Teaching Stream Appointments at McMaster
David Wilkinson, Provost

The teaching stream class of appointments at McMaster was initiated in the mid-2000s. At the time that these appointments were created McMaster was in the vanguard amongst Canadian universities in establishing a distinct career stream for faculty whose focus is more strongly weighted towards pedagogy than research. As this was seen as experimental and the impact on the institution needed to be assessed it was agreed that the number of teaching stream appointments would be limited by Faculty. The initial allocation (see SPS-A9) included 51 possible teaching stream positions* with the largest number (15) being allocated to the Faculty of Science and the smallest number (6) to Business. This allocation has not changed since it was established in 2006, although there have been a few temporary increases to address specific cases. (In such cases “temporary” means that the allocation is increased but will drop to the nominal value as teaching stream faculty members in the affected Faculties retire or leave their positions).

The teaching stream classification has brought a number of benefits to McMaster. First of all it enabled us to stabilize and recognize the careers of a number of highly valued colleagues who had held a series of contractually limited appointments over many years. There was a recognition that many of our colleagues holding long term CLAs were invaluable to the success of the institution and that by enabling them to move into the teaching stream we would provide full recognition of their impact and importance. As a corollary to this the creation of the teaching stream has helped in the recruitment of CLAs since there is now the prospect that the very best of these could move into teaching stream positions provided that there is room within the allocated slots.

Teaching stream appointments have advanced our commitment to “developing a distinct, effective and sustainable undergraduate experience”† in so far as they have reduced the need of Faculties to teach large numbers of courses using professors on short term contracts. Teaching stream faculty have brought more stability in, and strength to, undergraduate curricular offerings and they in turn experience greater attachment to the institution. The university made a commitment when the teaching stream was created that it would lead to a reduction in the number of CLA appointments. The following table demonstrates that this is indeed what has happened. Comparing 2006/07, the year before the first teaching stream appointments were made, with 2012/13, the 71 teaching stream appointments that have been made across the university is matched almost exactly by a decrease of 72 CLAs. Over the same period the university has also added 25 tenure stream faculty members.

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<tr>
<td>TENURE STREAM</td>
<td>735</td>
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<td>TEACHING STREAM</td>
<td>71</td>
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<td>CLA</td>
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McMaster has long prided itself on being a research-intensive university that has maintained a very high standard in international rankings despite the financial pressures brought to bear by a continuous

* excluding the Faculty of Health Science for which no limits are set
† Patrick Deane, Forward with Integrity, 2011.
erosion of government support for higher education and fundamental research. *Forward with Integrity* explicitly acknowledges this core identity and challenges the McMaster community as a whole to imagine how we maintain and even advance our research mission in light of shifting societal expectations and worsening economic conditions. In keeping with this provocation, teaching stream faculty contribute to our research intensity in a number of ways. By introducing this stream we are able to provide a diversity of career paths to faculty members from those whose focus is most strongly on research to those whose focus is primarily on teaching. As one of Ontario’s premier universities we value both research and teaching and we believe in the inherent connection between the two. This connection lies at the heart of *Forward with Integrity*. It is also central to the statement that we are a “research-focused student-centred” university. While many tenure-stream faculty have and will continue to bring innovation into the classroom, teaching stream faculty have both the time and the passion for pedagogy that enables them to bring new ideas and research-proven methodologies to McMaster. In particular as the new McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning (MIIETL) develops its membership base we anticipate that a large number of the teaching stream professoriate will find a home there and will be major contributors to the institute. As the teaching stream evolves we expect that many teaching stream faculty members will become engaged in pedagogically based research and educational leadership. This will better enable McMaster to apply the same level of evidence-based methodology to pedagogy as we do to research and scholarship.

This evolution in the way in which we envisage the careers of teaching stream faculty is key to the success of this experiment. To be clear, teaching stream faculty are not simply CLAs without periodic review. Our expectations are, and the developing landscape shows, that teaching professors will undertake either pedagogical research or educational leadership and course enhancements that are consistent with and contribute to McMaster’s research intensity. We can see an example of this in another innovative approach to pedagogy developed by our medical school. The Faculty of Health Sciences is the most research-intensive Faculty in the university and its reputation as one of the top medical schools in the world is based on that prowess. However, the Faculty has long embraced innovation in pedagogy and a flexible approach to career development. Some years ago Health Sciences developed a class of appointments called clinician-educators. FHS relies heavily on practicing physicians to teach medical students and residents. The McMaster approach is based on the concepts advanced by Boyer* in 1990 which expanded the notion of scholarship, both in educational and research realms, to create the potential for practitioners working in an academic setting to advance. Clinical educators contribute to the university through the scholarship of application and integration, bringing a unique perspective to medical education. This model has been studied and emulated by medical schools across North America. We can and should use the lessons learned in the medical school to develop a rich and sustainable concept for teaching stream faculty. Thus, the notion of a teaching professor at McMaster is evolving to encompass both teaching and scholarship, the latter being focused on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) as well as through educational leadership. The approach should be flexible, thereby enabling teaching stream faculty members to develop their capabilities as educators while contributing to the McMaster’s development as a centre for innovative approaches to teaching and learning. A committee chaired by Prof. J. Kim has been established by the Senate Committee on Appointments to undertake a study of the career development of teaching stream faculty members, 6 years after these positions were first developed. This committee’s report will recommend that the principals outlined above be incorporated into our broad understanding of these positions.

As MIIETL develops its mandate we see some very exciting possibilities for McMaster. MIIETL’s mission includes the development of and support for a pedagogical research unit. McMaster has long been

* E. Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered* (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching), 1990
known as an innovator in pedagogy from the development of medical education grounded in problem-based learning to the use of inquiry and more recently a unique approach to blended learning. We have the capability to become a world leader in this space. This would enhance the reputation of the university as one of the top institutions for advanced pedagogy amongst research intensive universities. It would also enable new pedagogies to be tested and deployed to the benefit of all of our students. In developing this model we see great value in making a number of appointments that are joint between MIIETL and individual Faculties, with these faculty members having an educational development role within MIIETL while serving as champions and initiators of new pedagogies within Faculties. For such joint appointments to enable long term career trajectories the faculty part of such appointments should be in the teaching stream.

The creation of the teaching stream has also enabled us to develop some innovative approaches to program development, some of which have created new pathways for college students to attend university. These modes of community outreach have strengthened our relationship with the city of Hamilton and surrounding regions, as well as aligned McMaster with provincial priorities and expectations. A good example is the Bachelor of Technology program. The faculty who teach in this program are all CLAs and teaching stream. Hiring faculty dedicated to teaching for this program has enabled an innovative approach to program delivery that is focused on hands-on education and small group learning. However it has also enabled the Faculty of Engineering to hire several tenure-stream faculty members with appointments in the research-intensive departments of the Faculty, hires that would otherwise not have been financially feasible. In this way the development of a new undergraduate program contributes tangibly to McMaster’s mission in terms of the scholarship of discovery.

In order to achieve the full potential of the teaching stream it will be necessary to increase both the number of teaching stream appointments at the university and the flexibility by which these appointments can be used. The past 6 years have demonstrated that teaching stream appointments are of strategic importance to McMaster and contribute tangibly to the mission of the university. Many teaching faculty are contributing thoughtfully and creatively to both the philosophical vision and concrete objectives outlined in Forward with Integrity, as I’ve attempted to outline. The development of the teaching stream and their full integration into the life of the university suggests that we need to move from the initial tentative allocation of such positions to one that offers a critical mass through which the impact will be felt across the institution. I am therefore proposing that the maximum number of teaching stream faculty appointments at McMaster be increased and the allocation be done in a more flexible manner. More specifically, I propose that we allow up to 15% of all career-stream appointments at McMaster to be in the teaching stream, with no more than 18% in a given Faculty. The precise allocation by Faculty would rest with the Provost, constrained by these limits. Even with this change, at least 75% of the teaching undertaken by career-stream faculty would continue to reside with tenure-stream faculty members. Moreover, by maintaining at least 85% of all career-stream appointments for tenure-stream faculty this allocation does not jeopardize McMaster’s longstanding commitment to the scholarship of discovery. It does however recognize that alternative forms of scholarship, in particular the scholarship of teaching and learning, have a significant role to play in the future of the university. This change will better enable McMaster to meet the goals outlined in Forward of Integrity and to become one of the premier universities in Canada that is known for both research and pedagogy.