Broadening the Role
of the Teaching and Learning Center:
From Transforming Faculty
to Transforming Institutions

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*Teaching and learning centers (TLCs) first emerged to sup-
port faculty dealing with underprepared students, focusing
on methods for effectively engaging students and assessing
student learning. But a broader role for TLCs is emerging: as
facilitators of the transformation of institutional culture. At
Quinnipiac University, the faculty development center has
played a leadership role in the implementation of the New Syn-
thesis for Undergraduate Education, a university-wide initiative
to integrate the essential learning proficiencies into the entire
undergraduate experience. Outcomes suggest that the center
has been effective by complementing the top-down institutional
initiative with a forum for bottom-up faculty, staff, and student
empowerment and participation.*

The roots of the earliest college and university faculty development
centers began when campuses were wrestling with complex social issues
such as the anti-war, women's liberation, and Black power movements
of the 1970s (Jamieson & Curry, 2001). In addition, large increases in
undergraduate enrollment and precipitous declines in the preparation
levels of students generated calls for student remedial learning centers,
as well as for faculty development centers to support the student learning
centers. The collegiate response to the declining level of preparation of
students was driven, at least in part, by the Carnegie Foundation for the
Advancement of Teaching study on the quality of education in Ameri-

can public high schools: *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America* (Boyer, 1981). The report called for American high schools to (1) adopt a clear and vital mission, (2) conduct a thoughtful examination of the curriculum, (3) reform their testing and evaluation procedures, and (4) recognize the importance of the teacher to the learning process.

In response to the Carnegie Foundation report, faculty development centers emerged to help faculty focus on curriculum and student learning. The faculty development center at Miami University (Ohio) was one of the first to be developed as a means of supporting teachers and offered the first Lilly Conference on College Teaching in 1981. Astin's *Achieving Educational Excellence* (1985), published by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, was critical in recommending that this shift in faculty focus and the development of students' talents and abilities, rather than institutional reputation or financial and faculty resources, be the basis for defining university excellence. Simultaneous to Astin's work, and in response to the strong reaction to *High School*, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching published *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America* (Boyer, 1987), which urged colleges and universities more directly to engage in the emerging national dialogue about the purposes and goals of an American education. If the push for educational excellence were to yield some results, the nation's colleges and universities must be willing to ask difficult questions about the quality of their own work. The study identified both the strengths and weaknesses of collegiate education circa 1985 and provided insights into ways in which institutions might be strengthened and students served better.

By early 1987, the movement to self-examine the mission/purpose of higher education, coupled with the emergence of faculty development centers, led to initiatives to examine higher education teaching methods critically toward increasing student learning. The landmark study by Chickering and Gamson, "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Under-graduate Education" (1987), promoted active student involvement in the teaching and learning process by distilling educational research in teaching methods into a coherent summary that could be understood by all college faculty.

Throughout the 1990s and well into the first decade of the new millennium, faculty development centers continued to champion the call for active student involvement in the teaching and learning process. For example, in *Scholarship Reconsidered,* Boyer (1990) introduced the term "Scholarship of Teaching" to the higher education lexicon. As part of the effort to legitimize this area of inquiry as faculty scholarship and to prompt a faculty/institutional culture shift to focus efforts on improved

student learning, this term later evolved into the "Scholarship of Teaching and Learning" (SoTL). Boyer's call for a shift in institutional emphasis toward student learning was echoed by many others, most notably Astin (1993), Angelo and Cross (1993), Barr and Tagg (1995), Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff (1997), the American Association of Colleges and Universities (2002), Tagg (2003), and Cox (2004).

Despite all of these efforts, the need for a paradigm shift in American higher education remains apparent. While the emphasis on student learning needs ongoing strengthening, faculty development centers still focus most of their efforts on improving teaching (Sorcinelli, Astin, Eddy, & Beach, 2006). In a very real sense, faculty development centers are "preaching to the choir" because, anecdotally, many of those in need of improving their teaching view such centers with skepticism. A broader adoption of the learning paradigm (Barr & Tagg, 1995) and ongoing conversations about learner-centered teaching (Weimer, 2002) need to become the norm. We know much about how students learn (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000) and how our teaching methods may foster increased student learning (Fink, 2003; Kuh, 2003; Richlin, 2006; Zhao & Kuh, 2004), but we are still in need of a transformative institutional culture change to respond effectively to that need. Scott (2003) pointed out the difficulties involved in fostering such a culture change, stating that good ideas are wasted unless they include suggestions for implementation. He posits that taking potentially relevant, desirable, and feasible ideas and making them work in practice is by far the most difficult part of the quality improvement and innovation process.

There appears to be no shortage of good ideas. Schneider (2005), in *Liberal Education and America's Promise,* calls for the fusion of the liberal arts with professional education, and Sullivan and Rosin (2008) echo this call. But the difficulty has been in the adoption of those ideas across a wide spectrum of the campus. Huber and Hutchings (2005) call for the adoption of a Teaching Commons, Cox (2006) for the adoption of a Community of Practice as a change agent, and Cook, Wright, and O'Neal (2007) for the use of Action Research to inform methods for increasing student learning. All of these methods focus on improving the teaching and assessment methods of individual or small groups of faculty. But what is needed is a broader institutional culture change that transcends the issues associated with individual faculty improving their teaching methods.

Lieberman and Guskin (2002) first began to address the shifting role of faculty development in higher education as a potential institutional change agent, and Sorcinelli, Astin, Eddy, and Beach (2006) produced a landmark study that suggested a future agenda for faculty development

on campuses. Both studies proposed that faculty developers and faculty development centers take a stronger leadership role within higher education institutions, by aligning the centers with institutional priorities and working with academic leaders to foster institutional change. Latta (2009) argued that teaching and learning centers that have begun to support broader institutional goals also need to analyze the organizational culture and expand into areas of organizational development such as human resources and institutional capacity for change. Kezar (2009), however, warned of the lack of progress and synergy that result when too many initiatives, with too many stakeholders, divert the university community from working together on a few priorities. The search for a sense of institutional purpose in light of a rapidly evolving world is still ongoing on most college campuses (Qualters, Dolinsky, & Woodnick, 2009), and the possible role of faculty development centers in providing assistance to transform the institutional culture is becoming more evident (Schroeder, 2010).

The New Synthesis for Undergraduate Education

Quinnipiac University is a private, coeducational, nonsectarian institution enrolling approximately 5700 undergraduate and 2000 graduate students through its Schools of Business, Communications, Education, Health Sciences, Law, and the College of Arts and Sciences. A School of Medicine is projected to open in the fall of 2015. The university maintains a student: faculty ratio of 16:1 and an average class size under 25, but has experienced rapid growth over the last two decades and has spread to three campus locations in close geographic proximity. While the reputation of the institution has increased along with the physical growth of the campus environment, the rapid growth and corresponding organizational structures threaten to reduce the sense of community so present on the campus.

In response to pressures to focus more fully on the assessment of undergraduate education and promote a university-wide culture change, Quinnipiac University is presently engaged in a multi-year project, the *New Synthesis for Undergraduate Education* (Thompson, 2009)*.* This university-wide initiative will support the achievement of essential learning proficiencies to equip the university's graduates with the skills and knowledge needed for lifelong success in a dynamic global landscape. The goal of the New Synthesis initiative is to build on the extensive effort that resulted in the university's new University Curriculum, which established a set of important learning objectives for all of the university's

undergraduates. Moving beyond traditional educational approaches that focus on content delivery (the *Instruction Paradigm*) (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Tagg, 2003), the New Synthesis will facilitate an institutional transition to a learning paradigm that powerfully integrates essential learning proficiencies, fosters educational approaches that promote learning with understanding and prepares graduates to flourish in the 21st century: as global citizens, as problem-solvers, as workers in a knowledge economy, and as educated people exercising a vibrant life of the mind.

Carol Geary Schneider, president of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), said during her August, 2009 visit to Quinnipiac that "naming something as essential does not mean that it is necessarily or easily achieved" (Thompson, 2009). While we have named the essential learning proficiencies that are important, we recognize the need for an intentional plan to help students and faculty understand their meaning and importance, and work together to ensure that they are, in fact, being attained. To do this requires a campus-wide effort to capture *all* opportunities for "learning," both academic and co-curricular, so that our students secure the full benefit of their studies.

The New Synthesis seeks to fully engage students, faculty, and staff in a synergistic partnership that achieves demonstrable progress toward the attainment of clearly defined and purposeful learning proficiencies. This will transform students from academic consumers into engaged participants. Thompson (2009) states that for this level of institutional engagement to occur, everyone must understand his or her role and readily recognize how individual efforts contribute to the common purpose of excellence in education. Additionally, the institution must fully support the developmental and resource needs that are keys to the success and assessment of this effort.

A necessary condition for unleashing the full potential of the positive impact we can have on students is more collaboration across various boundaries. The New Synthesis has the added potential of realizing benefits from collaboration across discipline, school, and functional boundaries at a time when our university is growing and spreading onto three campuses. This opportunity for collaboration will strengthen our sense of community around a common purpose. While it is appropriate that each of the university's schools has unique needs and strategies for pursuing academic excellence, there must be recognition that each school and each member of the university community is a critical part of the whole and shares in the common purpose and goal of academic excellence.

The New Synthesis initiative is divided into four phases, two of which have been completed and are now being effectively sustained. All four

phases have and will require significant effort, but they strive to achieve changes that will empower our students and bring distinction to our comprehensive university. *Phase 1* focused on engaging faculty, staff, and students in discussions and implementing ways to enhance our intellectual community. This phase occurred during the spring 2009 semester. In *Phase 2*, which was completed in the fall 2009 semester, we sought to establish campus-wide agreement and clarity on essential learning proficiencies for all undergraduates. We are currently executing *Phase 3*, which seeks to identify all of the contributions made toward the attainment of the essential learning proficiencies, both inside and out of the classroom, and how they are assessed. We will also determine the need for programming and resource development for each of the proficiencies. Finally, during *Phase 4* we will develop flexible but intentional program roadmaps that ensure achievement of the essential learning proficiencies and the initiation of an electronic portfolio program. Students will be able to reflect on their continuum of learning and we will have the ability to measure achievement of the university proficiencies. This last phase will take place during the 2010-11 academic year.

The Role of Faculty Development in the New Synthesis Initiative

For Phase I of this project the Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs charged the Faculty Collaborative for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, the university's faculty development center, with the responsibility for engaging faculty, staff, and students in discussions of their visions for an ideal "intellectual community" at the university and in recommending how those visions might be achieved. In addition to these goals, Phase I also strove to model an intellectual community and bring together a wide variety of people, each of whom were valued for their role in creating a common dialogue. These goals fell well within the mission of the Faculty Collaborative.

The Faculty Collaborative was chosen as the phase coordinator for two additional reasons. First, while it had been only three years since its creation, it had already established a record of effective task accomplishment and was respected by the administration. Second, the Collaborative had been formed in response to faculty interest and, since then, had developed a reputation for transparency, encouraging the expression of diverse opinions and the sharing of expertise. Nonetheless, coordinating Phase I represented a broader level of involvement in the university community. As do most teaching and learning centers (Sorcinelli et al., 2006), we had

focused on nurturing and supporting a learning community of teachers and scholars and encouraging faculty to learn, share, and reflect on means of blending classroom content and professional research. In addition to focusing in a new way on student learning both in the classroom as well as in the larger college experience, the discussions on intellectual community served as the beginnings of a much broader movement toward a new campus culture. This new culture aimed to involve not only faculty and administration in a curricular and co-curricular overhaul, but also students, staff, and alumni, who often serve as recipients, rather than agents, of change.

The Executive Committee of the Faculty Collaborative formulated the following strategy for engaging as many of the campus constituents as possible. First, we invited faculty, staff, and employee alumni to participate in small-group facilitated discussions. The feedback from these discussions was used to build an online survey that could reach a larger number of these individuals. Second, members of the Faculty Collaborative Steering Community and volunteer faculty polled students in their classes and attended a wide variety of student organization meetings. The classes and organizations were selected in order to engage students from all four undergraduate as well as graduate years, all five schools/colleges of the university, and student leaders as well as non-leaders.

Faculty-Staff Discussions and Survey

A total of 56 administration-staff and 36 faculty (~8% and 5% of those employed in the spring 2009 semester, respectively) participated in small-group discussions of the following two questions: *What are the characteristics of the ideal intellectual community at your University?* and *What do we need to do to make that community a reality?* A recorder collected all individual answers and captured the facilitators' reports of the three characteristics or values designated by their groups as being priorities and some of the group's proposed goals or actions needed to achieve them. After an objective review of the group reports, we assembled the reported characteristics or values from both discussions, keeping as much of the original language as possible, into seven clusters of similar ideas about an intellectual community at our university. We classified the proposed goals or actions by context into the following four categories: Academic: In Class or Academic: Outside of Class; Extracurricular; Recognition, Awareness, and Engagement; and Institutional Issues. These characteristics of and goals for an intellectual community were used to build an online survey to solicit broad participation by faculty and staff.

In the online survey, 401 faculty, staff, and administrators initiated and 280 completed all questions. The majority of our survey participants were full-time faculty (38%) and part-time faculty (30%); however, a large number of administrators and staff also participated. University alumni (faculty, staff, or administration) represented approximately 25% of the participant pool. Faculty, staff, and administration from the College of Arts and Sciences and from the School of Health Sciences constituted 34% and 18% of the participant pool, respectively. Of faculty employed in Spring 2009, fully one third of the 294 full-time faculty participated, and almost one fifth of the 507 part-time faculty. Within the Schools and Colleges, large returns were seen from the College of Arts and Sciences (39%), School of Business (36%), School of Education (38%) and School of Health Science (48%); returns were lower from the School of Communications (20%), and the School of Law (12%).

We selected seven characteristics of the ideal intellectual community to include in the faculty-staff survey, each representing features originally identified by multiple discussion groups (see Table 1). Participants first rated each characteristic on a scale from "very important" to "not at all important," and then ranked them from 1 (*most important*) to 7 (*least important*). Approximately 85% of our participants judged two of the seven characteristics as very important: "Spirit of Inquiry" and "Freedom of Expression" (see Figure 1). The other five characteristics were judged as very important by 55-69% of the survey participants. When asked to rank the characteristics, participants ranked the same two characteristics at the top of the list; 65% and 46% ranked "Spirit of Inquiry" and "Freedom of Expression," respectively, at 1 or 2. They selected the other characteristics for ranks 1 or 2 only 10%-28% of the time.

There were numerous suggestions for the goals or actions that would make our university's intellectual community a reality. We included all of the unique ideas within each of the five categories on the survey, and participants had to choose the three with the *most value and/or impact* within each category; they could also submit their own goals. In each of these categories, three specific goals were selected much more frequently than others. In the Academic: In-Class category, our faculty/staff participants chose the following goals most frequently: "Mentoring relationships: faculty to student, student to student, faculty to faculty" (63%), "Learning experiences that build intrinsic motivation to participate" (59%), and "Discussion of current events in the classroom" (40%). In the Academic: Outside of Class category, participants chose three out of seven choices most frequently: "Spaces where students/faculty/staff/ administrators can meet spontaneously around common interests and exchange ideas"


Table 1
Seven Characteristics of an Intellectual Community

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1. *Spirit of inquiry:* Intellectual curiosity, innovation, time for reflection, making connections.

2. *Freedom of expression:* Trust and respect for risk-taking, respect for differences of opinion, skepticism balanced by tolerance.

3. *Visible signs of intellectual community:* Celebration and support of scholarship and creative works, showcasing work that affirms commitment to intellectual community.

4. *Fostering collaborations among campus constituencies (students, faculty, staff):* Interdisciplinarity on campus.

5. *Interactions beyond campus boundaries:* Academic discussions of the regional and global community, service to the community and society, broad focus (outside of "self").

6. *Excellence in learning and teaching drives institutional priorities.*

7. *Caring community:* Comfortable and supportive community, environment encourages sharing/reflection, inclusive environment.

(54%), "Students take a more active role in the development, management, and successes of the university community" (45%), and "Collaborative faculty and student presentations" (43%). In the Extracurricular category, the three most highly selected goals were "Small group faculty/student experiences" (41%), "More service and service learning, intellectual opportunities on and off campus and/or abroad" (39%), and "Public debates and discussions that model acceptance/tolerance for other points of view" (37%). Another suggestion was "Theme for the year with external and internal speakers, book lists, targeted discussions both in and outside of classes (particularly utilizing interdisciplinary seminars), and open forums," which was selected by 33% of the participants.

In the category for Recognition, Awareness and Engagement, there were only six goals from which to choose. Of these six, more than 45-58% of our survey participants selected four goals: "Clearly visible signs of University-wide creative expression, seminars, controversial or thought-provoking questions, entertainment, life here at the University" (58%), "Student and faculty achievement recognized in all disciplines and across disciplines" (53%), "Opportunities to celebrate the scholarly pursuits of faculty and students (for example, University journal, poster sessions, awards)" (48%), and "Creative expression (written, art, music, drama) encouraged" (45%). Finally, in the Institutional Issues category, two

Figure 1
Participant Rankings of the Seven Characteristics of an Intellectual Community
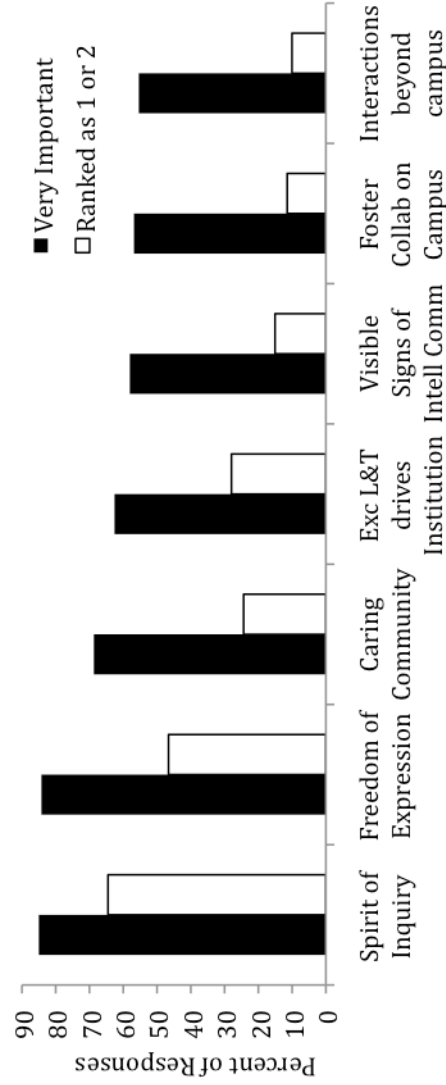
Note. Spirit of Inquiry and Freedom of Expression are both the most important and most highly ranked characteristics of an intellectual community. The percent of responses selecting "very important" (solid bars) and ranked as number one or two (open bars) for each of the seven characteristics of an intellectual community are shown.

goals out of seven were selected by approximately 50% and two goals by 40-45% of participants: "Mentoring: More advisors, fewer advisees, true mentoring to build lasting relationships" (51%), "Balancing of resources to allow small classes where pedagogically appropriate" (49%), "Time: class schedule accommodates dedicated intellectual time" (45%), and "Space: physical space(s) conducive to meeting, gathering, trying out new ideas/ behaviors (for example, in residential areas, near academic areas, and/ or near offices)" (41%).

Discussions With Students

To obtain student feedback on the nature of our university's intellectual community, we first piloted discussions in three different classes using the same two questions used for the faculty/staff discussions. Unfortunately, we discovered that these discussions would not be fruitful without a huge time investment. Instead, we decided to seek more personal examples of student experiences. In classrooms and at meetings for student organizations, we asked 727 students (representing approximately 11% of the total student population) to write answers to two questions: *What is the most intellectually stimulating experience you've had within the University community?* and *Why was this experience stimulating?* We included students from all four undergraduate and graduate years, and in classes offered by each school and college, honors and non-honors levels, and at least one interdisciplinary general education seminar. Of the total students surveyed, 35% were juniors, 20% freshmen, 22% sophomores, 16% seniors, and 7% graduate students. The percentage of students sampled represented approximately 10% of the freshman, sophomore, and senior classes, 19% of the junior class, and 4% of the graduate student population for the spring 2009 semester.

We were able to categorize almost all of the students' experiences into the same categories as used for the faculty and staff survey: Academic: In-Class, Academic: Outside of Class, and Extracurricular Experiences. Only four of the 727 students reported experiences that exhibited general changes in attitude not attributable to any event or class, and five students reported that they had not been intellectually stimulated at our university. We entered written responses that were representative or exemplars of each of the categories along with the online responses into text files and identified the most frequently used words or concepts using Concordance software.

Students identified their most intellectual stimulating experience as occurring in the classroom 54% of the time, outside the classroom but

related to a course 15% of the time, and in extracurricular activities 29% of the time. The following are some examples of experiences that students found intellectually stimulating. For Academic: In-Class Experiences, many students mentioned their instructor's knowledge, passion, or ability to create a safe environment where students could share their opinions and "think outside the box"; being challenged; being taken "out of their comfort zone"; learning about different people, cultures, and relationships; and gaining hands-on experiences in "real world" or "relevant" situations. They described stimulating discussions in class more often than lectures, but both types of class descriptions were well represented. Students mentioned the interdisciplinary seminar courses a number of times, always in reference to a specific instructor or course topic.

Descriptions of class-related experiences that occurred outside of the classroom included on-campus speakers and films assigned for class, working with a professor outside of class, field study and internship experiences, trips to off-campus sites including other countries, and independent research. Students used terms for the Academic: Outside of Class category like "hands-on," "critical thinking," "sharing work with others," "researching topics not covered in class," "independence," "thinking new thoughts," and "thinking about the big picture."

Almost one third of the student responses cited a wide variety of extracurricular experiences, a number of which were alternative spring break trips and other service, study abroad, participation in student clubs, having discussions with other students (in the dorms or elsewhere), being a Resident Assistant or a peer tutor, and campus events. Students mentioned the importance of exchanging ideas, learning about themselves and others, using the knowledge they gained in classes, "opening their eyes," and "giving back to the community." A few experiences described by students were difficult to categorize, yet important nonetheless. They spoke, for example, of the emotional connections to the community and insights into human nature.

Similarities and Differences Between Faculty/Staff and Student Ideas for an Intellectual Community

The vast majority (85%) of faculty/staff survey participants chose "spirit of inquiry" and "freedom of expression" as the most important characteristics of a more intellectual community at Quinnipiac University. In terms of desired actions or goals for the intellectual community, 60% of the faculty/staff participants selected two particular goals out of a relatively long list of suggestions for Academic: In-Class experiences.

Most importantly, they expressed the need to focus on "Mentoring relationships: faculty to student, student to student, faculty to faculty" and "Learning experiences that build intrinsic motivation to participate." Remarkably, over 50% of the student experiences fell into this category, and the student descriptions noted the importance of the faculty-student relationship and the excitement of being challenged in multiple settings in the classroom. In addition, two goals for Institutional Issues selected by approximately 50% of faculty and staff were to focus on mentoring relationships between faculty and students and balance resources to allow small classes where pedagogically appropriate. Thus, there appears to be strong, campus-wide agreement on the importance of significant classroom experiences and mentoring relationships.

There were quite a few student responses that described intellectually stimulating in-class or out-of-class experiences related to the interdisciplinary seminars, such as discussing a wide variety of topics, sharing viewpoints, thinking about diversity in a "free learning environment," and becoming close to the class and the professor. While there are certainly improvements that can be made to these seminars, as highlighted by earlier campus research using student focus groups (unpublished results), our results point to successes in the achievement of at least some of the University Curriculum and course objectives.

In the Academic: Outside of Class category, only one goal out of seven choices was selected by at least 50% of participants: "Spaces where students/faculty/ staff/ administrators can meet spontaneously around common interests and exchange ideas." Dedicated time and space was also a faculty/staff priority for Institutional Issues. The goal of dedicated space was not mentioned by students; however, students did relate intellectually stimulating experiences when meeting their professor outside of class. The variance in faculty and student attitudes toward the setting in which intellectual community/activity occurs—faculty/staff clearly point out the need for non-class/curriculum-driven experiences while students tend to privilege their classroom experiences—illustrates the difference between life-long learning (for example, pursuing one's curiosity in informal and formal situations) versus less developed ideas of learning for example, takes place in prearranged circumstances, planned by an expert). Perhaps the Quinnipiac community can play a role in helping its students develop long-lasting intellectual skills by effecting a culture shift toward intellectual pursuits throughout the university and by considering innovative uses of space and scheduling.

Other important goals for faculty/staff and described by students in the Academic: Outside of Class category highlighted the desire for a

more vibrant research-oriented and creative community. Faculty/staff chose as some of their goals in this category joint faculty-student presentations and research; 50% also selected visible signs of student and faculty achievement and recognition of scholarship. These data overlap the goal of dedicated space for interactions between students and faculty as they speak to working closely with faculty in non-classroom settings. The majority of the faculty and staff also highlighted the need for clearly visible signs of creative expression, thought-provoking seminars, and life at Quinnipiac University in general, and a large number of students recounted stimulating experiences related to these seminars and other unique campus events.

In the Extracurricular goals category, approximately 40% of the faculty/staff participants selected "small group faculty/student experiences" and "more service and service learning, intellectual opportunities on and off campus and/or abroad," with the remaining responses spread among eight other goals. The spread of responses in the extracurricular category was greater than for the Academic: In Class category, suggesting that the faculty and staff have a much sharper vision for how to improve intellectual stimulation in the classroom than for broadening the experience to include all co-curricular activities. However, students, faculty, and staff all described or selected local or international service, experiences abroad, and important events on campus that exposed the community to new ideas. While a number of the student "stories" valued student-faculty interactions outside the classroom, a number of them did not, instead focusing on self-discovery and the application of knowledge in new on- and off-campus settings. This represents an area of potential growth for the university.

The faculty and staff rated intellectual curiosity ("spirit of inquiry") as one of the two most important values of an intellectual community. In fact, our students rated some of their most stimulating experiences as when they were "challenged" and prompted to "think outside the box." The other most important value selected by faculty and staff was a respect for difference (freedom of expression). Do the students value differences of opinion and diversity in their classroom as well as in their outside-of-classroom experiences? At least some of the students specifically addressed the excitement of being able to share their thoughts as well as learn from their classmates in an open classroom environment, in their dormitories, and away from campus.

The Faculty Collaborative captured data and trends in faculty, staff, and student visions of the ideal intellectual community at Quinnipiac University. We also facilitated an incredibly rich dialogue that was

community-wide. Regardless of specific findings, it was clear from the vibrant discussion groups, the high rate of return on the faculty-staff survey, and strong student engagement in discussions with faculty and staff that members at all levels of the community valued the opportunity to talk to one another. The process of collecting the community visions in fact seemed to model that vision.

Outcomes to Date

As a result of the New Synthesis initiative and, in particular, the discussions initiated for phases 1, 2 and 3, we can see the beginnings of a campus culture change. The Faculty Collaborative led Phase 1 of the initiative and has played a major role in Phases 2 and 3 as well. The process of open discussion of student responses in the context of the faculty and staff members' vision of an ideal intellectual community at Quinnipiac (Phase 1), and, later, discussions of essential learning proficiencies (Phase 2) and course outcomes (Phase 3), has served to draw larger numbers of faculty, staff, and students together while working toward a common purpose. These results, while somewhat intangible, will undoubtedly serve as the seeds that germinate into long-lasting changes to the culture of the institution.

The New Synthesis initiative has also provided very specific recommendations for steps to reach that vision. As direct outcomes, the Faculty Collaborative is leading several new projects and supporting others. For example, we are currently helping to implement a new University Theme Discussion Project, where the campus will be engaged in common readings, discussions of complex issues, book clubs, fundraising, and other academic and co-curricular activities related to one theme per year. Importantly, the steering committees for these themes include students, faculty, and staff. We have also begun to highlight faculty and student scholarship by offering a new Faculty Scholar Program that supports and promotes the scholarship of teaching and learning, scheduling informal scholarship forums on faculty research, helping our summer interdisciplinary research program for students become more visible, and brainstorming with faculty across the disciplines on how to showcase student work. Finally, we are helping to expand an initiative begun in the fall by the Office of Residential Life, where faculty facilitate intellectual discussions of mutual interest with small groups of students in their dormitories. These discussions, titled "Hot Topics/Hot Coffee," began in the freshman dorms and are now offered in upper-class dorms, and we have already compiled a list of faculty volunteers for the following year. Thus,

the Faculty Collaborative has illuminated opportunities for faculty and students to engage in scholarship and greatly enhanced the interactions between faculty and students outside the classroom.

One of the other important consequences of the New Synthesis initiative at Quinnipiac University has been the formation of a new student organization called The College Group at QU, which is a new committee of the Student Government Association. Modeled after the College Group at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (CGM), the College Group at QU will act as the main student initiative for the New Synthesis Project. The purpose of the committee is two-fold: (1) to program events that correlate with the principles of the New Synthesis Project, while incorporating specific learning proficiencies as the program outcomes and (2) to assess areas in the student community in which the themes of the New Synthesis Project can be adapted. Members of this group helped publicize university book clubs, became important members of the University Theme Discussion Project and the Hot Topics/Hot Coffee planning committees, and have begun to coordinate with the educational arms of a multitude of other student organizations. They are also working with the Office of Student Affairs to change the focus of the new student orientations held before the start of the academic year in order to reflect the New Synthesis initiative. Most importantly, they and other student leaders have become valued constituents in all discussions and planning related to student learning, the campus culture, and the New Synthesis initiative in general. This is clearly an exciting development, where for the first time the entire campus—not just faculty and staff, but now also students—is engaged in moving toward a common set of goals.

Other important outcomes of the New Synthesis Project that reflect the beginnings of a change in campus culture can be found at the university and also the individual school/college levels. For example, the committee that oversees the University Curriculum will now expect courses not only to assess the goals of the Curriculum, but also to demonstrate how they contribute to the attainment of the essential learning proficiencies. Another committee has begun a collaborative review of the course scheduling grid, consistent with the desire to schedule open time for institutional events such as lectures by outside speakers. The College of Arts and Sciences has created voluntary, cross-disciplinary projects in creativity, diversity, research, environmental studies, international experience and service as new ways of bringing together students and faculty. The Albert Schweitzer Institute on campus has been increasingly successful in recruiting a number of departments from different schools to provide faculty and students with opportunities for international service as well as personal

growth. Finally, discussions at the department levels as they completed the course proficiency surveys deployed as part of Phase 3 of the New Synthesis Initiative have been instrumental in increasing the working knowledge and understanding by faculty of the essential proficiencies and how they are measured in individual courses.

Conclusions

Historically, faculty development centers have focused on improving student learning through a variety of pedagogical techniques that engaged university faculty. At Quinnipiac University, the Faculty Collaborative has played a broader role in fostering an institutional culture change by assisting in the implementation of the New Synthesis initiative.

In this new culture, faculty, students, and staff are open and trusting enough to have joint discussions about how well we as individuals, programs, and the university are doing with respect to student learning. Indeed, we are rapidly moving to a campus culture where the discussions are the norm rather than the exception. Students are taking a much more active role at all levels of discussion and are more consciously planning events that influence their learning; staff and alumni are also asked for input and included in realms that were previously only for faculty. While later phases of the New Synthesis revealed good efforts in exposing students to the university proficiencies, it is clear that there needs to be more overall coordination as well as assessment of student learning, and the assessment results need to be used in a process of continuous improvement.

For a university of our size and complexity to focus on a common set of learning outcomes for all students as a basis for dialogue and decision making implies a high degree of institutional uniqueness that fosters a strategic competitive advantage. We are confident that these discussions and the new common focus will prove to be sustainable, even in light of future changes in personnel. We are hopeful that the Faculty Collaborative has successfully aligned its mission with the institutional priorities of the New Synthesis initiative. Indeed, this process of bottom-up involvement of faculty, staff, and students through the Faculty Collaborative in conjunction with the top-down goals of the New Synthesis project has been instrumental in sustaining the momentum for institutional culture change on our campus.

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