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Faculty development, too often regarded as the province of individual departments or units, benefits from a more inclusive and collegial approach that includes the full range of teaching ranks and promotes a seamless web of development activities involving programs, departments, collegial, and university-wide units. Illustrations are provided from the faculty development activities of Temple University's Learning Communities Program.

Creating Community among Teachers: Faculty Development in Learning Communities

In the past three decades faculty development activities have progressed from sabbaticals, audiovisual aids, and student evaluations to team-building, orientation programs, and formative peer review, following the trajectory of "reflection in action" suggested by Donald Schön (1983): we frame problems, act to solve them, reflect on the resistances that arise, devise new plans, and move forward. Each stage of development generates new knowledge and confronts new kinds of disequilibrium or disruption that necessitate further reflection (Smith,1995). Constantly evolving and in process, lacking any template or final form, faculty development is a sort of Odyssey without an Ithaca.

The pressure to adapt and change faculty development activities is intensified when faculty teach in learning communities at urban public universities. Here, faculty development must foster a shared pedagogical vision among teachers who include adjuncts, entering graduate students, and seasoned professors. At Temple University, these faculty come from seven undergraduate colleges.

Sometimes appointed at the last minute, they teach students who typically commute, are the first in their families to attend a university, and hold part-time jobs, and the faculty's task includes relating or integrating the content of two or three linked courses in a learning community.

Thus described, these challenges appear daunting. Now, consider them again: what is interesting at second glance is that only the last obligation, to integrate the content of courses in a learning community, is new. Urban public universities have always served a commuting and upwardly mobile student body, and have generally deployed a teaching staff that ranges from novices to full professors. The learning communities structure merely renders these challenges more visible and pressing. Course integration, which seems at first glance a challenge, becomes in this context potentially beneficial, an antidote to the atomization of student learning, an arena for interdepartmental collaboration.

Collaboration: This hallmark of learning communities teaching is also basic to learning communities this kind of development. Ideally, department, college, and program will work together to improve faculty development, which permits a more continuous assault on teaching improvement than the workshops and brown-bag lunches of any single program. This process has begun at Temple University; although it has not succeeded at every turn, it has required the constant review, rethinking, and growth that make it an interesting case study.

A collaborative approach first requires that we recognize the distinctive qualities of the students we teach. Too often treated as an undifferentiated subset of the residential populations of private colleges and large state universities, students at urban public institutions have recently been recognized as a distinctive group. Alexander Astin's massive and useful longitudinal research on student success casts new, sometimes unflattering, light on the educational challenges facing this population: the bimodal format of one recent analysis by Astin (1992) invites comparison to a seesaw:

Student failure is associated with:

- Living at home, commuting
- Large institutional size
- Full-time employment
- Lack of student community
- Frequent use of teaching assistants

Student success is linked with:

- Student-student and student-faculty interaction
- Student-oriented faculty
- Hours devoted to studying
- Institutional emphasis on diversity
- A faculty that is positive about the general education program

The two sides of the seesaw, taken as a unit, illustrate the task of learning communities at a large urban university. The first column inventories the unchanging conditions of urban educational life; the second, the countervailing sources of support that the university must attempt to supply. Faculty development in Temple's learning

communities falls into the latter, as part of this overall effort toward student-centeredness: the benefits have been as evident in our Department of English as anywhere, and we will use that department as a focal point in the comments that follow.

Learning Communities Faculty Development Workshops

Scheduling

At Temple University, faculty development activities begin with the shaping of the Learning Communities offerings for a fall term. Each winter, the program leadership prepares a complex and carefully worked-out schedule of more than one hundred courses or sections of courses spread across assignments with departments, often drawing on veteran learning community faculty but also using graduate students who may not arrive until the following summer. At that time, we also review the experience of the preceding semester and set priorities for faculty development.

In the spring, we set up one-day faculty development workshops for the coming summer. These work best when the two or three faculty teaching in a community attend as a group. For this reason, and to accommodate faculty summer schedules, we invariably run three or four workshops in early June, in July, and finally one or two in late August. We also begin to pair faculty with each other, sometimes bringing them together before the summer begins.

The month of May brings a period of intense preparation as we shape the fall schedule and try to ensure maximum participation in our June workshop. The sooner faculty meet, the more likely they are to plan an intellectually integrated learning community. So we devote a good deal of effort to filling vacancies in the course assignments and to making sure that we understand the needs of departments and vice versa.

Content

Faculty development workshops have evolved since their introduction in 1993. The program administration has observed in this period that teachers absorb best if we model good learning communities practice by keeping lecturing to a minimum and promoting active collaboration by participants.

At a typical workshop there will be a brief presentation of information about the program goals and guidelines, with handouts (color-coded to facilitate group reference and discussion). We also introduce topics important in Learning Communities, such as learning styles, student development, classroom assessment, and collaborative learning. Other features of the workshops generally include a presentation by some campus office, for instance the Office of Counseling Services on student development.

Learning communities involve an understanding of student learning, and we generally try to involve the faculty not only in "training" but in learning about learning, engaging in 1996 a behavioral-cognitive psychologist whose collaborative learning techniques were based on years of classroom research, and in 1997 a cognitive

psychologist who reviewed recent studies on learning theory (apprenticeship, the problem of transference, and situated learning). These presentations by respected academics bringing relatively new knowledge to a group of professionals have been quite productive.

We pepper the workshop sessions with group exercises, arrange for teaching groups to sit together during lunch, and set up a listserv discussion group for the faculty. The workshop always includes a panel of veteran learning communities instructors who speak briefly about their experiences and then answer questions from the new cohort. At the end of the day, groups discuss how to schedule classes and coordinate course content in each community, and then report back to the larger group on what they have achieved.

Faculty come to Learning Communities Faculty Development workshops with a range of interests, experiences, and concerns. First-time participants often have concerns about the level of intervention that learning communities staff will have in their courses, and these concerns begin with the workshop. Questions arise such as "Why do I have to do this extra thing? What are they going to make me do? What can they tell me about teaching my own subject?" Once they are at the seminars, faculty often display different degrees of willingness to engage in the often difficult processes of reflection upon, and discussion of, their teaching practices. Of course, for many learning communities teachers, the workshops come to represent an opportunity to share ideas about pedagogy and to add to their skills. Those teachers are, understandably, the most engaged participants, and lead the seminar cohort time after time.

The need to run annual workshops presents other challenges. Some participants in the workshops have a long history with the program, and are veterans of many faculty development workshops, but new teachers always need to be initiated. While the nuts and bolts of learning communities—an overview of the program and its mission, pedagogical theory, and history—are clearly necessary for first-time faculty, learning communities veterans need new approaches and new material. We have attempted to split up the workshop cohort into old hands and novitiates for part of the time, or to provide some of the basic information in writing, or to hold separate workshops; but a solution to the problem is still elusive. In the effort to keep learning communities Faculty Development workshops attractive to our continuing faculty, though, the balance between basic coverage and freshness remains a central goal.

Information Technology

Some professional development activities have been phased out as faculty have increased their skills outside of Learning Communities. One example of this is the use of information technology. Classes at a commuter school such as Temple benefit immensely from use of electronic mail and the Web. In 1993 and 1994, we encouraged faculty to set up group listservs, and for those few years we ran computer skills workshops for teachers. As excitement about these resources grew in the academy as well as in the general population, and as the university began to fund computer accessibility for all faculty and students, these workshops have ceased to

be necessary. Nevertheless, Learning Communities Faculty Development provided a point of entry for many of our faculty during the birth of widespread campus network access, and was indeed on the cutting edge while it was still cutting. With the needs of commuting students in mind, Temple has covered the campus with workstations, and in addition, a surprising number of students now log on from home. So we continue to urge the fullest possible use of technology in our classes.

Follow-Up

Once the formal workshops have ended, learning communities faculty continue to meet on their own to plan the work for the fall. The learning communities office spends considerable time sitting in on these meetings, especially during the fall term. "Faculty development" at this stage involves discussions about how to merge course content and also about student learning and student discipline. The faculty fellow for learning communities engages in extended discussions about student problems, course construction, collaboration, and other topics. This is one of the more labor-intensive features of learning communities faculty development, but also one of the most rewarding.

Collaboration Between Department and Program

Departmental Activities

Different Temple departments treat faculty development differently. One of the most impressive is the Department of English, long respected for the practicum required of teaching assistants in writing programs. In any given fall term, 75 percent of the students in a practicum may be teaching in learning communities courses, so the practicum becomes a convenient setting for learning communities staff to keep informed about progress in these courses, and for encouraging discussion: a setting, in short, for the reflective practice advocated by Donald Schön.

The practicum for English 40, the developmental writing course, offers both pedagogical and writing theory as well as solid discussion of the experience of new teaching assistants in their daily classes. There is also a practicum for English 50, the next level of first-year writing at Temple; formerly called Composition 50, this is the "standard" college-level writing course. This practicum is taken one or two years after the English 40 practicum. The English 50 practicum, too, offers both practical and theoretical support for the new or inexperienced teaching assistant. In both, readings in theory about teaching, and the teaching of writing in particular, are supplemented by discussion of student work, grading standards, commentary on student texts, conference procedures, and alternative structures of evaluation and assessment.

The English practicum and Learning Communities Faculty Development workshops operate symbiotically, although they were not initially designed to do so. Learning communities summer workshops prime new teaching assistants for their teaching assignments before the fall semester begins, thus preparing them not only for

their first day of teaching, but also laying the groundwork for the reflection on pedagogy that the practicum offers. Once the semester begins and the teaching assistants have experienced intensive learning about teaching in the practicum, their interaction with their learning communities partners is enhanced. Future Learning Communities Faculty Development workshops also benefit from the pedagogical knowledge acquired by these teaching assistants.

Mentoring

The practicum also involves a mentoring component that assigns between five and ten new teaching assistants to a senior teaching assistant. The mentor advises the new teaching assistants in general, and is especially useful in addressing aspects of the new teaching assistants' experience that might be awkward to discuss with the practicum professor. The mentor fills an intermediary position, then, both easing some of the burden on the professor of fifteen or twenty new teaching assistants, and serving as an semi-institutional sounding board for new teaching assistants.

Mentors visit classes, look over student papers, and generally keep an open door for the new teaching assistants to discuss the day-to-day problems of teaching that might seem too inconsequential to bother a faculty member with. One invaluable aspect of mentors' class observations is the notes or transcript that they provide the teaching assistant. Mentors are also in a good position, as graduate students themselves, to tell new teaching assistants if they are overworking themselves either in their teaching or in the classes they're taking.

Interdepartmental Collaboration

Pairing of Teachers

In many learningommunities, a teaching assistant handling a basic service course will be paired with a full-time faculty member from another field. These arrangements involve both mentoring and collaboration. Sometimes the graduate student teaching a writing class is such an effective teacher that the faculty member can learn from him or her. At other times, the faculty member plays a meaningful role in assisting the graduate student. A recent outside assessment of the Temple Learning Communities program (Smith et al., 1997) singled out a math and psychology learning community that "had a significant amount of interdisciplinary activity, in part because of the professor's interest. Much of it took place among the faculty but there was also an assignment that sought to relate math and psychology. Math and psychology GAs met weekly. The math professor, at a coffee hour, often discussed teaching, students, and their disciplines." The assessment goes on to describe how the psychology graduate assistant suggested a social psychology class discussion on the use of common-sense sayings and the mathematician showed the relationship between these

and probability theory. This group also developed a joint project that required reporting on a research article in psychology that contained fairly daunting mathematics: the resulting papers were, according to the mathematician, "100% better" than he received in non-learning communities classes.

Paradoxically, one of the particularly attractive features of linkages like this, where a senior faculty member works productively with a graduate student in another area, is that they do not involve the learning community leadership at all. Once initiated, they generate their own energy. Clearly, the development of self-sustaining structures such as these is in the interest of any program with limited resources.

From the graduate student's point of view, the association with faculty from other departments brings exposure to vast disciplinary differences in both methodology and discourse about pedagogy. All teachers are exposed to the range of what has been called pedagogical content knowledge: teaching practices that are inherently shaped by their subjects. Although this would seem to be a dead end ("Why do I need to know how the physics folks teach cold fusion?"), it serves to expand teachers' consciousness about available styles of instruction. One result, then, is that teachers can be influenced by other fields, developing innovative means of teaching poetry, for instance, based on a pedagogical model learned from a geologist.

Graduate Students

Aside from pedagogy, other issues of professional growth are available to the graduate student through Learning Communities Faculty Development. Because of the interdepartmental nature of the program, graduate students are exposed to the larger picture of schools and colleges within the university as a whole. Working with people in other departments gives them a broader sense of the possibilities for faculty interaction across and within units. Departments, like individual classes and like families, develop very particular (and often peculiar) social structures and behavioral patterns, a fact easily missed by teaching assistants who take their own department for the world. By expanding the scope of teaching assistants' experience across the university, Learning Communities Faculty Development reaches into the future, affecting future faculty for years to come.

Collaboration with Collegial Units

At Temple University, teaching improvement units are located within individual colleges. Some collegial units, such as the one in the College of Arts and Sciences, have increasingly involved graduate students from learning communities. In one case, a team of graduate students in English had, without supervision or encouragement, formed a study team on the use of student portfolios and reported through the Teaching Improvement Committee to the college at large. This has led to increased activity with portfolios in the Department of English. In this case the activity was both initiated and continued by a group of graduate students working on their own.

During the 1997-98 academic year, the Teaching Improvement Center set up a year-long slate of presentations by and for graduate students: veterans of the learning communities program played a lead role in several of these sessions, dealing with such topics as "How Do I Balance My Roles as Both Student and Teacher," "Classroom Decorum: How to Get It and Keep It," and "What Are Your Rights and Responsibilities in Today's Classroom?" These activities culminated in an April conference, "Teaching Matters," organized by Temple teaching assistants, that dealt with these questions with an audience of graduate students from other institutions as well as Temple.

Conclusion

For a host of reasons, faculty development is one of the most exciting activities on today's campus: it is cross-generational, involving mutual support and sharing; it is an open and exciting field; it benefits from current explorations into the nature of professional training by Lee Shulman, Donald Schön, and others; it contributes to the success of a relatively new pedagogical venture, learning communities; it is informative—about both students and faculty—and it brings together units that once regarded each other as alien—different departments, different colleges—to share in the enterprise of improving student learning.

Suggested Readings

Astin, A. "What Really Matters in General Education: Provocative Findings from a National Study of Student Outcomes," *Perspectives 22*(1, 1992): 23-46.

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Smith, R. A., Reumann-Morre, R., El-Hal, T. A., and Gold, E., *"Friends for School Purposes": An Evaluation of Temple Learning Communities and their Role in Building Community, Connecting Students with Peers, Deepening Faculty Interaction and Creating Interdisciplinary Links Between Courses* (Philadelphia: Research for Action, 1997), 7.

NOTE: We are indebted to Leonard Waks of the Temple University College of Education for the enlightening discussion of Schön, and of John Dewey, a major influence on Schön.