

## **Maple League of Universities Monthly Report**

**June 30, 2021**



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### Executive Director's Note:

June has been dedicated to retreats for many of our partners both within the institutions (Board retreats, departmental retreats) and across the consortium. As we look backwards in order to look into the future, diverse groups have spent extensive time together this month "on retreat."

"Retreat," though, might not be the right word to capture this crucial thought work. According to the OED, a retreat is "An act of moving back or withdrawing"; 1.1 "An act of changing one's mind or plans as a result of criticism or difficulty"; "A quiet or secluded place in which one can rest and relax."

As Inigo Montoya, in "The Princess Bride" (film, 1987), says: "You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means."



Instead, I would like to make a case for framing these as alignment exercises. If you will indulge me a metaphor, going to a chiropractor is different than enjoying a relaxation-based massage at a spa: chiropractic treatment focuses primarily on alignment. To apply the metaphor to many of the "retreats" I have attended this month, we have been able to spend dedicated time identifying pain points. Through discussions, debates, and brainstorming, we can – as chiropractors and therapeutic masseuses do so effectively – apply controlled pressure to an affected area in order to resolve the misalignments and tensions, which results in better holistic health.

This is not a new metaphor. Plato's *Republic* provided one of its most influential formulations. The concept was connected to a politicized version of Aesop's fable of "The Belly and the

Members". In early modern England the country was often understood through the metaphor of a physical body politic.

If our communities are a collective body, then when the body is healthy, all parts flourish. However, if one area is wounded or sick, all are affected. Therefore, these “retreats” are important alignment exercises to ensure we have the time for focused attention to tackle “wicked problems” and thorny issues that have no immediate solution.

After a therapeutic massage there is often more pain in the day or two following the treatment. However, when you hydrate and stretch through the discomfort, the longer-term effects are restorative and even transformative.

We need retreats – to rest, relax, and recover – just as we need strategic alignments to apply pressure and address misalignments. A healthy body politic is another way of imagining sustainable and resilient systems; when we are in alignment, we have time to tackle “to do” lists while also taking the space to imagine our “to be” lists.

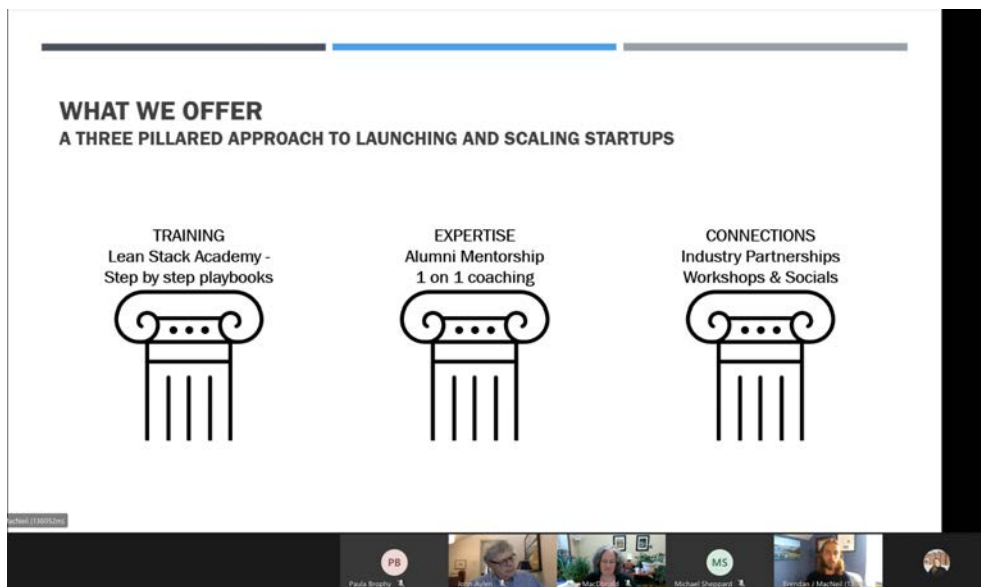


*~ Dr. Jessica Riddell, Executive Director, Maple League of Universities*

**I. Extraordinary Student Experiences**

**The Path Confirms Fall 2021 Launch**

The Path - Maple League Incubator is a program designed to help students across the Maple League of Universities launch viable businesses while in university. It is designed to be completed alongside courses and is a 12-week program that will take the student entrepreneur from any stage of development through to the next steps to scale and get their startup "pitch-ready." The Path is built on three essential pillars of startup success: training, mentorship, and connections. In addition, this social innovation incubator will also provide seed funding that can be applied for and a pitch competition to investors and partners at the end of each cohort.



The Path team has recently completed development of their virtual hub, [thepath.mapleleague.ca](http://thepath.mapleleague.ca) where entrepreneurs can find resources, connect with peers, and post their projects. The two project leads, Michael and Brendan, are on track for a Fall 2021 launch of the first cohort; The Path is open to any student across the Maple League who wishes to register; this incubator is a space that connects with entrepreneurship courses to provide these students automatic access to The Path.

### **OLTC Program Builds Relationships Across the Maple League**

While still in the early stages of the OLTC program expansion across the Maple League, Matthew Dunleavy (OLTC Program Director), Lauren Boulton (OLTC Project Manager), and Jessica Riddell (Maple League Executive Director) have been meeting with inspiring collaborators across the four campuses to ensure this PILOT program is adapted to



align with the strategic vision at each of the four institutions. Building advisory councils with embedded champions at individual campuses -- and providing external funding grants, resources, and centralized support -- will be crucial for building sustainable and high impact programs with the goal to ensure that all Maple League students have the opportunity to participate in such a transformative work-integrated learning (WIL) initiative.

### **RIIPEN Extends RBC Funding to Support Student-centred Experiential Learning**

Riipen Founder Dana Stephenson connected with Dr. Jessica Riddell and the OLTC team this month to explore how RIIPEN might support transformative work-integrated learning initiatives across the Maple League. Dana submitted an extension of funding proposal to RBC to continue to fund the consortium access to this platform, the largest marketplace in North America for experiential learning and PSIs.

## HIPs Report Published

High-impact practices (HIPs) have a significant and positive impact on students' deeper learning and aids in development of intellectual and practical skills, civic responsibility, and richer understanding of different cultures around them (Kuh 2008). However, HIPs are often concentrated in business and science degrees, leaving a critical gap in scholarship related to HIPs and liberal education. In 2020 – 2021 Dr. Jessica Riddell and Tiffany MacLennan (Maple League Research Fellow) designed a research project that assesses HIPs across the Maple League universities, designed a HIP spotlight project, presented on panels and delivered professional development workshops. The Knowledge mobilization part of this project launched this month, and can be found on the Maple League website.

## HIGH IMPACT PRACTICES VISIBILITY PROJECT

## **II. Faculty and Staff Engagement**

### **The Maple League Research Committee Builds Key Research Capacities & Connections**

The Maple League Research Committee has been active in identifying challenges and opportunities for researchers at small, primarily undergraduate institutions. They've connected CRCs from across the four campuses, hosted webinars and sessions on research funding, worked on support systems for junior faculty, explored joint initiatives and membership in various associations, and this month added two new projects to their portfolio:

#### ***1. Building Membership with the Royal Society of Canada***

At the April 30th meeting of the Maple League Research Committee, there was strong interest in establishing a Royal Society of Canada (RSC) College / Fellow ML Nomination Committee to coordinate nominations from the four Maple League universities. RSC alumni and others will be invited to join the committee, which will be led by Dr David Hornidge, a current RSC College member from Mount Allison University.

Planned activities will be mapped on the Maple League's successful 3M design model:

- A. Identify one or two institutional champions on each campus
- B. Identify possible nominees
- C. Design with EDI principles;
- D. Share best practices and success stories;
- E. Develop support for nominees, nominator, and research offices with the following:  
handbook with planning schedule, tips, checklists; webinar for FAQs; timely requests for reference letters; pair nominees with mentors and external readers. Resources would include honoraria for external readers, and access to a student fellow and/or administrative support to assist with the nomination packages.

#### ***2. Expanding HQP opportunities via MUN's PhD program***

The ML Research Committee invited Dr Aimée Surprenant, Memorial University's Associate VP (Academic) and Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, to its 4th June meeting to discuss opportunities for faculty from the ML to be primary supervisors of graduate students enrolled in various PhD programs at MUN. A highly successful partnership with StFX already exists and has provided numerous benefits to faculty, including enhanced HQP training records for



competitive grant applications. In addition to the HQP training and related research productivity opportunities, the arrangement involves cost-effective sharing of student stipends and access to MUN's professional development training programs. Future planning will focus on MOU development/renewal between MUN and the ML universities.

### Maple League Teaching & Learning Committee Gather Virtually for a Strategic Retreat

The Maple League Teaching and Learning Committee hosted a strategic visioning retreat June 14-18, 2021. Members from all four campuses spent 15 hours in synchronous sessions focussed on topics such as:

- Strategic vision and alignment with robust programming
- Micro-Certificate or faculty credential in teaching and learning
- High Impact practices and inclusive pedagogies
- Connecting communities through research and teaching clusters
- SoTL project on the impact of the V\_MLTLC

The conversations were lively and rich in both reflection (what have we *done*) and in future facing directions (who do we want *to be*). While the four Maple League universities do not have “bricks and mortar” teaching and learning centers, the pandemic has inspired new ways of thinking about support beyond the dated concept of a “centre” and moving into high-impact spaces like innovative hubs and interconnected networks. The Virtual Maple League Teaching and Learning Centre is a dynamic “hub”; this diverse social network energizes cross-connections, improves knowledge sharing and mobilization, and enhances learning across grassroots microcultures. The V\_MLTLC takes a “social networks” approach to educational development. We can grow in new ways in 2021 and beyond, especially with Neil Silcox joining the Maple League for a one-year consultant as the Faculty Excellence Lead ([see ML Team, Section IV](#)).



### III. External Engagement

#### **Maple League International Teams Collaborate on Outbound Student Mobility**

Representatives from the international departments of the Maple League universities have been meeting to discuss submitting a joint proposal to the Universities Canada Global Skills Opportunity. Funded by the Federal Government of Canada, the project seeks to support low-income students, students with disabilities, and Indigenous students to participate in study and work abroad programming. By working together through the Maple League, it is anticipated that not only will we be able to support each other's capacity development in education abroad, but also create an innovative and transformative experience for our students to learn together. The committee members are Anthony Adey (Director of Student Recruitment at Acadia University), Michael Holmes (International Admissions and Exchange Program Officer at Acadia University), Annick Corbeil (Manager of Student Life at Bishop's University), Robin Walker (International Programs Coordinator at Mount Allison University), and Larissa Strong (Director of Internationalization at StFX University).



## Maple League Incorporates to Attract Federal Funding Opportunities

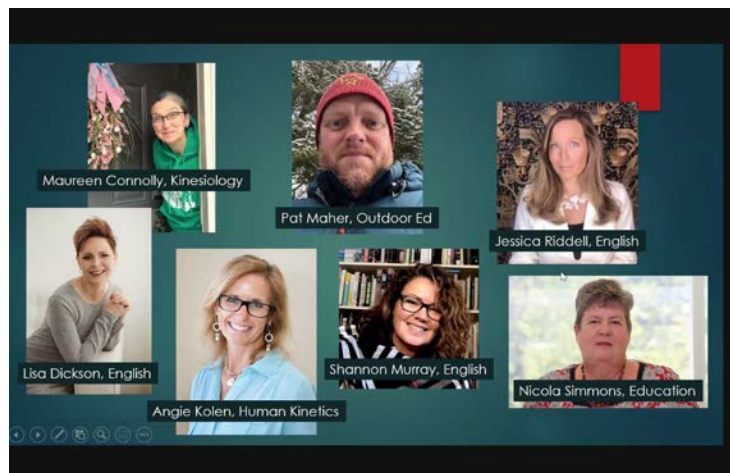
We are excited to share the recent creation of the Maple League Foundation. This Foundation has been set up to make us eligible for federal funding, funding that we would otherwise be ineligible for as provincial post-secondary institutions (PSIs) that are funded provincially. Maple League of Universities Foundation is federally incorporated with a business number and an official named certificate. With the incorporation we have a corporate registry and official seal, which are all requirements under the Not-for-profit Corporations Act (NFP Act). We hope to build on relationships with external partners, including

- **ICTC** Information and Communications Technology Council \*Government of Canada's Sector Council Program
- **BHER** (Business Higher Education Round Table)
- **CEWIL** (Canadian Experiential and Work Integrated Learning)\* depending on the funding stream

The Maple League is also trademarked in both Canada and the US. NB. All regular funding from foundations and other philanthropic-related activities continue to go through regular institutional channels.

## STLHE Features Seven 3M Faculty as Mentors - Including Two Maple League 3Ms!

ON June 9, the STLHE Unconference, held virtually this year, featured a panel of seven inspiring and engaged 3M Faculty who have mentored, supported, and amplified educational leaders across Canada. Two members of the Maple League - Dr. Jessica Riddell (Bishop's) and Dr. Angie Kolen (St. FX) - were featured on the panel. Two new 3M Faculty Fellows and three new 3M Student Fellows were welcomed to the Fellowship at the STLHE Conference Friday, June 11.



### **Conference Board of Canada Engages with the Maple League on Social & Emotional Skills**

Michael Burt (Vice President at Conference Board of Canada) connected with Dr. Jessica Riddell on a study they are conducting that explores the impact of systemic discrimination on the development and assessment of social and emotional skills, also referred to as “soft skills” or human skills, for Black Canadians. This project aims to develop recommendations and inform anti-racist and inclusive employment standards that support diverse Canadians. Michael and his colleague Michelle Gorea identified key thought leaders and managers to interview in order to understand how inclusive and equity-focussed leaders are tackling calls for more inclusive, anti-racist work environments. After the initial interviews the Conference Board of Canada invited Dr. Riddell to sit on their Social and Emotional Skills Research Advisory Council to help guide national conversations about social and emotional skills and practice inclusivity in higher education and beyond.

### **Jessica Riddell Wins National Magazine Award recognition with *University Affairs Magazine*:**

On May 27, 2021 the National Magazine Awards were announced and Dr. Jessica Riddell was given Honourable Mention in the category 2021 NMA: BEST COLUMN OR REGULARLY FEATURED DEPARTMENT. Read more about the award [here](#) and follow her award-winning column three years running, [“Adventures in Academe.” in University Affairs Magazine.](#)

### **Bader International Study Centre (Queen’s University) Offers the Maple League a Castle**

Jenny Corlett Director, Bader International Study Centre (BISC), Queen’s University, has been cultivating conversations about possible collaborations with the Maple League. The team at BISC has been impressed with the work of the Maple League, and in a recent email noted “I have been so impressed with the work that you and your colleagues have done around the pivot to online learning and teaching, EDII, sharing best practices and supporting each other.” The BISC and the Maple League are in the early stages of exploring possibilities for collaboration and the UK campus (which is an actual castle). BISC offered the ML custom programs for faculty and/or institutions to develop a customized mobility program, using the UK campus facilities as a base, with support from the BISC experiential learning team to integrate field studies or other activities into the curriculum.

## The Maple League Applies to CEWIL

On Thursday, May 27, the Maple League hosted the Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada team: strategic leads at CEWIL created a Maple League focussed session about their new call for proposals for its Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) Innovation Hub (iHub). The CEWIL iHub is funded in part by the Government of Canada's Innovative Work-Integrated Learning Initiative (I-WIL). CEWIL's mission is to build the capacity to develop future-ready students through quality work-integrated learning. The CEWIL iHub will operate as a centre of expertise that provides grant-based funding to enable and promote curricular work-integrated learning (WIL).



The session was very well attended and has already had a significant impact identifying and supporting several applications across the four universities. A significant number of proposals were submitted by the June 15th funding deadline. The projects submitted came from each of the four schools and are a great example of the outstanding teaching and innovation that happens at Maple League universities.

A few of the projects submitted to CEWIL from ML partners include:

- Matthew Dunleavy (OLTC Program Director) and Lauren Boulbee (Maple League Strategy and Advancement Lead), with the support of Jessica Riddell (Maple League Executive Director) and Rebecca Leaman (Interim Director of Experiential Learning & Career Development) submitted an application to Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada for \$180,000. The funding application aims to reduce barriers to student participation. This project will benefit specifically

first-generation and BIPOC students, focussing on direct student benefit and dismantling a number of WIL barriers for historically excluded groups.

- Cynthia Alexander (Politics Professor at Acadia) submitted a proposal for an Arctic Studies course, focused on Nunavut as a case study.
- Dr. Michael Sheppard (Entrepreneurship & Innovation at Acadia) and Brendan MacNeil (Acadia) submitted a proposal for \$197,000 to support The Path: students enrolled in entrepreneurship and innovation courses at the post-secondary institutions from the Maple League of Universities will engage in an entrepreneurial work integrated learning experience offered through The Path.
- Angie Kolen (Human Kinetics Professor at StFX) submitted a proposal titled “Service Learning: Connecting Classroom Learning with the ‘Real’ World” for \$27,500. This application primarily supports the student-volunteers who contribute 30 hours to either Fit 4 Life or Fit 4 Tots and 2 students (150 hours each) to assist with the prescribed data collection and questionnaires and interviews related to knowledge, attitudes, and confidence related to physical activity promotion.
- Dr. Erin Austen (Associate Professor of Psychology at StFX) submitted a proposal titled “Gauging Campus Accessibility” for \$18,000. With the support of campus Facilities Management, students in a 300-level Applied Health course will conduct a two-stage partial accessibility audit of campus. In the first stage, students will audit the campus using a checklist tool created by Dalhousie University. In the second stage, students will re-audit each location from a user perspective by working alongside individuals with disabilities. By comparing the data from the two audits, students will gain insight into whether accessibility means something more than compliance with accessibility standards.

## **HESA Engages the Maple League as Thought Partners on Student Assessment**

[Higher Education Strategy Associates \(HESA\)](#) is conducting a review of student feedback in evaluations across the Canadian higher education landscape. Through this review, they seek to better understand how student feedback is collected through student course evaluations, its formative and summative uses, and its role in cyclical program reviews. As a part of this review, they identified Bishop's OLTC Pilot Program and the new Maple League expansion as an alternative and meaningful way to incorporate student feedback. The ML is supporting this study.

## **Maple League Invited to Toronto Recruitment Event in Fall 2021**

In 2020 - 2021 the Maple League was identified by academic advisors and guidance counsellors across Canada and around the world as leaders in quality undergraduate education. Recruitment teams from each of the four universities worked together to travel (virtually) to campuses from Ontario to India. This trend continues with new invitations for collaborative recruitment events. This month, Michelle Douglas, the Associate Director of University Advising at Toronto French School, reached out to Jessica Riddell (Maple League Executive Director) to request a recruitment representative from each of our four institutions participate in a virtual event to present on the Maple League schools and the value of our model of education. The ML recruitment teams are eager to collaborate in virtual spaces to recruit a new cohort of students and share our model of an extraordinary 21st century liberal education.

## **Maple League Campus Spotlights**

### ***Two of the Three newly-elected members of the Canadian Historical Association are Maple League Faculty***

Dr. Claudine Bonner (Associate Professor in Sociology at Acadia University) and Dr. David Webster (Associate History Professor at Bishop's University) have been elected to the Council of the Canadian Historical Association. The Canadian Historical Association is the largest bilingual not-for-profit and charitable association in Canada devoted to fostering the scholarly study and communication of history in Canada. Congratulations Drs. Bonner and Webster!

### *Acadia Engages Alumni with “Walk Home for Homecoming” Event*

In an effort to engage alumni, Acadia University has organized a virtual event titled ‘Walk Home For Homecoming’ as a way for Acadia Alumni to participate in socially distant, safe exercise outside during the pandemic. Alumni are encouraged to set distance goals for the lead-up to Homecoming Weekend with the idea that each person determines how many kilometres there are between their home and Acadia, and aims to complete that distance. Of course, those who live close by are encouraged to keep going! Every time a participant travels 20 kilometres and documents it on the Facebook page dedicated to the event, their name will be entered in a draw for an Apple Watch. The prizewinner will be selected randomly on Homecoming Weekend in October. Decals and stickers will be sent out to all those who participate in this initiative, proudly showcasing the Acadia brand and declaring, “I Walked Home For Homecoming”. All are encouraged to participate, and share stories, photos and kilometres travelled throughout their journey!



**I WALKED HOME**  
*for* **HOMECOMING**







#### **IV. ML Team**

##### **The Maple League Supports a Dynamic Team of Thought Partners**

###### ***Lauren Boulton***

From her position as a student fellow, to her post-graduate fellowship, and now in her current role, Lauren has been a key lever for change. Lauren Boulton is a 2020 graduate of Bishop's University with a BBA in Marketing and Entrepreneurship, and a minor in Communications and Digital Culture. In her new role (funded in part through external grants) Lauren continues as Strategy and Advancement Lead while taking on a new portfolio as the Project Manager for the Online Learning and Technology Consultants (OLTC) Program.



As the Strategy and Advancement Lead, she stewards Maple League initiatives related to fundraising and communications. In this position she identifies potential funding opportunities and designs a strategic plan to execute successful partnerships. As a member of the Maple League strategic planning team, Lauren supports Maple League communications by ensuring that all plans are aligned with the Maple League focus statement and key messaging. Lauren's role as Strategy and Advancement Lead includes talent development with Maple League consultants, relationship management with all active committees and communities of practice, and the preparation of all executive review materials such as the monthly, quarterly and year-end reports, which also include regular financial reporting to ensure prioritization of programs and budget.

As OLTC Project Manager, Lauren maintains a high-level overview of the progress of the program and its potential future growth. This includes institutional planning, building governance and structures for the program and helping with the administration of hiring and job performance assessment. Lauren is also responsible for communications, grant/funding applications, reporting and data analytics. Additionally, as the OLTC Project Manager she manages a detailed schedule to keep the program on track, and provides direction for early resolution of risks.

***Matthew Dunleavy***

Matthew Dunleavy is joining the Maple League as the OLTC Program Director, a one-year consultant position funded through an external grant from BHER. Matthew has been a SSHRC Doctoral Fellow in Victorian Literature and Course Director with the Department of English at York University, has worked with the Teaching Commons at the same institution, and is currently the President of the Board of Directors of Learning Essentials for Adults in Durham Region (LEADR)—a charitable non-profit organization dedicated to providing tutoring for adults in basic literacy, numeracy, and digital skills.



After the success of the OLTC pilot program at Bishop’s University in 2020-21, Matthew is responsible for overseeing the expansion of the program across the four Maple League Universities for the 2021-22 academic year. Using the Bishop’s pilot as a template, Matthew will ensure that students and faculty at all Maple League Universities enrolled in the program have a consistent, engaging and essential experience in their work-integrated learning (WIL) or micro-WIL experiences. As the OLTC Program Director, Matthew will create and support avenues for transformative experiences for students, faculty, and other stakeholders to be living proof of the radical potential in Canadian Universities when we embrace new models of learning and mentorship. Reporting to the Executive Director, Dr. Jessica Riddell and the VP Academics, and working alongside Project Manager, Lauren Boulton, Matthew aims to further place the Maple League of Universities at the centre of transforming undergraduate education in Canada (and beyond), envisioning a new liberal education with students engaged as key-collaborators in their own education and university experience.

*Neil Silcox*

Taking on the role of Faculty Excellence Lead, Neil Silcox joins the Maple League with a one-year contract to help the Maple League Academic Committee and the Maple League Teaching and Learning Committee tackle a few strategic projects. His role replaces Heather Carroll (Director of the VMLTLC), but takes a more academic and faculty-focussed approach to engage the multiple communities of practice in curricular and co-curricular approaches to inclusive High Impact Practices (HIPs).



Neil is a theatre educator, as well as an actor and director, and also specializes in facilitating meaningful, actionable conversations about teaching and learning. His company, the [Canadian Theatre Educators' Conference](#), has brought together hundreds of post-secondary theatre teachers from across Canada and around the world (both in person and IRL) to envision new theatre pedagogies which prioritize student wellbeing.

As Faculty Excellence Lead, Neil will be spearheading the Teaching & Learning Micro-Certificate Program, where teachers can come together to elevate one-another's practice, and collaborate to create new pedagogies for 21st century liberal education. Neil will also be working on Maple League Courses; both to smooth out navigation of administrative hurdles, and to increase uptake from both faculty and students. Finally, Neil will work to build strong reciprocal relationships between campuses on an individual, program, and faculty level. He will be organizing and leading the Maple League Book Club and Better Together series, as well as other opportunities to nurture scintillating conversations between teachers. Reporting to Executive Director Dr. Jessica Riddell, and working alongside Strategy and Advancement Lead Lauren Boulton, Neil is thrilled to be strengthening inter-institutional relationships and supporting and empowering faculty.