Roles and Responsibilities for Community of Practice Members and Chairs

The following is a series of suggested roles and responsibilities for CoP members and chairs. This document has been adapted from one used to guide the organization of CoPs at the McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning. In keeping with the spirit of Communities of Practice, some roles may change depending upon the structure and activities of the individual CoP.

Role of CoP Members

- Make effort to attend and participate at scheduled meetings, with the understanding that not every member will be available to attend all meetings
- Provide input and insights on topics discussed at the meetings
- Suggest ideas for future topics of conversation or special projects

Role of the CoP Chairs in Supporting Communities of Practice at McMaster University

A number of studies have found that the most important factor in a community’s success lies in the leadership abilities of the chairs (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). CoP chairs perform a variety of functions including:

- Identifying important issues in their domain;
- Planning and facilitating community events;
- Creating informal connections between community members;
- Fostering the development of community members;
- Managing the boundary between the community and the formal organization; 

Specifically, McMaster CoP chairs agree to:

- Maintain a list of members;
- Hold a minimum of four meetings, activities and/or events per calendar year (the number will be determined jointly by the CoP);
- Have at least one chair or co-chair person present at each meeting;
- Assess the health of the community and evaluate its contribution to members and the organization by tracking membership (both number of members, length of membership), activities and participation rates; conducting interviews with CoP members; and providing evidence of CoP impact on members’ knowledge and practice.
Additional Resources

