Teaching & Learning Commons NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2026

A MESSAGE FROM THE AVP

Winter is a time to cozy up, read a good book, connect with others and reflect on the world around us. Part of this reflection for me right now is considering the purpose of education. Change is all around us and it's significantly impacting educators and students. We can lean into these changes and seek new paths forward or we can hunker down and hold on to what is. For me, the choice is clear.

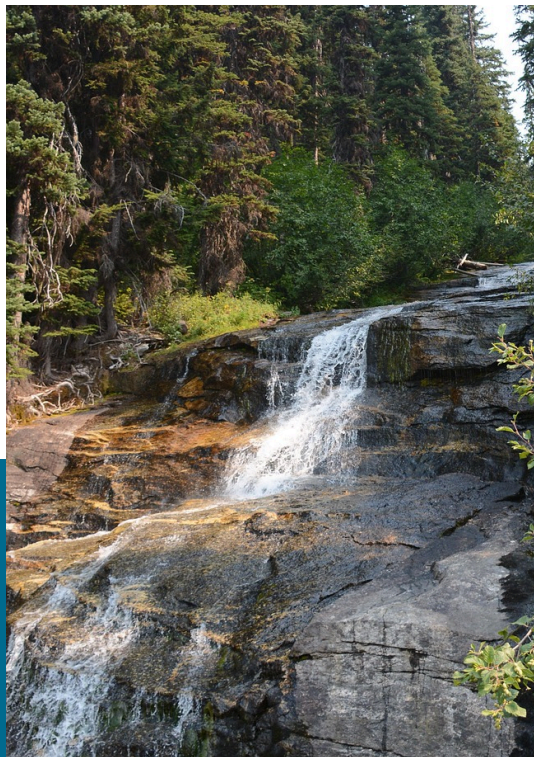
Most students choose education to become career ready and secure a better life for themselves and their families. At Teaching & Learning (T&L), the student experience is at the heart of everything we do. Our purpose is to support educators to deliver an exceptional learning experience to every student. To accomplish this, we must constantly question if our current practices and operational processes accomplish that goal.

With all of this in mind, I've been reading Josh Eyeler's new book Failing our Future: How Grades Harm Students. This book caught my attention as I see assessment practices as a critical component of modernizing teaching and learning. Eyeler questions the rationale for our decisions in education, including:

- the difference between evaluation and assessment
- how intention of desired outcome should drive our decision making
- the ways grading practices may perpetuate bias and marginalization of students
- how grades are the gatekeepers to the possibilities of the future and can be obstacles to motivation and consequently to learning

If you get a chance, I encourage you to read Eyeler's book; a copy has been ordered for the library.

In this month's newsletter, you'll learn of current opportunities to partner with our T&L team in the pursuit of designing an exceptional learning experience. From recorded generative AI webinars targeted for faculty to offering a workshop designed to help you transition in person courses to online and so much more, we walk alongside you at T&L to help evolve your own teaching practice. If you experience challenges designing new assessments, managing academic integrity or would like to dialogue about grading approaches – we're here to support you. Please reach out to tlcommons@kpu.ca or visit our T&L Centre. We'd be happy to see you there.



We at Kwantlen Polytechnic University respectfully acknowledge that we live, work and study in a region that overlaps with the unceded traditional and ancestral First Nations territories of the Musqueam, Katzie, Semiahmoo, Tsawwassen, Qayqayt, and Kwikwetlem; and with the lands of the Kwantlen First Nation, which gifted its name to this university.

T&L COMMONS COMMUNITY CORNER

The TL Commons continues to be committed to developing community around teaching and learning. And to that end, you'll find below the latest blogs, communities of practice, and upcoming faculty development sessions to support you in your practice development.

Open Education Week

Open Education Week is March 2-6, 2026. Be sure to check out our workshop offerings, hosted by Open Education Strategist Amanda Grey.

- Mon, Mar. 2, 1-3PM, ZTC Quest: Finding Quality OER for Your Students
- Tues, Mar. 3, 10AM-12PM, From Annual to Perennial: Renewable Assignment Design
- Thurs, Mar. 5, 1-3PM, Foundations First: Designing OER Textbooks for Student Success

Click the title of the workshop to learn more, or click here to view all of our upcoming workshops!

More Learning Opportunities!

- Tues, Mar. 3, 9:30AM-12:30PM, Maximizing Moodle Gradebook
- Mon, Mar. 23 and 26 11AM-1PM, Designing online with intention: Moving in person courses to online

ZOOM PLAYTIME

The Teaching & Learning Commons is launching Playtime with Zoom—an informal space for KPU educators to explore and practice Zoom tools. Join us in a supportive environment where you can try out features, ask questions, and experiment with teaching ideas.

Whether you're new to Zoom or eager to explore tools like breakout rooms and whiteboards, these sessions are designed to help you create engaging, student-centered online experiences. No preparation required—just bring your curiosity! Each session supports both your pedagogical and technical needs.

Schedule

- Mon, Mar 9, 11AM-1PM
- Tues, Apr 2, 10AM-12PM
- Wed, Apr 22, 1-3PM

Click here to join the Zoom meeting (only active during the scheduled period)
Meeting ID 653 4361 0111
Passcode: 491433

Click here to watch a short video about the benefits of using Zoom!

Transitioning to Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC)

This resource guides faculty through the practical process of converting their courses to ZTC, from assessing current materials to requesting official designation. The toolkit includes five key steps (Assess, Explore Resources, Evaluate, Communicate with Students, and Request Designation), with specific guidance on using Simple Syllabus, working with librarians, and navigating the scheduling process. Click here to access the resource.

WAKE UP

SOCIAL JUSTICE MUSIC FESTIVAL

by Andrea Votto

Meet Gordon Cobb, music instructor at KPU for nearly 10 years. Also chair of the Music Department, Gordon doesn't fall short on accolades during his tenure, some of which include the Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Award, Dean of Arts Service Award, and the Distinguished Service Award from the President's Office, all tied to his work in the 3-year running Wake Up - Social Justice Music Festival. To put it lightly, Gordon brings passion to his work at KPU.

> "Wake Up is a melting pot of ways to explore what is possible in the music industry."
> Gordon Cobb

THE BIRTH OF WAKE UP

The story begins with the creation of City of Surrey's think tank, Surrey Music Strategy (SMS), developed as a roadmap to rebuild and strengthen the local music sector post-COVID. The strategy called for collaboration across institutions, industries, and communities to imagine what a modern music scene could look like; one that went beyond orchestral halls or traditional performance models.

Recognizing the important role of education in this picture, Dean of Arts, Shelley Boyd was invited to join the strategy's development. With a campus located directly in Surrey, KPU was uniquely positioned to contribute. The think tank was dedicated to re-envisioning music industry work: its diversity, its evolution, and its emerging opportunities.

The goal was clear: equip students not just to perform music, but to work in the music industry.

Piloted in 2023, the Spruce Atrium housed the first iteration of Wake Up, with headliner Quanah Style, a two-spirit trans woman known for her infamous drag performances. In its second year BC's "queen of hip hop," Ndidi Cascade was the headliner.

Of course, the ambitions of producing a music festival for the first time is not absent of some blunders, and important lessons learned, a vital part of any teacher's journey, creating an opportunity to continue getting stronger year over year.

First Year Mishaps - Valuable Lessons Learned

- No dedicated stage manager
- Forgot to put new memory cards in cameras
- No technical rehearsal, resulting in issues in changing over artists played out in front of the audience
- Venue had too many entrances. Keeping track of audience members was impossible, becoming a security risk
- Planners allowed artists to submit playback audio in various formats, with not all formats being compatible to be played
- The event was too long, and people left before it was over

Pictured
Left: Lowkita
Right: Sydious Rose

Wake Up Social Justice Music Festival

MARCH 25, 6PM
SURREY CONFERENCE CENTRE

Scan the QR code to learn more about the festival and to register

A WELL-OILED MACHINE

This year is the 4th annual Wake Up Social Justice Music Festival. Taking place on March 25th in the KPU Surrey Conference Centre, the festival has evolved to include a diverse group of artists.

Serving as the backbone of the festival is Gordon, working as the artistic director. His vision provides the creative backbone for Wake Up, but the festival's heartbeat comes from the students themselves. From scheduling to staging, promotion to production, even creating merchandise, students lead every component of the festival. It's not only an educational experience, it's true industry practice, generating excitement for possibilities in the students' futures of their careers.

Wake Up empowers students to build, run, and shape a real festival with real community impact.

MUSI 3500: SPECIAL TOPICS

"The course becomes what the students make it. My job is to understand learning outcomes and direct them towards that." Gordon Cobb

The course has become a true experiment in student-responsive pedagogy. Each semester, Gordon learns which programs students are coming from and adapts the course to match their fields, strengths, and future career paths.

- **Journalism** students take on real festival communication projects: writing stories, creating newsletters, building the festival's public voice. They also create the press release and connect with local papers.
- **Business** students dive into merchandising and manufacturing, product development, website work, accounting, inventory management, and front-of-house operations.
- **Creative arts** and technical students move into production roles, from lighting design to video editing to audio-visual work.

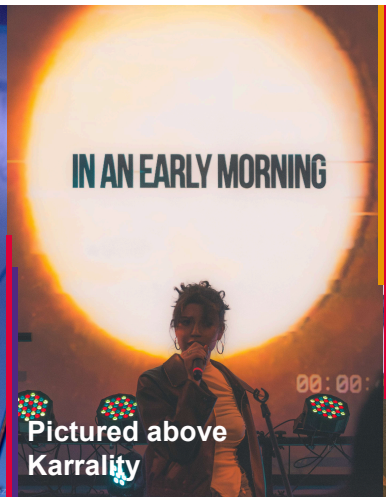
Instead of making students fit the curriculum, the curriculum molds itself to the students. This flexible approach has turned Wake Up into a true living curriculum, one that grows larger, richer, and more ambitious every year.

COLLABORATE

WAKE UP WOULDN'T BE WHAT IT IS WITHOUT COLLABORATION WITH THE FOLLOWING KPU PARTNERS

- Office of External Affairs
- KPU Foundation
- Advancement Officer Drew Dennis
- Marketing Department
- Music Instructor Malcolm Aiken
- Dean of Arts Shelley Boyd
- Various faculty and past MUSI 3500 student volunteers

Pictured above
Kelly Pang



Pictured above
Karrality

Pictured above
Left: Karrality, right: Sydious Rose

PURPOSE STATEMENT

Through active intentional partnering, the Teaching & Learning Commons provides pedagogical leadership that is grounded in community, ethics, creativity, and care.

VISIT THE COMMUNITY CORNER

Arbutus 2400 (2nd floor library)

We invite you to spend time in the T&L Commons Community Corner. Enjoy our spacious seating and large screen to cast to.

Check us out on SharePoint!

- T&L Commons SharePoint home page
- 2025 Professional Development Series
- Simple Syllabus

ICYMI
In case you missed it

Generative AI: Faculty Perspectives Webinar Series
If you missed our most recent webinar, Sprinting Towards AI and Stepping on Privacy, it is ready to view by clicking here.

Academic Integrity Speaker Series – ChatGPT Ate My Homework: Teaching in the Age of "MePT"
Tues, March 10th 12-1pm, online (Zoom)

Join us for the next speaker in the Academic Integrity Speaker Series, KPU faculty member Alym Amlani on Tues, March 10th from 12-1pm where he'll be presenting on ChatGPT Ate My Homework: Teaching in the Age of "MePT"

Click here to register