

Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Annual Report 2004-2005

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CETL Annual Report 2004-2005

I. Launch of CETL in 2003-2004

Seattle University's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) was launched in 2003-2004 to build upon SU's tradition of excellence in teaching and to promote the University's mission to enhance student learning. CETL was created as a resource for faculty, an office that supports and encourages effective and innovative teaching. Led by Interim Director Virginia Parks and coordinated by Administrative Assistant Julie Stein, the hallmarks of CETL's first year included

- a visit by Barbara Walvoord of Penn State University,
- an Inaugural Faculty Institute with over 100 faculty participants,
- the development of an 18-member CETL Advisory Board (see Appendix A),
- a series of faculty workshops facilitated by track leaders Mark Roddy (Ed), Jeannette Rodriguez (A&S), Paula Lustbader (Law), and Pat Fleenor (Albers),
- the awarding of four Teaching Innovation Grants, presented to Sharon Callahan (STM), Maria Chavez (A&S), Cathy Horiuchi (A&S), and Pam Taylor (Ed), and
- the hiring of a new full-time Director for the Center, Therese Huston.

Therese Huston joined the SU faculty in Fall 2004.

II. Objectives and Activities for 2004-2005: A Surprising Year

One of the first tasks for the new Director was to create concrete objectives to guide the Center's activities. With the help of the Provost and the CETL Advisory Board, twelve specific objectives were articulated. Six objectives were prioritized for the 2004-05 Academic Year, and the remaining objectives were judged to be important developments for 2005-06 and 2006-07. A complete list of CETL's objectives is provided in Table 1. Some of the objectives, such as "Provide customized information & consultation to guide changes in teaching practices," will be an annual priority for CETL because of the

“scholarly teaching,” in which good practice is informed by the research literature. CETL can promote scholarly teaching by helping faculty apply research findings to their own classrooms. Hutchings (2005) defines the third point on the continuum as “the scholarship of teaching” in which faculty use their classrooms as an opportunity to collect data on teaching and learning. In 2005-06, CETL will be gathering more information on how to support the scholarship of teaching and learning on SU’s campus by working with the Provost’s Office to send a faculty team to the Annual Meeting of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Vancouver, BC.

The last surprise for CETL in 2004-05 concerned the faculty who used the Center as a resource. When the Director started in the fall, several senior faculty and department chairs quietly confided that the Center would be a valuable resource for untenured faculty but it would be of little use to tenured faculty. In contrast to these expectations, tenured faculty sought CETL’s support regularly throughout the past year. Tenured faculty constituted approximately 60% of the participants in CETL-sponsored workshops and 21% of the faculty consultations.¹ The workshop topics that drew the largest percentages of senior faculty were “Teaching International Students: What Changes and What Stays the Same” and “Better Peer Reviews: A Focus on Classroom Observations” (See Table 2). Pleasantly, two of the tenured faculty who projected a lack of senior faculty interest later attended CETL workshops.

In addition to the high numbers, faculty have noted the benefits of working with CETL. On the CETL Services Survey (distributed quarterly to any faculty member who attended a workshop or consulted with the Director), the most frequently cited change that has occurred as a result of working with CETL is gaining “an understanding of why a particular approach works / doesn’t work” (48% of the 50 faculty respondents), and the second most common outcome was that faculty “gained confidence or felt encouraged” (39%). Of the respondents who worked with CETL in a face-to-face consultation (N=14), 100% gave the highest rating, “Extremely valuable.” The few criticisms that have been raised in

¹ If Department Chairs and Deans are included in the total number of tenured faculty that consulted with CETL, then the percentage of consultations with tenured faculty rises to 35%.

CETL surveys include “need more time in the workshops,” “there is a culture of overwork at SU,” and “this survey should be shorter.” (The survey was reduced by 15% the next quarter).

In summary, CETL has enjoyed a high level of faculty participation and interest in the Director’s first year. There had been a concern before CETL was launched that it would be viewed as remedial or as a place where “problem faculty” go. Given the strong turnout of skilled teachers at workshops and the overwhelming number of requests that CETL receives for up-to-date research on teaching and learning, the Center has begun to build a reputation as a resource that the best teachers utilize.

III. Lessons Learned

CETL’s Director has learned several valuable lessons in her first year. Several of these lessons concern communication awareness, namely what should and what should not be said. For example, CETL’s policy is that all consultations are confidential and voluntary. At the Director’s previous institution, the staff at the teaching center could say “Several faculty of color from Arts and Sciences have come to me with complaints about...” as a way to draw attention to an issue without violating the confidentiality of those individuals. Given the size of SU, however, and the fact that many people know the concerns of their peers in other departments, such comments must be avoided. Another communication challenge is that faculty often begin a conversation about teaching by externalizing the source of their teaching frustrations. They might complain about the students, the course evaluations, or the quarter system. The Director’s challenge is to empathize and find the underlying teaching issue that the instructor can address without endorsing the complaint. On more than one occasion when a faculty member has brought a complaint to CETL, it has appeared that the faculty member wanted to use CETL’s name as leverage in motivating policy change. The Provost and Russ Lidman, the Chair of CETL’s Advisory Board, have helped the Director develop key communication skills to handle these moments.

Valuable lessons regarding faculty workshops have developed through trial-and-error. For example, the Director learned that workshops need to be offered on a variety of days to accommodate faculty schedules (for example, many nursing faculty can only attend workshops on Mondays or Fridays)

and that the number of guest speakers for any single workshop needs to be minimized despite the number of interested parties (i.e. four guest speakers was too many, leaving the last person rushed and flustered). The Director also learned that the minimum number of pre-registered participants for a CETL workshop should be 5; a smaller number provides insufficient opportunities for diverse perspectives and dialogue. These changes will be reflected in CETL workshops for 2005-06.

IV. Problems in 2004-05

Two major problems arose for CETL in 2004-05. The primary problem is one of insufficient staffing. Given an unexpectedly high volume of consultations, requests for workshops, and research inquiries regarding policy decisions, CETL's staff of only 1.5 (a fulltime Director and a half-time Administrative Assistant) could not meet the demand. The forecast for growth is also concerning: at the Director's previous institution, the number of individual consultations grew by 100% between her first and second year and by another 63% in her third year. The request has been made for additional staffing.

The second problem concerned CETL's space allocation. CETL currently has adequate space, but several faculty members are seeking that space for ways that it was previously used. Efforts are being made to reconcile this problem.

IV. Activities for 2005-2006

With the guidance of the Provost, CETL is coordinating SU's Academic Convocation, a unique opportunity for all faculty members to gather on the topic of teaching and learning. This year's Academic Convocation is being held on Sept. 15, 2005 with Professor Vincent Tinto, Chair of the Higher Education Program at Syracuse University, as the keynote speaker. In his interactive presentation "Taking Learning Seriously," Dr. Tinto will describe a paradigm shift within higher education. He will build upon the work of Barr & Tagg (1995), who observed that the emphasis on instruction is shifting to an emphasis on learning. CETL has scheduled meetings throughout the day for Tinto to consult with faculty and staff on the topics of collaborative learning, residential learning communities, and retention. Tinto's visit also

provides an opportunity to spotlight some SU faculty who are nationally recognized for their use of active learning techniques, such as Vicky Minderhout (Chemistry) and John Bean (English).

CETL will continue to offer a variety of workshops and seminars on teaching and learning in 2005-06, but with some notable changes. In her first year at SU, Dr. Huston facilitated most of the workshops herself, which gave her an opportunity both to increase CETL's visibility and to establish her own credibility as a resource. To accommodate the growing number of requests for individual teaching consultations, however, the Director has asked a variety of SU faculty and guest speakers to lead the majority of the workshops for 2005-06. For example, as a follow-up to Tinto's visit, Dr. Laurie Stevahn (College of Education) will work with CETL on monthly workshop series on Collaborative and Active Learning. Other faculty, such as Toni Vezeau (College of Nursing) are being asked to sit on faculty panels on highly requested topics, such as "The Art of Good Lectures."

In addition to these workshops facilitated by SU faculty, CETL will be bringing at least two guest speakers to campus in the upcoming year. Dr. Christine Stanley, the Assistant Dean of Faculties at Texas A & M, will be coming to campus Nov. 4, 2005, to lead two workshops on addressing difficult diversity issues in the classroom. Eric Liu, J.D., former speech-writer for President Clinton and an instructor at U.W.'s Evans School of Public Policy, will give a presentation on Feb. 7, 2006, on five qualities of inspiring mentors and teachers.

CETL will also be piloting a new Peer Coaching Program for a small group of senior faculty, under the leadership of Dr. Carol Weaver (College of Education) and CETL's Director. The purpose of this program is to prepare a small cadre of SU faculty who will be willing and able to serve as peer coaches to other faculty. Ten faculty members will participate in the pilot program, each nominated by his or her respective Dean. These peer coaches will practice coaching / being coached through a reciprocal coaching process during the school year. There are several potential benefits of this program. First, the AAHE has identified peer coaching programs as an essential component in building a community of faculty who practice the scholarship of teaching and learning. Second, these coaches will be in a position to improve the climate of trust surrounding classroom observations in their departments. Lastly, CETL's

Director and Advisory Board hope that some of these peer coaches will be interested in being future CETL faculty fellows to assist with the growing demand for formative classroom observations.

Table 1: CETL Objectives and Activities for 2004-2005

		Objectives	Relevant Activities and Outcomes Aug 15, 2004 – July 31, 2005
CETL's First Priorities for 2004-2005	A	Provide customized information & consultation to foster improved teaching practices and deeper student learning	<p>Consultations on teaching and learning with 37 faculty, across 18 departments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts & Sciences: 51% of consultations • Albers School of Business: 19% • Education: 11% • Science & Engineering: 8% • Nursing: 8% • Law: 3%
	B	Facilitate conversations among faculty on teaching and learning (T&L) to address concerns and disseminate successful strategies	<p>20 workshops / seminars</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 CETL workshops, 132 participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts & Sciences: 30% of participants • Albers School of Business: 26% • Science & Engineering: 17% • Law: 11% • Nursing: 8% • Education: 7% • 4 co-sponsored workshops (NFI, Albers, Center for Service) ~ 75 total participants
	C	Gather information about types of support faculty want or need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with 28 Academic Administrators • CETL Services Survey data from 50 faculty • Outcomes: list of "key teaching & learning concerns" & preferred topics for workshops
	D	Establish visibility of CETL: build relationships & become more visible and familiar on campus	Evidence: Unexpectedly high number of consultations and requests for CETL's input on committees and projects (e.g. laptop policy, course evaluations, freshman seminars, etc.)
	E	Identify exemplary teachers in each department and document and disseminate best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have identified exemplary teachers in 6 schools, based on input from Dept. Chairs and faculty. • Now initiating conversations with these faculty to participate in workshops
	F	Answer questions about role of CETL on campus & its policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual meetings with 6 Deans, 22 Dept/Prgrm Chairs • Clarifying CETL's role in workshops and consultations
	G	Provide information about research on T&L and connect research to instruction and assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most common type of faculty consultation is request for resources on teaching & learning (47% of all consultations)
Second Priorities 04-05	H	Offer accessible resources so faculty can take ownership and build expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have created a lending library • Need better website and organized resources
	I	Provide research findings concerning T & L policies being considered on campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most frequent request for research to inform policy decisions has concerned course evaluations
	J	Create opportunities for collaboration within and between departments, colleges, programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One school, three departments and one program asked CETL to lead discipline-specific workshops or facilitate a focused discussion
	K	Make substantial contributions to the national and global dialogue on issues of teaching & learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations at 2 international conferences on higher education • 2 articles accepted for publication
Prof. Devlpmt.	L	Seek external sources of funding to support innovative teaching and learning initiatives on campus	College of Engineering at Pontifical Catholic University of Chile is interested in developing a grant proposal re: engineering education, potential focus on Project Center

Table 2: CETL Workshop Overview 2004-2005

	Workshop	Participants	Attend	Total
Fall	Using Early Course Evaluations to Improve Teaching and Learning	1 st &2 nd year faculty	11	2
	CETL Resources for Faculty	Faculty in Non-Profit Leadership	15	2
Winter	Using Early Course Evaluations to Improve Teaching and Learning	All faculty	19	2
	Beauty in the Ivory Tower: How Appearance Affects What Happens in the Classroom	All faculty	22	2
	Teaching International Students: What Changes and What Stays the Same	All faculty	22	2
	Collaborative Learning: Tools for Facilitating Effective Teamwork <i>(with Laurel Stevahn, College of Ed.)</i>	Albers School of Business	23	1
	Getting Started with Service Learning Courses <i>(with Kent Koth, Center for Service)</i>	Albers School of Business	12	1
Spring	A Focus on Learning NOT on Teaching <i>(with Paula Lustbader, School of Law)</i>	1 st year faculty	25	1
	Better Peer Reviews: A Focus on Classroom Observations	All Faculty	14	2
	Promoting Academic Integrity: Strategies to Reduce Cheating & Plagiarism	All faculty	13	2
	Energizing Long Classes	All faculty	20	2
	What's Next After Tent City? Teaching About Poverty through Service Learning <i>(with Kent Koth, Center for Service)</i>	All faculty	15	1
	Totals		211 participants	20 sessions

Appendix A: CETL's Advisory Board Academic Year 2004-05

Janet Bishop, Lemieux Library

Sharon Callahan, School of Theology & Ministry

John Carter, College of Science & Engineering

Michael Clay, Office of Information Technology

Mary de Chesnay, College of Nursing

Arthur Fisher, Matteo Ricci College

Loretta Jancoski, Provost's Office

Beverly Johnson, College of Nursing

Paulette Kidder (Executive Committee), College of Arts & Sciences

Gail Lasprogata, Albers School of Business & Economics

Russell Lidman (Executive Committee), Institute of Public Service

Paula Lustbader (Executive Committee), School of Law

Vicky Minderhout (Executive Committee), College of Science & Engineering

Greg Prussia (Executive Committee), Albers School of Business & Economics

Mark Roddy, College of Education

Carol Schneider, Learning Center / Disabilities Services

Laurel Stevahn, College of Education

Ex Officio

Susan L. Secker , Provost

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