

Using SOTL to Drive Curriculum Change: the Variables and Experiences of the MRU Athletic Therapy Program

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ABSTRACT: Curriculum change at the post-secondary level is never easy. Adding the complexities and nuances of SOTL to drive those changes may, on the surface, seem to add complications to that equation. However, at the Mount Royal University Athletic Therapy (MRU AT) undergraduate program, we have engaged in SOTL projects that have not only created scholarly output, but helped pave the way for change. The purpose of this paper is to describe the MRU experience with curricular change and how SOTL has helped facilitate various stages necessary for successful implementation.

In 2014, the MRU AT program admitted students to the inaugural undergraduate program. It had transitioned from a collaborative undergraduate degree to an autonomous bachelor's degree, so there was a good opportunity to implement new approaches. In addition, external to MRU, professional standards were changing whereby there was a call for implementation of competency-based curriculum by the year 2020 (Lafave, Bergeron, et al., 2016). The MRU AT faculty agreed to implement a clinical presentation (CP) approach to facilitate the competency-based curriculum requirements. This required content validation of CPs that represented the AT scope of practice (Lafave, Westbrook, et al., 2016). It also necessitated a re-imagining of how teaching, learning and assessment may be approached. As such, the AT faculty members were led by the MRU curriculum expert through a self-study that would help all faculty members with the CP curriculum implementation (Yeo et al., 2016). Arguably, the first and most critical step was for our faculty members to develop a comprehensive understanding of how to best teach and assess using this unique model of curriculum delivery.

An equally importance step was to investigate student perspectives with the new curriculum. Students track their own competence through a CP logbook and portfolio. We are in the second year of a mixed method study to understand the student experiences using CP logbooks and how it may impact their learning in AT. Early results have led to teaching and learning changes. Since this is a longitudinal study, multiple cohorts are being studied with varying results for each due to the curriculum changes. In this way, SoTL has become a meaningful aspect and driver of curriculum transformation in our program.

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