



Preparing the next generation

In the late 1990s the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada addressed the pressing issue of faculty renewal in Canadian universities. In the last five years, Canadian universities have embarked on aggressive recruitment strategies to attract to their campuses new faculty members who are committed to the dual mandates of a university -- providing high quality teaching and engaging in innovative research.

Brock University has attracted many highly-talented young faculty members and has successfully used the Canada Research Chairs Program to build our research capacity, focusing on key strategic areas. All of these new faculty members are committed to integrating their teaching and research interests, and encouraging students to become engaged in research that is critical to our intellectual, social, economic and scientific development. Dr. McGinn's research will assist Canadian universities to understand more completely the ways in which new researchers are educated, mentored and make the transition from student to faculty member or scientist. Dr. Scott demonstrates how one researcher, working at the intersection of disciplines, integrates theoretical and methodological approaches to inform his scholarship and our understanding of the world in which we live. Both Drs. McGinn and Scott are exemplars of the ways in which our new faculty demonstrate their commitment to teaching and scholarship.



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Researching research

Scarce parking, scrambles to find classroom space, and new residence construction are a sampling of the issues surrounding the double cohort that is looming large on the September horizon. A lesser-known matter is that in an effort to hire additional faculty in response to the increased student body, Canadian universities have discovered that there are simply not enough professors to go around.

Through an examination of graduate student training and the relationships that exist between mentor and protégé, Associate Professor Michelle McGinn, a research methodologist in the Faculty of Education, is working on a research project that will hopefully encourage graduate students to become university professors.

"With the double cohort a reality, it is important to inspire graduate students to pursue academia," explains McGinn. "We have found that one of the reasons students shy away from academic circles is that they are intimidated by research." McGinn seeks to clarify and extend the theoretical notions of participation, self-identity and collaborative mentorship through a detailed analysis of researcher training. McGinn's work has shown that through participation in a number of varied research projects, students not only gain valuable experience, but as an added bonus their self-identity is broadened.

"Ultimately, the more research that students execute, the more skills they develop and the more confidence they have in conducting research," McGinn suggests. "Their actual self-identity changes, and in

fact, they begin to feel more like researchers. In this time where universities are having trouble attracting students into academia, nurturing a comfort level with research may encourage more students to go into this field."

Currently, there are many ways in which students can be engaged in research including research methods and disciplinary content courses, research

assistantships and independent research, such as thesis work.

Although many students are currently working with faculty researchers, McGinn suggests that a careful look at program plans

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may increase these opportunities. "By designing more inclusive research packages, more faculty members can be directly involved in the teaching of research methods to graduate students," she explains.

In addition to these efforts the courses she teaches offer "a wonderful opportunity to work directly with students and investigate whether or not they feel like researchers," says McGinn.

"In my class, students discover that there are many different ways to answer a research question. Ethnography, case studies, grounded theory and action research are just a few. By using their own perspective, students can even do research on themselves to investigate how they are working within a profession."

McGinn has found that in all of her classes, she is dealing with

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students who have unique backgrounds. As a result, their experience of research and their approaches to research are different, yielding some interesting results. For example, students coming from a humanities background may be accustomed to text-based research, while those in scientific fields are familiar with quantitative methods.

McGinn's research takes a multi-tiered approach. An examination of quantitative factors such as particular research tasks and skills that graduate

students demonstrate, combined with more qualitative elements such as the understanding of research that students demonstrate, and statements regarding students' self-identities related to research, will assist McGinn in her work.

While still in its early stages, McGinn is happy with the patterns that are emerging so far. She is hopeful that additional results will be the advancement of scholarship regarding researcher training, graduate student

development, and research collaboration. She hopes to illustrate to post-secondary institutions the need for instructive initiatives in graduate and undergraduate education at Canadian universities. McGinn's work is one of very few research programs in North America that is devoted to understanding researcher training in a comprehensive fashion.

~Kimberley Lee

Postmodern Problems: Brock professor explores the intersections between literature, film, and popular culture

From Jonathon Swift, Clint Eastwood, Forrest Gump to Angels and Cyborgs, Assistant Professor Steven D. Scott of Brock's Department of English Language and Literature, has an incredibly large range of research interests. Scott, who teaches twentieth-century literature, autobiography, and theory, researches postmodernism and contemporary literature and the intersections between literature, film, and other forms of popular culture.

Scott's interest in literary theory began while at the University of Alberta where he received his MA and PhD. His MA, which looked at a period in Swift's life where he was writing both publicly for a Tory newspaper and privately to his friend Stella, attempted to account for the "differences between what needs to go into a piece of writing that was meant to be public versus something that was clearly meant to be private and the kind of rhetorical tensions that happen as a result," explains Scott. His PhD focused on two American postmodernism writers, John Barth and Louise Erdrich, and dealt with theories of play and game. Titled, *The Gamefulness of American Postmodernism: John Barth and Louise Erdrich*, it has since been published.

Scott's current research integrates the tensions between public and private and fiction and non-fiction. Scott is currently working on many projects that range across a wide variety of literature, film, and popular culture. One of his projects looks at Angels and Cyborgs in literature, film, and popular culture. Interestingly, although most would not draw a connec-

tion between the two figures, Scott configures them, at least in part, "as images projected by humans about how they actually see themselves, or construct themselves." The "Cyborg," short for "Cybernetic Organism" is interesting to Scott because it is a combination of machine and human. And, as Scott suggests, "I think the Cyborg stems from our human sense that everything affects us physically," and cyborgs are purely physical things that look like us. Angels, on the other hand, have always been attached to the body-less, as



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~ Dr. Stephen Scott

they can exist with only an intellect or soul and rarely with an actual physical body. Significantly, Scott notes, "the long-standing discussion is whether angels have any physical body at all; whether something that has an intellect, something that has a soul, perhaps, can exist without occupying space." Because Scott equates Cyborgs with the physical and Angels with the non-physical, he sees them together as a way to understand the definition of a human: "Angels act as a kind of spiritual/intellectual wish fulfillment and Cyborgs as a kind of physical wish fulfillment," says Scott.

While angels and cyborgs are both popular, the two are rarely seen together, which is odd because they seem to somehow attempt to answer, as Scott explains, "that whole question of needing to put the physical and the spiritual back together." According to Scott, "one of the interesting places they do meet is in some cyber-punk or cyber-fiction where there is a wish to be freed of the body. So, characters are often based in a machine, but are bodiless which means at some levels they really become angelic." Recently Scott wrote a conference paper on this issue, which has been selected as an article for a collection on technology and spirituality. The paper looked at Richard Powers' novel *Galatea 2.2*, which is concerned with similar questions of embodiment, as the central character has no physical body.

Scott has spoken about his research all over the world, including most recently at a conference in Glasgow, Scotland called "Technotopias" and Kansas City where he talked about some of the ways the Western works in postmodern film. In particular, Scott talked about Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven*, which, postmodern-like, "is very informed about the kinds of discourses running through it. So, it has that kind of self-reflexivity/self-examination that so much postmodernism literature has," explains Scott.

Considering that Scott's research includes a broad range of literature, film and popular culture, he is indeed a complement to Brock's innovative research culture, which aims to encourage interdisciplinary teaching and learning.

~Julie-Ann Elliott