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# Learning From Each Other: Involving Students in Centers for Teaching and Learning

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*Student involvement in centers for teaching and learning (CTLs) is often an overlooked avenue of faculty development. While several formalized programs for student involvement exist at other universities, the authors explore informal and easily implemented opportunities to work with students that can provide a viable starting point for centers of all kinds. They discuss the roles that students can play as presenters, panelists, audience members, marketers, and colleagues, and the valuable growth that involvement can foster for students and faculty alike as they engage in dialogue and reflection about teaching and learning.*

Most centers for teaching and learning (CTLs), by their very nature, focus on faculty. We are faculty developers, so of course we work *with* faculty and *for* faculty. However, we know that students are the indirect benefactors of our work, and as such, their voices and involvement in CTLs are crucial to our success. In our particular case, involving undergraduates is especially important given our reporting structure to the Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education. It is a part of our mission to better undergraduate education, and, thus, facilitating dialogue between faculty and students is highly valued. For any CTL, involving students is a critical step in bridging communication gaps between students and faculty members. By taking advantage of opportunities to stay in touch with students, listen to their classroom experiences, ask their opinions, and, in turn, expose

them to our work, we begin rich dialogues about teaching and learning that can benefit students, faculty, and faculty developers alike.

By becoming involved with the work of our center, students are able to gain a fresh perspective on the "other side" of the classroom and re-envision themselves as purposeful learners. Metacognitive scholars confirm that the process of thinking about learning is beneficial for students (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Paris & Winograd, 1990), and engaging students in our CTL consequentially sets the stage not only for conversations, but also for continued reflection about and enhanced awareness of the nature of teaching and learning that students can take with them into their own studies. Furthermore, creating opportunities for faculty and student interaction encourages the kind of mutually beneficial, open learning environment that Chickering and Gamson espoused in their classic work "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education" (1987). By exposing faculty to the value of student voices, and by revealing to students the hard work and humanity of teaching, CTLs can help foster future interaction between faculty and students beyond the confines of the center.

Both undergraduate and graduate students alike can serve as vital sources of support and enrichment for CTLs and their faculty, as the programs of other respected institutions illustrate. Institutions such as Brigham Young University, Miami University, the University of Michigan, and Bryn Mawr College are known for their programs that incorporate students in their CTLs. The Center for Teaching and Learning at Brigham Young University and the Center for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching, and University Assessment at Miami University, using the same model, both employ and train students to serve as consultants through the Student Consultants on Teaching Program (Brigham Young University, 2011; Miami University, 2011). Through this program, students offer faculty a variety of services, including serving as a recorder/observer, faux student, filmmaker, interviewer, primed student, or student consultant (Cox & Sorenson, 2000).

The Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) at the University of Michigan offers a similar student consultation program called the Graduate Teaching Consultants Program, in which graduate student instructors are trained to provide peer consultation services to graduate student instructors across campus. The CRLT also offers discipline specific services for their College of Engineering (University of Michigan, 2011). In addition to providing student consultation services, Bryn Mawr College and Miami University also strive to engage students in dialogue about teaching and learning (Bryn Mawr College, 2011). For instance, Bryn Mawr

College partners students with faculty members on the development or redesign of courses or programs, while Miami University involves students as faculty seminar participants or associates (Cook-Sather, 2010; Cox & Sorenson, 2000). Programs like these serve as important benchmarks for other centers looking to involve students in their work.

Although no such formalized program exists at our institution, we pave the way for the student voice by setting up informal opportunities at our CTL, the Teaching, Learning, and Technology Center (TLTC) at Texas Tech University, and we hope to use these experiences to build future prospects for student involvement. While the scale of student involvement at our center may be simple, perhaps it serves as a realistic starting point for others that can serve to build a viable network of relationships across the university and cultivate dialogue between students, faculty, and staff. We have found students on our campus to be a valuable, untapped resource for faculty development, doing everything from marketing our center and presenting to our faculty, to even joining us as colleagues—and all in easy, cost-effective ways that any CTL could implement. More importantly, our experience has shown that involving undergraduates and graduate students at our CTL is a reciprocal relationship that keeps us grounded and in tune with the needs of today's students while giving them an opportunity to see a faculty perspective as they learn about teaching and learning.

## Students as Presenters, Panelists, and Audience Members

Students can play important roles in CTLs as panelists, presenters, and audience members. Over the years, our CTL has hosted multiple panel discussions featuring students as panelists. Topics have varied, but among the most well received have been discussions of academic dishonesty and student expectations. We have also called upon the unique expertise of graduate students as sole presenters and invited undergraduate students to sit in on sessions as audience members so that other faculty and instructors in attendance might benefit from their perspectives. Rich conversations ensue when students and faculty members are in the same room not as teacher and student but as joint participants in conversations about teaching and learning. Indeed, we often hear positive feedback from faculty members after a teaching and learning session featuring and/or involving students, and we even note a refreshed perspective as they have the opportunity to see and listen to each other differently.

### *Practical Benefits*

One benefit of offering the student perspective in sessions and providing opportunities for faculty and students to dialogue about teaching and learning in general is the growth experienced by all involved. Certainly research supports the broader-picture notion that partnering students and faculty members in conversations about teaching positively affects their relationships (Cook-Sather, 2008; Cox, 2001), and Sorenson (2001) clearly notes the wisdom in taking advantage of the student perspective to give feedback based on students' insight as learners. Cox (2001) suggests that the "faculty-student connection is two-way, with students learning about teaching at the college level and about life in academe" (p. 168). When asked to reflect on her understanding of faculty members based on her experiences after both working at our center and serving as a panelist, one of our student assistants expressed the connection identified by Cox (2001), saying, "I have been able to see how much work goes into creating a course and making course resources available. I think I have compromised on some things I want a professor to do now that I know how much time they spend managing the course. On the other side, I know how much more some professors could be doing to help students reach the end goals of the courses" (personal communication, March 25, 2011). Another student panelist said, "It was nice sharing our thoughts on education and experiences. It was very comforting that the attendees were very receptive to our comments and treated us like peers rather than just students" (personal communication, March 29, 2011).

Furthermore, as Brunner (2005) notes, the significance of getting feedback from the so- called front lines and listening to student perspectives about how to make content relevant simply cannot be measured. In one vibrant panel discussion, a highlight occurred when a student athlete admonished a senior faculty member, exhorting her to "step up and take control, girl" as she complained of classroom management problems. His authentic voice and follow-up with practical suggestions to hold students to higher standards may have carried more validity for this professor than those of her peers or staff from the CTL. After attending another student panel discussion, a senior faculty member and Dean at the university commented that "excellent teaching involves relationships—teacher with student, student with student, student with teacher—in the context of academic content and learning. Not to hear the student voice, in class or sessions on teaching, is to ignore half of the relationship. . . . Insights gained from this are very important and can help teachers be better facilitators" (personal communication, March 29, 2011). As we consider the depth in

the reflections from our student panelists and the openness to student feedback from the senior faculty member, we see that both benefitted from listening to each other and from the relational process of reflection.

Students can also offer a fresh source of skills and knowledge that can supplement the contributions of CTL staff or even faculty presenters. As noted, we frequently recruit graduate students to serve as experts at our center events. For example, a workshop in spring of 2011 focused on using LinkedIn to manage a faculty member or graduate student's online persona and to compile academic accomplishments in a public profile. The leader of this workshop is a graduate student with industry experience with Carnival Cruise Line, American Express, and an interactive marketing agency. His knowledge of social media is, frankly, beyond the expertise of the CTL's staff, and his credibility is high given his industry experience. Similarly, an undergraduate student assistant in our center has developed his own expertise using and supporting clicker technology. We asked this student to co-lead a workshop with an experienced faculty member who could talk about pedagogical issues with clickers and share his classroom experience while the student could address technical issues based on his support role and his experiences as a participant. Our students today have been tagged as digital natives (Prensky, 2001), and taking advantage of their technological expertise is an excellent way to connect faculty and involve students and certainly can help CTLs in the process.

Like many CTLs, we aim workshop presentations primarily at faculty members, instructional staff, and graduate teaching assistants; however, there is significant value in purposefully organizing sessions with a mixed audience of students and faculty. One common theme in the past few years for many CTLs has been the examination of generational characteristics of today's college students in an effort to connect faculty members with their students and possibly create greater understanding between the two groups. It has been said that categorizing Millennials has become a cottage industry in and of itself (Hoover, 2009), as evidenced by the work of teams such as Howe and Strauss (2000). Indeed, at our CTL, a popular session is titled "Teaching the Ne(x)t Generation." We have seen firsthand that when purposefully aiming this session at a mixed audience of students and faculty, the discussion of Millennials and their perceived stereotypes is much richer. We particularly appreciated watching the dynamic change from an engaged but fairly passive audience listening to the presenters discuss the research, to a student-faculty interaction focused on listening to each other's perspectives with a thoughtful discussion examining the relevancy of the research. That discussion even led a faculty member in attendance to do his own research on the topic and volunteer to lead a

follow-up session at our center.

### *Recommendations and Lessons Learned*

One realistic matter of consideration is how to find student participants for our center activities, and then, in turn, to encourage them to share honestly without fear of repercussion. We often start by canvassing our own student assistants and their peers. Several staff members in our center have academic appointments or volunteer with student organizations and have opportunities to interact with students outside of our center, although to avoid any potential conflict of interest we obviously do not ask for participation from students enrolled in a staff member's official classes. We also turn to teaching assistants enrolled in our graduate student development program (the TEACH Program) and ask for their help in recruiting students from their departments. We have purposefully sought student athletes and learned that it is important to clear their involvement with administrative representatives to make sure that their participation is within the bounds of NCAA regulations. In addition, we have solicited involvement from sororities, fraternities, and student government organizations. Perhaps the students that we are most eager to recruit are those who have struggled in college or who have experienced academic challenges. It is easy enough to find overachieving students who are willing to speak, but it is more difficult to encourage the voices of underachieving or at-risk students. We cannot emphasize enough the value of these students' contributions in considering how better to serve and retain them.

By seeking diversity among the student panelists, we gain insight into their needs. For example, one of our student panelists remarked, "I wish professors would understand that some students are not as passionate about everything as others, so they do the bare minimum. I would have appreciated more praise for going above and beyond, not doing the least I could to pass, and get more recognition" (personal communication, March 29, 2011). Another said, "I wish that professors understood that I'm a full-time student, with four 3000-level courses, one 2000 that thinks it's a 3000, and that I also work 20 hours a week. I try to be prepared for every class, but in some weeks where I have three papers due, I will be less prepared just because I had to budget my time. I don't want professors to think that I am using this as an excuse not to do assignments, but in some weeks, give me a little slack in classroom discussions if I haven't had time to develop a good position" (personal communication, March 25, 2011).

One key lesson we have learned is that having a non-faculty member facilitate discussion may be less daunting for student participants than a professor or well-known administrator would be. Our student ombudsman has volunteered to serve in this role, as have others from Student Affairs, and in our experience, these individuals seem to put students more at ease through what might be perceived as a more neutral stance. They also remind us to take care with confidentiality and tread carefully around topics that may be sensitive for students. It is worth the effort required to recruit students as participants, both as audience members and panelists, as their involvement deepens the dialogue in our sessions.

## Students as Marketers

We also continue to meet the needs of our center through the use of students in relationship marketing, or marketing activities that establish, develop, and maintain successful relational exchanges (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). As we are all aware, one of the most significant goals of any CTL is to establish a presence on campus and identify successful strategies for recruiting an audience for center events. Therefore, as part of our marketing strategy, we look to the promotional support, both solicited and unsolicited, that graduate students on our campus can offer, for as Neal and Peed-Neal (2010) assert, "Word of mouth promotion is perhaps the best strategy of all" (p. 114). As such, we have witnessed the powerful ripple effect that occurs at our center when graduate students whom we have come to know bring colleagues and faculty mentors with them to events, or help us advertise our programs and services. This marketing strategy furthers our goal of increased communication between faculty and students and encourages students to think about pedagogy as we remind them of the events we offer, and they spread the word among their colleagues and professors.

### *Practical Benefits*

The most tangible benefit of drawing on student marketing is the sheer growth it can bring to a CTL and to the awareness and discussion of faculty or graduate student development in general. As a result of strong relational marketing with students, for instance, we have witnessed vast expansion in our own graduate student development program, the Teaching Effectiveness and Career enHancement (TEACH) Program, which consists of a cohort of approximately 20 graduate instructors from various disciplines. In our annual application process, we are happy to

find that there are many departments on campus from which we always receive applicants. Each year new TEACH Fellows remark on the impact of recommendations from past Fellows on their decision to apply to our program; we know that these are direct results of word-of-mouth and relationship marketing. Similarly, over the years we have also seen an increase in our center's role in other graduate student development programs on campus ranging from departmental courses on college teaching to nationally recognized programs such as the Texas Tech University Howard Hughes Medical Institute Graduate Teaching Scholar (HHMI) and the Post-Doctoral Teaching Scholar programs housed in the Center for the Integration of Science Education and Research, and we know that our increased presence is due in part to word-of-mouth marketing by graduate students.

Likewise, we often find that many of those graduate students who frequent our center due to their participation in more formalized professional development programs like TEACH or HHMI, or who are encouraged to visit our center by other faculty or departmental advisors, also bring friends, colleagues, and even faculty with them to center workshops and conferences, and they often voluntarily continue their attendance in the future. For instance, we built a particularly strong relationship with one HHMI fellow, who soon became a staunch supporter of the center, actively recruiting faculty in her department to attend center events and even commenting that "all new faculty members should be attending sessions like these" (personal communication, April 29, 2008). Such unsolicited support has been a boost to our event numbers, and we therefore strive to build positive relationships with as many graduate students as possible. We have had particular success with a workshop series aimed at aspiring professors and co-sponsored by our graduate school, which has helped us meet graduate students from departments in which we have otherwise had limited connection.

Furthermore, those graduate students have also helped increase our consultation numbers, as they become more aware and take advantage of our services and then advertise them to others. One example that epitomizes the benefits of open dialogue and collaboration between students and faculty members occurred when a graduate student came in with her advisor for help developing a grading rubric for a heavily weighted project. Coming from a field that tends to rely on subjective critique, both of them were unfamiliar with rubrics and how they might enhance student learning. After meeting with a consultant to discuss the ins and outs of rubrics, this faculty member and his graduate student ultimately became very enthusiastic and thoughtful about the implementation of

rubrics into their assessment plan, and we now know them as regular visitors at our center.

We also pursue more directed center marketing by contacting graduate students we know and asking them to share the information with potentially interested colleagues. While these graduate student marketers are frequently TEACH Fellows, we have also established solid relationships with other graduate students who regularly attend our sessions and whom we know to be thoughtful about teaching and learning. Most recently, we called upon the networking power of a TEACH Fellow in the College of Human Sciences, among others, to help us promote a panel discussion on how to successfully work with or manage teaching assistants. Although this is an issue traditionally encountered by faculty members, because our center is housed in a large research university, many of our graduate students also work with teaching assistants. Therefore, in order to boost attendance at the session, we asked our TEACH Fellow to advertise it for us with her graduate student and faculty colleagues, because her college is known to employ a large number of teaching assistants, and promotion from a colleague would likely be a more powerful motivator than any other advertisement we might offer. We followed suit with other familiar graduate students known to work with teaching assistants, and we were pleased to see that the majority of our audience came at the request of friends and colleagues.

### *Recommendations and Lessons Learned*

As Neal and Peed-Neal (2010) discuss, and as our experience confirms, social relationships are critical to the success of one's center. To maintain a vital campus presence, and to ensure that there is no doubt about the necessity of our center, we strive to build and nurture relationships with graduate students, faculty, and administrators alike. While there is certainly a hierarchy among these different groups, it has been our experience that word travels quickly through the chain of command, and by advocating our strengths and staying in touch with instructors, regardless of their position, we are more effective in both our development and marketing initiatives. One of the simplest ways that we establish these relationships is by making a sincere effort to get to know the people who come to our center. By visiting with people before and after events and by attending as many of the sessions held at our busy center as possible, we endeavor to show how much we value these individuals as both teachers and colleagues and to show that we are here to help. The strength of the relationships we form with our patrons and our establishment of dialogue

between students, faculty, and administrators at our center is recognized in the continuation of these relationships and discussions outside of our center and in the sustained development of future faculty members who are increasingly reflective about all aspects of teaching and learning.

It is also important to bear in mind that although graduate students may initially come to a CTL in order to fulfill a class or departmental requirement, they are much more likely to continue their involvement and bring their colleagues if they are aware of the value in its services and the benefits of reflecting on the teaching and learning process. Some of our most successful TEACH Fellows first came to our center because an instructor required them to attend a teaching and learning workshop, and because of that initial positive experience, they chose to pursue their interest in teaching and learning through further involvement in our formal graduate student development program. By creating a welcoming and nurturing environment, and by making the extra effort to get to know new faces, CTL staff members can better position themselves to make a positive impression and form those relationships that are so crucial to building a campus network. After all, you never know who your next marketer might be.

## Students as Colleagues

Another way in which we involve students at our CTL is to embrace them as colleagues. Like many other universities and centers, we are fortunate to be able to employ undergraduate students as paid student assistants to help us with simple office tasks like filing and data entry. However, these students also assist us with more complex tasks, such as typing and categorizing handwritten student commentary gathered from small-group instructional diagnoses (SGIDs) that our consultants conduct. We also employ graduate students as peer consultants in the TEACH Program. Unlike other larger, more formalized student consulting programs, such as those at the University of Michigan or Brigham Young University, our center employs only one or two peer consultants at a time, whom we approach directly rather than soliciting applications. Our peer consultants typically work 10-20 hours per week (although we currently employ one full-time), and they are often TEACH Program alumni who not only know the program well, but have been on the other side of the consultation process as instructors and have good communication skills and a passion for teaching and learning. This high level of student involvement brings vast rewards for our student colleagues, who become well acquainted with the inner workings of the teaching and learning process,

as well as for our CTL and faculty.

### *Practical Benefits*

We have found our collegial relationships with students to be beneficial not only to the function of our center, but also to the professional development and personal growth of the students. Of course, working with undergraduates is an affordable way to lighten our substantial workload. However, even more valuable is the personal growth that those students get to experience as a result of working in our center. For our young student assistants who have never considered the faculty perspective in the classroom or thought purposefully about teaching and learning, witnessing the "behind the scenes" process of teaching as we consult with instructors and seeing the detailed student feedback that instructors must process proves to be an eye-opening experience. When typing up SGID commentary, for example, our student associates are frequently shocked by the sometimes-cruel things other students write about their instructors, and they gain new appreciation for the sensitivities and hard work of faculty striving to create positive classroom experiences. In an interview, one former student assistant commented, "Students take for granted everything a professor or student teacher does for a class, whether it be notes on PowerPoint, reviews for tests, etc. They are often busier than we are, as they are sometimes also students, and I think working 'behind the scenes' has given me more patience in all of my classes" (personal communication, March 22, 2011). Another former student assistant agreed, noting, "Working at the TLTC and especially with the TEACH program helped me as a student to appreciate the efforts professors take to improve their teaching. It's so easy to think professors don't care about their students, but I realized that is generally just not the case" (personal communication, March 22, 2011).

Cook-Sather (2010) also describes the value of involving undergraduate students in the educational process, noting the confidence they gain and their development as learners. Our student assistants likewise agreed that their involvement at the center made them "better student[s] as a whole" (personal communication, March 22, 2011). One even acknowledged that her CTL work indeed encouraged her to pursue more interaction with her own instructors, making her more comfortable to approach them and ask questions she might not normally ask (personal communication, March 22, 2011).

Working with graduate students as teaching consultants is, likewise, a constructive way to add much-needed staff to meet the growing needs

of our center. It is no secret that it is challenging to find experienced and well-qualified faculty developers, particularly in our isolated location near the panhandle of West Texas. Most faculty already employed by our university are not interested in leaving or changing their teaching and research positions to become full-time staff members, as our center positions dictate; others are not interested in relocating to our somewhat rural locale—a situation that many universities and CTLs might face. However, existing graduate students are often thrilled at the opportunity for extra income—especially if they have limited departmental funding or have reached the end of their teaching eligibility. More importantly, our graduate student consultants relish the chance to gain additional experience in the discipline of teaching and learning.

Because our graduate student peer consultants are usually already familiar with the TEACH Program and the consultation process, the amount of training required on our end is considerably reduced and the transition process for new consultants is also easier than bringing in an outsider. It is also beneficial to know that we are working with eager academics who have a genuine enthusiasm for teaching. Both Cox and Sorenson (2000) and Brunner (2005) emphasize the advantages of working with student consultants who have a particular interest and/or experience in teaching and learning. Cox and Sorenson, for instance, discuss recruiting undergraduate student consultants from education classes, while Brunner discusses choosing graduate student consultants who have been or will be teaching assistants, and who have the goal of teaching in the future.

Our peer consultants can share common experiences with other graduate student instructors, both as former Fellows, if applicable, and as current graduate students. One of our Fellows was struggling with her qualifying exams, for instance, and was able to commiserate with her peer consultant, who had recently tackled his. Our peer consultants can connect with graduate student instructors in much the same way that graduate student instructors can connect with undergraduate students—in that "I'm not so different from you" way that helps young instructors feel like they are not alone. One of our peer consultants also observed the collaborative relationship he experiences with the instructors he works with, remarking in an interview, "I feel a new sense of accessibility to them since we are actually on the same team with a goal of providing the highest quality undergraduate education" (personal communication, March 21, 2011). The process of consulting also re-ignites the passion for teaching, as our peer consultants continue to learn about and reflect on good pedagogy. "I can't wait to try this in the classroom!" our current peer consultant frequently declares.

Working with peer consultants has the added benefit of bringing new faculty developers into the fold, helping to grow the field of faculty development and build new interest. One of our current full-time consultants began her career as a peer consultant in our center, and she has gone on to contribute to the literature in the field and persist as a valuable member of our team.

### *Recommendations and Lessons Learned*

We continue to fine-tune the ways in which we work with both undergraduate and graduate students on a daily basis at our center. The most essential lesson we have learned about employing undergraduate student assistants is the importance of training in professionalism. Even though we frequently work with bright and mature college students, we have to remind ourselves that, for many of them, this is their first "office" job requiring them to interact with adults in a formal setting. Over the years we have discovered the need to have quiet conversations with several of our student assistants about issues we might never have anticipated. Some student assistants have needed guidance in phone etiquette (we had to inform them not to simply say "hello" when answering the phone as a representative of our center, for instance), and many have received direction about suitable office attire (which they learned does not include short shorts, tank tops, ripped jeans, or dingy t-shirts). We also ask the students in charge of SGID data to sign confidentiality agreements in order to convey the significance of the task and the sensitive nature of the feedback under their purview.

A major goal in training our student assistants, beyond the necessary office skills, is to communicate to them that they represent our center and our team as professionals to the university community and beyond, for as Neal and Peed-Neal (2010) confirm, "if the individual who answers the telephone is a student assistant who knows little about the mission, values, and purposes of the program or does not really care about the job, he or she could leave a very bad impression on callers. When your product is service, *every* member of your staff is a salesperson" (p. 102). We aim for our student assistants to realize the vital role they play in helping us maintain the relationships that keep our center thriving. More than that, we value the role we are playing in mentoring these students and preparing them for their future lives as professionals.

We have come to realize that we also serve as role models of collegiality for our student assistants. We strive to include our student assistants in all of our center activities, both professional and recreational, and look

for opportunities to help them grow. One of our former student assistants remarked, "I just appreciated always being welcomed into every activity by anyone at the TLTC. . . . Every time I run into someone with a student assistant job on campus and compare my experience to theirs, mine is always more rewarding. Working at the TLTC was amazing!" (personal communication, March 22, 2011). Another student assistant commented, "I didn't think I could enjoy a job in college as much as I have! I am thoroughly happy to come in every day and help with whatever is needed. Everyone is so genuine here and makes me feel comfortable" (personal communication, March 22, 2011). We are glad to know that our undergraduate assistants learn more than just data entry skills; they also gain an awareness of what it means to be considerate and professional colleagues as well as thoughtful students. Our relationships with these trusted students also helps keep us in touch with the student culture and experience.

Working with busy graduate students has taught us the importance of clear communication and thoughtful scheduling. We have employed both part-time and full-time graduate student peer consultants, both of whom require exceptional skills for juggling multiple priorities. Part-time peer consultants might be cobbling together several jobs to make ends meet on top of their duties as graduate students. For these student consultants, who are typically dashing in and out of the center, we have found that an organized calendar that can be shared with the entire staff, such as Outlook, is an invaluable source of clear communication. We also ask our part-time consultants to establish a regular work schedule each semester so that we know when to expect their presence in the center.

Conversely, full-time peer consultants might struggle with working eight hours a day, then going home to face the obligations of their lives as students. For all of our graduate student peer consultants, we strive to help them prioritize their obligations and emphasize that they should not neglect the responsibilities of their graduate programs. We want them to succeed and finish their degrees, so we often find ourselves encouraging and reminding them to take some extra time to work on a dissertation, meet with an advisor, or prepare for exams. For either part-time or full-time peer consultants, it is therefore helpful to lay out expectations from the very beginning, from the organization and communication skills required to the way priorities should be determined.

While the peer consultants under our employ are usually former TEACH Fellows, and thus are already familiar with our graduate student development program, they are not familiar with the faculty development literature and still require training and assistance with the transition from

instructor to consultant. One of our peer consultants, for instance, noted the challenge he initially felt in separating himself from his own teaching experience, commenting, "It can be very easy to project your teaching experience on the individual. . . . I sometimes have to remind myself that everyone has a different experience in the classroom and that everyone is at a very different point in his or her professional development" (personal communication, March 21, 2011). To provide some initial training, we introduce our new peer consultants to the work of some of the most influential scholars in the field, such as McKeachie and Svinicki (2010), Chickering and Gamson (1987), Brinko and Menges (1997), and Angelo and Cross (1993) before the semester begins, if possible. We also mentor them on our consultation philosophy, sharing feedback models with them, walking them through the process, and offering our individualized feedback on their trial efforts. We even accompany them on their early classroom observations and SGIDs so that we can collaborate with them on the feedback process as desired.

For centers without an extensive graduate student development program from which to recruit peer consultants, trusted faculty recommenders can be an excellent source for finding outstanding graduate student instructors with an interest in teaching, as Cox and Sorenson (2000) also suggest. As previously noted, education classes could be another potential source, although we have found that working with consultants from a variety of disciplines also adds richness to the services and perspectives we can offer. Similarly, faculty and student connections also help supply us with trustworthy undergraduate student assistants, directing us towards students with known skills and a good work ethic.

## Conclusions

Whether it is in relation to marketing initiatives or opportunities to dialogue with faculty about teaching and learning, engaging students in the daily operations of our center has increased our ability to better serve our campus as well as our mission of improving undergraduate education. While student involvement is often a neglected resource in faculty development (Cox & Sorenson, 2000), our experiences bear out that it is easily implemented with great impact for our CTL, faculty, and students alike. Indeed, partnerships of all kinds play a substantial role in faculty development, as the literature corroborates (Cox & Sorenson 2000; Neal & Peed-Neal, 2010; Sweet, Blythe & Phillips, 2009). Through our work with students, our CTL facilitates mutually positive, reciprocal relationships between faculty and students that improve the teaching and learning

process for all involved. Faculty are able to hear more readily the voices of their students, and students learn to reflect on themselves as learners, teachers, and future professionals. Above all, by involving students in the work of our center, we open the door for a more open and thoughtful environment for teaching and learning in general.

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