we continued refining our vision of our future.

Suddenly, surprisingly, the end result of this process was an announcement of the dissolution of the unit we had so lovingly defined and a merger with another unit on campus. Our new, merged acronym was announced. I received official notification that my e-mail address had been changed. I continued receiving e-mails to my old address from colleagues at my former unit, while my new colleagues used the new e-mail address. It wasn’t all cynicism and despair (many of the e-mails in my new

inbox were quite friendly and helpful), but I remember finding my split e-identity rather symbolic—this “merger” had the affective signification of a split: old real job/new fake job.

Given the degree to which I, like so many others, tend to identify myself with “what I do,” a split like this amounted to a minor career identity crisis. *Career* might seem overwrought, but my graduate studies are in service of one day becoming a faculty member of an institution of higher learning. I consider my part-time job at our Centre to be an integral part of the training I need to become the kind of faculty member I want to become.

It took a month of queries, requests, and consultations to reconcile the two e-mail accounts so that I had all my messages arriving in the same inbox. While my e-identities have now long been merged, I am still negotiating a different kind of merger. What I am coming to appreciate is the points of reference most helpful to orienting myself in this new merged unit: the members of my small team. This reorientation has not been a personal epiphany. It was the result of a conscious effort by CTLT management to create nested teams. Regardless of any reservations I might harbour about our new structure, it is the reality that I have to negotiate. The most difficult part about orienting myself within my smallest, most deeply nested team has been the feeling of losing oversight. The merger made the unit much larger, but it has actually rendered my experience of it much, much smaller. I have had to let go of the larger view I used to enjoy, working instead through a much more pronounced hierarchy. Building our small team, a process that is still very much in progress, has meant developing trust with new people as well as redefining the parameters of existing relationships to suit our new situation. The makeup of the small team to which I was assigned means I have been doing more of the latter than the former.

My relationship with Jan is a representative example. I have known and worked for/with Jan as long as I have been affiliated with UBC, lived in Vancouver, or even lived in Canada. She and my predecessor interviewed me the day after I moved here for the position I held at TAG and currently hold at CTLT. She has been my supervisor since then. Adjusting to the new hierarchy has altered the dynamics of our relationship. Under the flatter hierarchy of TAG, Jan did not often need to actively and explicitly advocate on my behalf. That does not mean she did not do so, but rather that I was able to effectively advocate for myself and my projects—she kept an eye on me and intervened as necessary. As the CTLT organizational structure gained traction, it became clear that the position of graduate student staff within the unit needed to be better defined and articulated. It was in this process that I relinquished the role of advocate to Jan. As

many of the recommendations graduate student staff had made became reality, I came to also realize that the loss of oversight, which still makes me nervous, can come with a valuable trade-off: Relinquishing things like advocacy and broad oversight means more time and energy for pursuing specific projects.

*Zack Lee, Educational Resources Developer:
Catching Up With a Change of Careers*

My previous professional experience in the university environment was mainly focused on communications and special events. Working at OLT, I was exposed to the creative possibilities that technology afforded us, something I had not been aware of previously. Finding out how blogs can be used as a learning tool was an exciting idea. Learning about students contributing to Wikipedia to write scholarly research projects was a novel concept worth exploring a bit further. I slowly involved myself in projects that allowed me to dig deeper into how various learning technologies can be used to support excellent teaching and learning opportunities.

I started to research what other universities have done in this area. I attended many workshops, seminars, and conferences to broaden my knowledge of these tools. I read articles on issues related to technology such as digital identity, open education, and privacy. I sought to engage these topics through my work by creating resources and opportunities for community dialogue. I worked on the documentation for UBC's e-Learning Toolkit, which encouraged reuse of the resources presented and collaboration between community members interested in learning technologies. I started to develop and co-facilitate workshops for the Learning Technology Institute. Yet I still felt that I didn't have the scholarly knowledge and direct experience in teaching and learning to be directly involved in shaping the learning environment at UBC.

The disconnect I felt was amplified by joining the FPD team as an Educational Resources Developer. All of my new team members were from the former TAG, well known in the teaching and learning community as experts and leaders. Over the years, they have gained specialized knowledge and extensive experience that I never thought I could match. Needless to say, I felt out of place and approached the first few team meetings with hesitation and trepidation.

In order to gauge who my new teammates were, I listened. I listened to what they wanted to share, what their concerns were, and what they were working on. As I listened, I learned what motivated them and why they worked at UBC. At the same time, they wanted to get to know me,

asking the same questions I wanted answered. What did I want to share? What were my concerns? What was I working on? I was given the space to talk about what motivated me and why I worked here. As our team met more regularly, I became more relaxed, more willing to talk. I started to share ideas, provide feedback, and suggest projects we can collaborate on. Slowly, I felt safe with my teammates; a sense of trust was building between us.

Looking back on the past few months, the most important exercise my team does every day is create a space where we can communicate honestly with each other. The act of asking somebody what their thoughts are, even though they don't share them willingly, speaks volumes on how much we value each other. It signals to everyone that each one of us is important. No matter how long you've worked in the community or what your previous experiences are, you always have something unique to bring to the table. Being part of a team requires us to build relationships with each other. In turn, our relationships are built and depend on our ability to communicate in a frank and honest way.

*Roselynn Verwoord, Community of Practice Developer:
Reflections on Becoming a Team Player*

What does it mean to transition from working independently as an educational developer in a teaching and learning centre to working in a team of educational developers? What are the challenges and opportunities that are presented as a result of a merger between two distinct units within a university campus? As a Community of Practice Developer in the former TAG who had reported directly to one supervisor and never worked in a formal team (with the exception of being a member of the team of staff), the merger and subsequent re-structuring of OLT and TAG staff into large and smaller teams wreaked havoc on my sense of autonomy and on my ability to "get things done." What did it mean to become a member of a small team nested within a larger team in a newly formed unit? How would working in a team structure impact my autonomy and sense of independence as a staff person? These were the questions that were foremost on my mind as I adjusted to being a team player. In this reflection, I present three themes—finding commonality, listening, and collaboration—in order to highlight the benefits of the merger from my perspective. They emerged from my transition from working autonomously to being a member of a team.

Finding Commonality

Having worked independently in the former TAG unit, I found myself struggling to adjust to the concept of being a member of a small and large team, within an even larger organization. What does it mean to be a member of a team with other individuals who seemed to have no direct connection to the work that I do? How is our work connected, and what are the commonalities in our positions? I have found that finding commonality among the tasks, roles, and responsibilities of the members of my teams has been both interesting and rewarding. I have built new professional and personal relationships that have led to synergies and to the implementation of collaborative projects at the Centre. This has not only benefited me, but it has also benefited the individuals who access the programs and services we offer. That being said, finding commonality amongst our disparate roles has been challenging, as it has required a considerable amount of time and listening. Instead of just “getting things done,” I have to slow down and listen to my team members’ needs, interests, and points of view. Who is the person behind the role? How do they interpret their role, particularly as it relates to programs and services at the Centre?

Listening

There have been many meetings on understanding what each of us does in her or his role at the Centre that have required us to listen with curiosity and interest. With a thorough understanding of what our roles are, we recently have begun to explore how our roles fit together. What are the commonalities as well as the unique aspects and perspectives that each role brings to the teams? How can these roles be applied to support innovation and creativity in collaborative projects?

Collaboration

Having spent a great deal of time discussing our roles, commonalities, and differences within the context of the larger Centre, our small team has recently begun to explore engaging in common projects. This article is one example of a collaborative and shared project that we decided to do together. Not only do collaborative projects foster teamwork and relationship building, they also help us continue to communicate the work that we do with ourselves as well as others. There are several other collaborative projects in development that will allow us to continue focusing on our

commonalities, listening to each other, and working together.

*Jan Johnson, Manager, Facilitation and Process Design:
Essentials to Team Development*

We have many teams in our Centre, among them the CTLT Team (everyone who works for the Centre), the TLPD Team (the folks who are part of the Teaching and Learning Professional Development Division—one of six divisions within the Centre), and the FPD team (the group of us who belong to the Facilitation and Process Design team who are writing this article—one of four teams within the TLPD division). We also have cross-unit teams—for example, the X team, consisting of two managers from each of the six divisions, and our Team Leads Team, consisting of the managers and learning strategists within the TLPD team. Becoming a team in a centre of this size has many aspects to it, and where we (any group of CTLT staff) are in the process of becoming a team differs depending on which team we are speaking about.

Currently, I am the Manager of the FPD team. My reflections emerge from my experiences in working with many different people to become teams at various levels within the Centre. Rather than speak specifically to one experience or within one context, I focus instead on what I have come to believe is essential for the successful development of any team in the context of a Centre formed from the merging of several previously successful units, as ours has been.

Successful team building within such an amalgamated organization includes the following:

- Recognizing that each predecessor unit had its own culture, language, and processes developed over many years and that all were valuable, relevant, and appropriate to the work/context/clientele of that unit;
- Allowing time for individuals to mourn the loss of their previous team/unit before asking them to be excited about and focus on the possibilities of the new entities;
- Being willing to explore differences in meaning, culture, philosophies, and processes from the perspective of a learner, with patience and curiosity, and without prior judgment;
- Publicly acknowledging and valuing what the members

of each of the units brings to the new unit and the new teams in terms of character, knowledge, skills, expertise, and scholarship;

- Conceptualizing the development of new teams and a new unit as valuing and building on the existing strengths of all of the previous units in an appreciative way and sharing that perspective across the new unit/teams;
- Believing that new colleagues from units other than your own are actually very good at their jobs and can be trusted to do those jobs without being micro-managed;
- Consulting members of all previous units, transparently, in making decisions wherever possible and appropriate;
- Providing clear, logical rationales for decisions made at all levels and sharing them across the new unit/teams;
- Focusing on the simplest, most straightforward approach to creating and providing the appropriate organizational structure and required process- and policy-related documentation;
- Approaching team building with a spirit of caring, compassion and generosity—looking for ways to help your colleagues shine.

Weaving the Threads

As previously mentioned, we quickly recognized that the variation in how we realized our tasks was representative of our different approaches and outlooks as members of the FPD team. Our foregoing texts look and feel so different. They range in form from Lydia's metaphorical three-paragraph prose account to Roselynn's questions organized by theme, to Jan's practical bulleted list. They range in tone from Isabeau's hopeful but apprehensive gesture toward an uncertain future to Zack's cheerful chronological narration of his unfolding career path. Despite these differences, the content of our reflections reveals strikingly consistent commonalities between our five individual experiences. We have selected

two common threads that bind our individual experiences together: balancing perceived losses and gains and facilitating active communication between teammates.

Balancing Perceived Losses and Gains

The first theme that emerges from our individual reflections is the balancing of perceived losses and gains in the process of building a team. Isabeau, for example, cites an intangible “dip in energy” that accompanies the standardization of processes within the new organizational structure. She laments a loss of autonomy, but she indicates a future where the benefits from that loss will become apparent. Similarly, Lydia concludes with an illustrative example that shifting responsibilities onto others, as required by the new system, can result in increased time for other endeavours. Roselynn, likewise, reflects on experiencing a loss of autonomy that directly threatens her sense of herself as an effective staff member. Though many of her sentences, tellingly, still end in question marks, she indicates that the strategy of “finding commonality among the tasks, roles, and responsibilities of the members of my teams has been both interesting and rewarding.” This strategy has led to new relationships and projects that she finds enriching. Zack’s loss is an affective one, due to his having a different professional background than the majority of the team. For example, he “felt out of place and approached the first few team meetings with hesitation and trepidation.” As his narrative progresses, it becomes apparent that the team-building strategies he employed helped him transition out of his discomfort to gain a new perspective on his work. Finally, Jan’s reflection also addresses the notion of balancing loss with benefits. She recommends that individuals be given space to mourn the loss of the previous teams before expecting them to be enthusiastic about the new ones. As we have gone about building our team, we have certainly been mindful of the fact that, although our combination holds the potential for many benefits to be shared among us, it also necessarily entails some losses. These losses, as illustrated by our reflections, take different forms for each of us.

Perceptions of loss are natural when experiencing organizational change, especially in situations where individuals become part of a larger organization (Cross, 1998). Losing the ability to take command, to make decisions and implement them effectively, is something Isabeau and Roselynn underscore. Lydia refers to a loss of oversight to her work and Zack expresses losing touch with what he already knows how to do. They express a loss of intimacy and familiarity in their work environment as

they situate themselves in a reality where new policies, processes, and responsibilities are inevitably introduced. Many of the pieces touch upon making adjustments by balancing the experienced losses with recognition of the potential gains, something that Jan alludes to as well. In addition to creating a shared vision of what defines us as a team, sharing our individual experiences allowed us to find commonalities and multiple meanings that would bind us together (Barnett, 2011). This perceived sense of loss of effectiveness as a staff member was counterbalanced by gaining greater standardization of process and procedures. The loss of responsibility for broader oversight also meant gaining more time to devote to projects. The process of communicating these experiences through a collaborative project allowed us to make connections among separate and individual perspectives.

Facilitating Active Communication

The second theme that emerges from the reflections is that of active communication between teammates. It is most strongly evident in Zack, Roselynn, and Jan's reflections, though it is also present in Isabeau and Lydia's as well. Zack explicitly identifies listening as a team-building strategy he consciously employs to balance a loss of professional identity with gains in new skills. More importantly, he characterizes listening as a skill also employed by other team members. The communication that helped him overcome his initial trepidation is an active strategy in which all of us engage. Roselynn dedicates a subsection of her reflection to the theme of listening. Like Zack, Roselynn stresses that this listening must be active—in her words, "listening with curiosity and interest." Jan couches a similar sentiment in terms of "willingness to explore." She cites a willingness to "explore differences in meaning, culture, philosophies, and processes from the perspective of a learner, with patience and curiosity, and without prior judgment" as being essential to team development. Active communication of differences in meaning, culture, philosophies, and processes is an unstated prerequisite to exploring them. For Isabeau, active communication has taken a qualitatively different form than it did in her previous unit. She characterizes the communication within the previous organizational structure positively, but she remains skeptical about the quality of active communication within the new hierarchical structure, if not within the FPD team. Lydia implies a similar discontent when she writes of trying to merge her CTLT and TAG e-mail accounts, stating "It took a month of queries, requests and consultations to reconcile the two accounts so that I had all my messages arriving in the same inbox." Both

Isabeau and Lydia, however, indicate that this loss could be balanced by new benefits.

Active communication—listening, asking, and sharing with genuine interest—has had a positive impact on our sense of becoming a team. Successful organizational change requires creating a supportive culture where employees can freely communicate their experiences, making linkages between the past and the present (Lucas, 2010). Relationships are predicated upon a reciprocal exchange of information between individuals. If Roselynn and Zack did not have the “willingness to explore” or listen to their new team members, they could have grown disenchanted with their new reality. They would cease participating in team activities and prefer to work alone. Lydia and Isabeau ask questions about new processes and procedures, allowing them to sift through the ambiguity and have a clearer understanding of what these meant (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Without colleagues who share their knowledge and experience, staff cease to monitor their own performance and to make continuous self-adjustments to adapt in the new environment (Rousseau et al., 2006). Organizational change also means learning, adapting, and transferring organizational practices. Our team learned from the differing yet complementary perspectives communicated through our essays. Without prior discussion or explicit requests, active communication was a practice we all employed to our benefit. As Jan rightly puts it, we adopted the position of being learners, a perspective we ask everybody who participates in our programs to embrace as well.

Potential for a New Future

Mergers can be a disconcerting time for staff undergoing this particular type of organizational change. A new reality suddenly takes hold, full of uncertainty and ambiguity, as new structures, policies, and procedures are put in place. Following a trend with teaching and learning centres across North America, the staff from the Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology at the University of British Columbia had to adjust to the new environment they work in with the hope of further solidifying the support they provide for teaching and learning.

As part of these adjustments, the authors of this article had to come together to form a team where there had not been a team before. The Facilitation and Process Design team is a collection of individuals grouped together with the expectation that they will work together effectively to achieve common goals. In order to help us meet that expectation, we needed to define what made us a team.

Our original intention in this article was to share with other teaching and learning centres our experience and activities in becoming a team by reflecting individually on what we have done over the past few months. Our writing process has, fortunately, taken us in another direction. We came to the realization that by engaging in a collaborative project, like this article, we gained an opportunity to work together and to develop a deeper understanding of who we are as a team. Collaborative projects can provide teams an impetus to recognize the inherent differences between their members as well as the commonalities that bind them together.

Our individual reflections show that there is a sense of loss of what we loved as well as a sense of uncertainty for what is to come. On the other hand, the reflections also demonstrate a sense of hope for the potential to do and be something greater as well as excitement about the arrival of new opportunities. This sense of hope is firmly rooted in the relationships we build with our new colleagues, who bring different experiences, knowledge, and energy, all of which enrich our work. Only by engaging actively with each other through listening and communicating can we bring these opportunities to the surface. Trusting our colleagues enables us to share ourselves, ask difficult questions, and suggest ideas. It allows us to listen and accept what others have to say, to dig deeper into the issues at hand, and to explore ideas for a potential future.

In order for us to create the potential future we envision for ourselves, we continue to find other ways to support each other. Little by little, we establish relationships that help us become not just a team but also the team we *want* to be. As much as we have progressed toward building the FPD team, our individual reflections still take us by surprise when read together and give us insight into who we are individually and within the group.

To staff members at other teaching and learning centres who need to build a team, we recommend exploring the following ideas and actions:

- Create a shared vision of what defines you, the members, as a team.
- Recognize that there will be losses in any organizational change, but balance them with the gains you will be receiving.
- Find ways to communicate actively with your team members, from asking questions regularly, to using technology for collaboration, to listening with genuine interest.

- Engage each other in collaborative projects, as they will multiply your opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of who you are as a team.
- Find concrete ways for team members to support each other in their goals and tasks.

Our goal was to shed some light on our particular circumstance within our context, yet other questions can be asked for future studies and dissemination: What is the impact of organizational change on teaching and learning centres? What is the impact of the change on the programs and services offered? What strategies can be developed as a result of organizational transitions to ease staff members' transition from one reality to the next? How can educational developers foster creative and innovative approaches to teaching and learning in the context of a larger organization? Organizational change offers many questions such as these that need to be explored. Though the answers will always be context-specific, we hope sharing our experiences may contribute to the resources available for others as they navigate similar situations.

Footnote

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