Welcome Summer Student Team!
A Few Things to Think About This Week …

Think #1: **Web Design From the User Side**. What are some basic principles of good web design? Why should I care? How will this have an impact on students?

Consider these 8 principles...

Principle 1: **Obvious and Self Explanatory Breeds Comfort.**

Students need to know what the learning commons site is about right up front. If they know what to do on a site, they are comfortable and will likely return.

When users have to search for what a page is about, this is called an unnecessary question mark. Our job is to remove these. Most users tend to scan a site in the "F" pattern – across the top – across high middle and down left side. What is important about the page/site should be self explanatory and easy to see somewhere in that pattern.

What you can do: Review the main page of the site: Is it obvious to you what the site is about? Do any unnecessary question marks come up for you? Jot down your thoughts about how we might emphasize the obvious and use the F guideline to improve usability.

Also, how can we use the carousel more effectively? What purpose does it serve now? What purpose should it serve (in your opinion)

Principle 2: **Barriers Breed Contempt.**

Barriers include things like broken links, video that doesn't work too many images, too much variation in page design and graphics that don't make sense.

What you can do: As you review the site, test the links, try to find barriers and note them down to fix later. Try a few toolkits. Are you discovering any barriers? Try a toolkit on your smartphone or other mobile device? How is the experience?

Principle 3: **Less is More.**

Learners have limited time and they want to get what they need in the shortest amount of time. Also, we want to have a site that is sustainable (which means easy to manage when adding, editing or revising content).

Our strategies for this?
- Write concisely and get to the point.
- Use a scan-able layout (columns, accordians, headings and icons help with that)
- Use student voice (plain language) in writing.
- Contributors manage their own content (on wiki or their websites) and we feed it to our site (using rss or embed code).
- Innovate only when you know you can do something better – then include the Wordpress development team (they may be working on something similar or will want to learn from your idea). We have regular Wordpress clinics (2x week at CTLT). If you don't know – just ask.

What you can do: *Review all pages in the What We Do section. How are we doing with "less is more"? Are there pages that can be improved (in your opinion)?*

Principle 4: **Attention Requires Focus.**

Focusing learners' attention on the aspects of the page you want them to pay attention to can be achieved with a moderate use of visual elements like boxes, graphics, headings, icons. Too much visual clutter splits focus and can be confusing.

What can you do? *As you scan pages on the site, do you naturally land on what is important on the page? If not, suggest a solution.*

Principle 5: **Consistency is Not Boring.**

In fact, consistency in web design reduces the learning curve and makes users more comfortable. Consistency for our site includes navigation, landing page design, content page design (using columns) and strategy for weekly posts.

What can you do? *What are the most consistent aspects of the site? How does this consistency help users in your opinion? What are the least consistent aspects? What can we do about this?*

Principle 6: **Organize, Economize and Communicate**

We want learners to get a sense of what they can do or learn here, how they can contribute (comments and feedback) and how we are connected with others talking about similar things. To compete for the attention of learners with limited time, we need to:

Organize: The structure of the site should be consistent and predictable with common elements in the same place on the page.
Economize*:* Do the most with the least. Here's how:
- *Simplicity:* include only the elements that are most important for communication.
- *Clarity*: all components should be designed so their meaning is not ambiguous.
- *Emphasis*: the most important elements should be easily perceived.

Communicate: See Less is More. Keep site balanced. Consider the effect of color, type faces, etc. Keep it simple and seek a cohesive balance on the site.

What can you do? *Review the site for general organization and clarity. Note any questions you have or suggestions for improving on the above elements.*

Principle 7: **Ask Early, Ask Often.**

Ask students about site useability. But be specific about what you want to know. Any feedback is better than none.

What can you do? *Review a toolkit (that you didn't design) and complete the feedback survey. What would you want to know about a student's experience with the toolkits? This may be a question from the feedback survey that you want to dig a little deeper with. Answers to this will help inform the questions we bring to the focus group on May 24th.*

Principle 8: **Walk the Talk With Academic Integrity**

Be legal by ensuring all citations are in order for work that you are referencing or for any images you use.

Note about image copyright: we need to ensure all images on the site are legal to use (ie. Licensed under a cc:by creative commons license) or usable by permission. For reference, see:
http://wiki.ubc.ca/Library:Copyright_Resources/Image_Sources/Citation_Guide#Websites

What can you do? *Familiarize yourself with the above resource.*

Think #2: **Interesting stuff happens…** on campus, in the community and at the Learning Commons each week. How can we use the website to engage people? Where are the natural alliances between happenings, events, conferences, initiatives at UBC? How can we integrate social media into a strategy? Other ideas?

Think #3: **Who are we missing**? Who are the students who you think visit the Learning Commons site? Why are they coming here? Who doesn't visit? Why not? What strategies might we use to be more inclusive?