A Peer-Based, Dissemination Model of Professional Faculty Development: A Story

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The goal of the peer-based, dissemination approach to faculty development is to have the faculty's experiences and knowledge about teaching, student learning, scholarship, and academic life become more open, public, and available to colleagues, and to be used to build up both a body of knowledge about teaching and learning and a tradition of open exchange and support among the faculty. The author's narrative is a practical meditation on a dramatic change in one faculty center's theory and practice of professional faculty development, the Center for Teaching, Learning & Scholarship (CTLS) at Georgia Southern University. His story has implications for faculty development and for the creation, or re-creation, of faculty development centers and programs.

A Beginning: Beyond Problems

This reflective essay presents some acquired experience and knowledge about a particular model of professional faculty development, a model that has greatly invigorated faculty centers at two different universities and exposed the tacit assumptions and theory behind a different, long-standing, common model for faculty centers. While its short- and long-range effects have yet to be systematically researched, it is plausible that the model described here can be generalized to a variety of higher education institutions, to their professional faculty development needs and aspirations, and to their organizational structures and processes.

The model to be discussed is facilitated by a campus-wide faculty center

with its own budget and personnel. However, the nature of the model makes it relevant to other localized faculty development structures and programs (whether institution-wide or within designated colleges or units). And while funding is needed for some aspects of the model, many of its benefits can be attained with small staffing and limited budgets. Most (but not all) of the model's manifestations have been in interdisciplinary contexts, but it can also be applied to disciplinary programs or cohorts.

In the creation and development of faculty centers around the United States over the last 50 years, one common approach adopted by many centers is based upon an assumption that faculty development is largely about providing answers or skills to faculty about teaching problems or topics. As a result, those centers enacted an instructional, problem-centric approach with the tacit belief that pedagogical or course design experts would provide faculty with the information, knowledge, and tools to do what they had not learned in their graduate programs or previous college teaching. The usual programs offered by such faculty centers are workshops by center staff on all sorts of pedagogical topics. These tend to be one-time events with limited or no follow up and, thus, with self-limiting outcomes. Workshops lack the sustained attention and work over time that is possible through faculty collaborations (see Tagg, 2010). While faculty are certainly learners, they are such sophisticated learners that the traditional workshop model of faculty development seldom results in fundamental changes or innovations. It certainly falls short of creating communities of faculty practice. What this model does do is identify a faculty center as problem-centric without framing that function in the larger context of overall faculty pedagogical and scholarly knowledge, experience, and wisdom.

A faculty center does not emerge fully formed, but has a genesis and is affected by both the needs of faculty, the strengths of the center's personnel, and the organizational model that develops (whether by plan or over time). Sorcinelli (2002) advises newer centers to think big, but start small, and develop a focused program over a period of years. The advantage of having a specific organizational model in mind from early in the history of a faculty center is that such a center's autobiography has a lens through which to create and interpret the faculty development paths, potentially avoiding some trial and error dead ends or short-lived directions. As it seems, centers tend to develop a structure based upon numerous factors, such as local culture and needs and the stated desires or needs for specific programs and individualized services. Wright (2002) puts it this way: "Indeed, an examination of faculty development programs in different institutions reveals that the one consistency is the variation among

them" (p. 24). Yes and no. In spite of such variations, a general pattern for centers appears to emerge from all of the local settings and stories, a model where providing short-term, targeted topics for faculty is the norm (as epitomized by the "workshop") and where the center tends to focus on addressing problem areas or topics (as identified by the center's staff or from faculty surveys/feedback).

Having an intentional model or "conceptual framework" allows a center to both include certain directions and activities and exclude others. Otherwise, a center may assume a drift mentality where offerings are based upon "what other centers are doing, or on serendipity" (Kuhlenschmidt, Weaver, & Morgan, 2010, p. 25). Just as faculty developers advocate for the role of objectives in course construction, "a faculty development center can benefit from a conceptually structured program to guide the focus of services" (Kuhlenschmidt et al., 2010, p. 26). The model or conceptual framework is the rudder that allows steering to occur to avoid the shallows and take advantage of prevailing winds. What is such a framework? According to Kuhlenschmidt et al. (2010), "It is a coherent, selective vision relevant to the particular situation that guides the faculty development program over time and through changing trends" (p. 27). Without such a model, the organization of the center and the participation in its programming remain unfocused, even scattered.

One of the stressors on a center is to constantly involve faculty in its activities, services, and events. Fink (2002) explains that certain practices need to guide centers in their involvement of faculty:

> First, the instructional or faculty developer must produce an informed yet creative vision of what is needed and what will be accepted at his or her institution. Second, program activities should meet the needs of local faculty and complement each other in a productive way. Third, one must find ways of connecting and integrating the program with the needs and activities of other persons and units within the institution. Finally, the program staff need to do whatever is necessary to acquire and maintain the skills and knowledge necessary to support the program. (p. 43)

Even this advice is adaptable to various models for centers (as it should be). The purpose of this article is not to funnel such good advice into a common mold for a center, but simply to confirm, *a posteriori*, that what I am calling "the peer-based dissemination model" (PBD) can encompass those practices and go beyond them into the actualization of a model that has been experienced as highly responsive, collaborative, and socializing. PBD also does something that other approaches may not fully utilize: ex-

perientially emphasize the professional responsibilities of faculty towards one another. In the Preface to *Faculty Development for Student Achievement: The QUE Project*, Henry says that "Faculty Development at its best invites faculty members to reflect on their professional obligations to their academic disciplines and to their students" (2006, p. xiii). PBD—and not necessarily only that model—provides immediate opportunities for faculty professionally to support to each other. That support gives PBD its vitality, scope, and sense of rejuvenation. Faculty become the learners, and faculty development is the learning process. Faculty unite as teachers, students, and storytellers among themselves. "Experts" still have a role, but the *de facto* expertise of faculty is the point of origin and departure.

From Margin to Mainline

An intentionally peer-based approach to faculty development is fully compatible with having faculty centers achieve greater institutional roles, what Schroeder and Associates (2011) call "coming in from the margins." Faculty in congruent teams can, while focusing upon teaching and learning issues, simultaneously and collectively help the faculty center/program become an agent for organizational change at the institution. This participation in organizational development has not historically been central to the missions of centers that focused upon instructional development through workshops, consultations, speakers, and the like. Such an approach may or may not impact organizational development. But when dynamic groups of faculty work together, and their local interests merge with institutional goals or aspirations, they may become connected to the larger whole and stimulate desired change.

But to be a change agent means going beyond the habitual niche of faculty development as catalyst for instructional development, as important as that niche is: "Significant expansion of TLCs in the 1980s through the 1990s took place when instructional development demands permeated all types of institutions" (Schroeder, 2011, p. 25). Being a change agent means reconceptualizing how faculty development programs operate within the context of the whole, complex institution and how the nature of the faculty development program can be attuned to major institutional strategic planning. To remain in the status quo of an individualistic-only approach to faculty development risks having the program be pigeonholed into a peripheral place in the organization.

A metaphor for moving from private to open places, from isolated to united, is the "teaching commons" as described by Huber and Hutchings (2005) in their book *The Advancement of Learning: Building the Teaching*

Commons. The teaching commons is an ideal that remains far too uncommon. Peer-based development is a means actively to work toward making such a vision an experiential "place" and not just a utopian metaphor. "The teaching commons is a space where people can have access to each other's work, but it is not a 'commons' in the sense of being all the same. . . . Its vibrancy, like that of a city's, lies in the number, variety, and distinctiveness of its neighborhoods" (p. 71). Let's take a closer look at the neighborhoods and the city of our model.

A PBD approach to faculty development begins at a point where the workshop and services model seldom, if ever, reaches: an expressed appreciation of already-existing faculty professional knowledge united with organizational embodiment and applications of that knowledge. As it engages faculty in active participation with colleagues about the teaching and learning process, a PBD model focuses directly upon an institution's regard for effective teaching and significant learning in and across all disciplines. PBD, then, can be defined as collegial, interdisciplinary faculty teams working together over time to address topics of shared concern, applying the results of that work to their own courses and work with students, and disseminating the results of those applications to colleagues. But PBD can be either formal in structure, like the traditional faculty learning communities (FLCs) with their well-organized goals, procedures, and outcomes, or more informal, with less strictly defined outcomes.

Perhaps a better definition of PBD that encompasses more of its potential forms is to see it as a dialogic community of inquiry. This model realizes and recognizes the great amount of teaching, learning, and scholarship experience and knowledge of an institution's faculty, as well as creates venues for those faculty to learn from each other while collaboratively engaging in new learning. The model also allows for surprise and unplanned outcomes that can be both directly and indirectly related to teaching itself. Thus, PBD begins, not with what faculty don't know or what problems they have, but with a systematic appreciation of what they do know, individually and collectively. Calling forth knowledge that has often remained untold in the context of the academic community, PBD has some of the explorer and artist about it so that pedagogical forays are open to both analysis and poetic interpretation. PBD can make things happen by resisting cultural energies long in place and by transcending models and paradigms that an academic culture decides have lost their prosaic and poetic rhyme and reason.

A word should be given here to the relation between FLCs and PBD. Generally, FLCs are manifestations of PBD, and PBD can be expressed in various forms, one being FLCs. Milt Cox and his extensive FLC website

at Miami University (http://www.units.muohio.edu/flc/index.php) have long promoted the value of FLCs and, thus, of PBD. What this essay describes is an approach that includes FLCs and makes them the benchmark for other kinds of faculty social and intellectual collaboration. Another way to say it is that FLCs epitomize PBD, while PBD encompasses and transcends FLCs. The idyllic goal of PBD is for the entire campus to be a quasi-FLC.

PBD can be symbolized by the banyan tree, which became our Center for Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship's (CTLS) logo and speaks metaphorically about its vision, identity, and activities The banyan tree's branches send down aerial roots that, when they reach the ground, take root. As they thicken, the roots support the branches, which then grow and send down more roots that enable the tree to spread in amazing ways. Such roots can, themselves, eventually become new trunks and a single banyan tree may have many trunks. A large banyan tree can protect people from rain and sun under a shady canopy. Children can swing from its roots. It has been called the "tree that walks." I like to think that our PBD model is like the banyan tree in its compelling growth, restfulness, and restiveness. As the tree grows, the experiences of teaching, learning, and scholarship take deeper root; the branches of wisdom about teaching and student learning reach out by sending down new roots of teaching experiments, creative activities, and assessed learning outcomes that reach the ground. Some roots are FLCs, others are faculty book groups, others are writing circles, and the like. The canopy of professional faculty development spreads as those roots deepen and the tree becomes much more than had been imagined. The spirit of the tree's growth infuses and transforms the academic culture. The banyan becomes and is the faculty's nexus, but it doesn't stop there. As a growing, walking, learning tree, its roots provide learning ground for the faculty's students who are the recipients of the faculty's experience of growing with the tree. In fact, the faculty growth *is* the tree.

To highlight this dynamic, our CTLS adopted a Vision Statement that begins with realizing and recognizing the existing achievements of faculty as a solid trunk/root from which new growth emerges:

> The Center for Teaching, Learning & Scholarship appreciates and respects the experience, knowledge, and wisdom of Georgia Southern faculty and is an enthusiastic persevering advocate, agent, and catalyst for the faculty's unprecedented professional development in teaching, learning, and scholarship.

This statement emphasizes that the CTLS is not mainly problem-central and problem-centric, where faculty with problems can come for solutions.

Of course, helping faculty with pedagogical issues was (and still is) part of the Center's mission, but it didn't seem inspiring or productive to advertise ourselves in that way. Such a statement would imply that only for faculty with existing teaching problems, or only when faculty encountered teaching problems, should the CTLS come to mind.

History and Change

It seems fair to say that in the first half of its history, the CTLS was problem-centric. It did not have a full-time director, but a faculty member who served half time with a small staff. When that person left the university, another faculty member served as interim director. Eventually, for 2004-2005, the administration decided to hire its first full-time director. However, after one year, that director decided to leave. In 2005-2006 there was no director at all, with the staff of four people (secretary, director of technology, and two instructional designers) largely doing their own things under the general supervision of the associate provost, who has the administrative responsibility for the CTLS. Looking back, that situation may have reinforced each staff member doing their work in semi-isolation from each other. There was not a vision for the CTLS's future.

Beginning in 2006 with my hiring as the new, full-time director with the PBD model I had developed as the director of a center elsewhere, the CTLS looked to reinvent itself as the main campus advocate for a unified, active, and contemplative approach to faculty development. The academic administration, with the hiring, expressed its leadership and desire to see what PBD would bring. PBD represented a new direction, a risk, with no guarantees of success. The risk was in changing the very tradition of the CTLS and advocating for levels of collaborative, faculty participation that had never existed in the Center's previous iteration. Would faculty respond to the new model and directions, or would they want the workshop model to continue? Would the PBD model even get off the ground at this state university? Or was the timing propitious? Had the history of the Center been such that now was the time for a new birth after a long labor? The old model had its advocates and its time, but it may have unknowingly created a longing for something other, something more.

Not only was the CTLS changing, but the University itself was in a process of large change. It was reclassified as a Doctoral Research University after a century of seeing itself as an institution where teaching was central. And the University was going through steady growth in the size of its student body and faculty. Very large numbers of new faculty were being hired each year. The university developed institutional aspi-

rations to move beyond its regional comprehensive university identity and become a national comprehensive university. The re-focusing of the CTLS was part of a larger dynamics of growth and change. A poetics of self-identity moved through a revitalized historical awareness of the institution's story.

The continuing CTLS staff seemed to accept with enthusiasm the PBD model, even though it would mean some large changes in their work responsibilities. The staff had largely done individual consultations and provided singular workshops to small numbers of faculty, and I don't think we fully knew how each person's work and responsibilities would change, just that they would change. At the start of this transitional phase, I described to the staff the PBD model and its positive results at my previous university. I think my talk of significant faculty participation increased the staff's curiosity and energy—reinforced by the fact that they were also probably tired of doing the same kinds of things over and over again. However, as a former CTLS staff member, Steve Bonham, describes below, there were some doubts:

> When we first started offering FLCs [Faculty Learning Communities] and RRs [Reading Roundtables] some five years ago (2006) to promote change—by "facilitating exchange" of concerns/ideas/potential solutions by faculty with a common interest—I must admit I was skeptical. I felt that a more narrowly focused proactive approach—like we used in our hands-on teaching with technology . . . workshops would be far superior. . . . I was wrong. While we still offer "proactive" workshops and seminars on instructional design, assessment, and a variety of related topics, faculty ARE indeed adult learners, autonomous! And they prefer a "just in time teaching" approach as they discover (often incidentally(!) in RRs and/or FLCs) an idea/issue of relevance and often put to immediate use in their academic careers. (personal communication, March 2011)

Perhaps the STLS staff were feeling as isolated in their faculty development work (silos) as faculty were in their teaching. Subsequently, I also described the model to the faculty as mining (and minding) the riches of the faculty, creating a more collegial academic culture, and leading faculty to experiment and apply teaching and learning innovations and ideas in their classes and other work with students. By having faculty work closely together on a regular basis, they could discuss teaching, learning, and the effects of various teaching practices on students. A goal of PBD is to open the doors to teaching and learning and have teaching become a common and desired topic of faculty conversations in multiple

contexts and venues.

This was easier said than done. We were dabbling at the edges of organizational change, and academic institutions can be as automatically resistant to change as any other type of organization. We needed to talk, but we needed to do more than talk, too. What kind of talk, though? Here again, the poetic and metaphorical emerge to say that faculty development is more than solving problems. It would be presumptuous, not appreciative, to announce to the faculty that change, at last, was at hand. Change in itself is not necessarily a good. So the PBD model had to be about much more than doing things differently. It had to be about informing, forming, and transforming. Metaphors and paradigm shifts transform. Thus, we talked in direct language, but we also spoke through symbols, like the banyan tree, and through stories.

As Lee Shulman (1993), the former president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, says, teaching is not only a personal, individual experience but also a public one: "We must change the status of teaching from private to community property" (p. 6). Traditions of individualism in teaching develop and hold fast. Fears about having problems in teaching can obstruct seeking advice. Many faculty do not talk much with colleagues about their teaching—a strange quietness among people who talk a lot for a living. There is a need to bring the truth-telling, tradition-creating aspects of story telling and to uncover the fruitful, but all too hidden, experiences of faculty in working with students.

The Hallway

There is a story of a faculty member complaining that students in class are unresponsive, passive, and quiet. In response, a colleague said to watch those same students in the hallway before and after class. They are often talking, lively, and active. What happens once they walk into the classroom? In some ways it is analogous with faculty and discussions about quietness in the classroom. A student may hesitate to ask a question or to admit to having a problem with a topic. A professor may hesitate to ask colleagues about a teaching issue, especially about having a problem in teaching a class or students. According to Bass (1999) in his "The Scholarship of Teaching: What's the Problem?"

> In scholarship and research, having a "problem" is at the heart of the investigative process; it is the compound of the generative questions around which all creative and productive activity revolves. But in one's teaching, a "problem" is something you don't want to have, and if you have one, you probably want to

> fix it. Asking a colleague about a *problem* in his or her research
> is an invitation; asking about a problem in one's teaching would
> probably seem like an accusation. (Bass, 1999)

But what happens when faculty are in the "hallway"? What happens when a venue is created where faculty are together in a relaxed setting and the discussion turns to teaching? This is when the private thoughts and concerns about teaching can emerge. Stories begin to be told and recognized by others. A group of professionals is learning about and from the knowledge and experience of one another. The "hallway," seemingly, has arrived. But the hallway never really left. It has been there, but routines, habituations, fears, and busyness clogged it. Maybe as we walk the hallway there is a professional tendency to get yanked, or to yank ourselves, into our offices so often that we eventually forget that the hallway is more than a way to get to our desks; it is the piazza of professional life, the public area that gives relief to the private dimensions of our work. If we seldom leave our offices except for classes, departmental or committee meetings, and fire drills, the hallway loses its spirit and becomes only a corridor. Instead of a place for potential luminal moments, the hallway becomes completely functional and vapid. When a faculty development program creates venues for the mystery, art, and science of teaching and learning to flourish, the "hallway" is reborn.

The CTLS itself is to model the model and be a "hallway" among ourselves. As the director, I am very pleased and fortunate to say that the CTLS staff of Judith Longfield, Patricia Hendrix, Stacy Kluge, and Steve Bonham have been good at "hallwaying" the CTLS so that it can create "hallways" for faculty. The staff's work has been crucial and instrumental in adapting, promoting, and facilitating PBD.

Hallwaying is ongoing and needs be so. To paraphrase Newton, a hallway at rest tends to remain at rest, but a hallway in motion tends to remain in motion. The secret is barely a secret: View faculty development as largely a hallway activity (with a touch of the luminal?). Better yet, faculty development is the hallway where thinking out loud is allowed and acknowledged. The hallway is both the map and the journey. It is a rite of passage from one paradigm or metaphor to another. The hallway conveys the talk about PBD among the faculty themselves so that it comes from the faculty themselves.

The CTLS took the PBD leap right away in the 2006-2007 academic year. After I became director, I requested to meet with many keys academic and campus leaders to introduce both myself and the PBD model. We at the CTLS know that our work depends upon university leaders and faculty developing trust in and respect for us as people and colleagues and

coming to find us and our work competent, professional, effective, and relevant. But we didn't have a long time to explain the PBD model with the fall semester starting. Invitations were e-mailed to the faculty to form RLCs and Reading Roundtables (faculty book discussion groups). Writing Circles (academic and creative) formed, along with a group whose only intent was intellectual stimulation, the Thinkaloud Club. PBD would sink or swim. The staff would, of course, still provide individual consultations and some workshops. Would the faculty respond? What if they didn't? What if they did?

I have been hired by two universities to jump-start existing programs where "beating the bushes" to get faculty to participate had been too common. And we all know that trying to attract faculty to faculty development activities is a big source of stress. Can e-mail alone do it? Probably not. While faculty we have surveyed indicate e-mail is their preferred way to learn about Center activities, e-mail is also a bane in their lives. Too little communication and people don't know about it and don't come; too many e-mails and people get tired of hearing about it and don't come—another part of the faculty developer's balancing act.

Before e-mails (or posters around campus, or flyers sent to departments or to all individual faculty, or website info, or calendars in newsletters, or even the "back-in-the-day" handwritten note or invitation) must come the vision and goals that you want the attending faculty to consider and embrace. PBD in the "hallway" was a large part of that vision. Without a vision, faculty development struggles and may grind to a virtual halt. It is better to invite faculty to a really good activity and have a modest number of participants than to invite them to an average or mediocre activity and have a large turnout. The good activity will foster growth of the banyan tree; the average activity will desiccate its roots.

We at the CTLS are not marketers, but we have to learn to formulate and communicate our activities in such a way that fingers itchy to hit the delete button will at least pause to find out more. Thus, our invitations were preceded by meetings with campus leaders and placed within a larger context for the kinds of new things being offered. The hallway was being introduced and the dialogical inquiry began, modeling PBD. The PR needed to attract attention while being concise and accurate. After we did what we thought we could do, the nature of the program became its own voice, and participants helped in the tree taking its first steps. The key was uniting the banyan tree with the hallway

Realizing the Present and Future

Our staff sent out invitations for the formation of faculty learning communities and reading roundtables. There was not a large operating budget, so all participation would be without any stipends, and the program would have to be cost-effective. Nonetheless, the responses began to come in. Dozens, scores of faculty joined these activities that lasted for either a full academic year (FLCs) or a semester (RRs). That first semester three RRs formed with 29 people, and that first year there were 12 FLCs with 77 members. Books that the FLCs read included the following: *What the Best College Professors Do,* Ken Bain; *The Academic Portfolio: A Practical Guide to Documenting Teaching, Research, and Service,* Peter Seldin & Elizabeth Miller; *Team-Based Learning: A Transformative Use of Small Groups in College Teaching,* Larry Michaelsen, Dee Fink, & Arletta Bauman Knight; *Building Online Learning Communities: Effective Strategies for the Virtual Classroom* (2nd ed.), Rena M. Palloff & Keith Pratt; *How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci: Seven Steps to Genius Every Day,* Michael Belb; *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching,* Susan Ambrose, Michael Bridges, Michele DiPietro, Marsha Lovett, & Marie Norman; and *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom* (2nd ed.), John C. Bean.

We now had a new kind of "problem": scheduling for many people and meetings. I don't think the invitations we sent were so captivating and intriguing that faculty were rendered helpless but to attend. That large initial response was not a surprise to me, because the same sort of thing had happened when I introduced PBD at another school, but it must have been surprising to the CTLS staff not used to this kind of "problem." We have not yet done a research study of PBD to find out why it seems to connect with many (but certainly not all) faculty. My interpretation is a simple one, just as PBD is a relatively simple idea. Most faculty had long wanted to become college faculty, and, for some, it is a dream job. And most faculty really like working with students and want to be effective and successful in that work. However, a skewed academic tradition of pedagogical/andragogical individualism and isolation had led many faculty either to repeat the way they were taught for their whole careers or, for those not satisfied with that pattern, to use a trial and error approach to doing things differently. Why? Because most of us did not intentionally learn much in our graduate study about how people/students learn because the experience and knowledge of the good and best teachers among us remain largely inaccessible to others, hidden by that same strict individualism and isolation regarding teaching.

For many of us, the doors of teaching and learning were not only closed, they were sometimes locked shut. Neither new faculty, nor anyone else, had a key. Perhaps a few faculty would discuss teaching with each other, but that may have been the exception. To seek to improve one's teaching was often an unknowing recapitulation of what many others had done and were doing, all in isolation from each other. For instance, how many academic departments or programs make a point of visiting each other's classes for formative purposes to learn from colleagues? How many programs make pedagogy or pedagogical questions and research a regular aspect of their departmental meetings? How many departments or colleges have created ways for faculty to mentor one another about teaching and students' learning? The key to PBD is its potential to be a matrix and make ongoing connections among subjects. The narrative of PBD is a story of dialogic and collaborative strings forming a kind of kaleidoscopic tapestry where faculty at any point of their development, or career, can experience the creative energies of the PBD matrix. There is planning involved, but there remain threads of spontaneity and even mystery, and those threads can resonate together. The walls of the siloes evaporate, leaving space and place for the matrix to fertilize the academic culture, step by step.

I think the reason the faculty responded as they did in 2006, and have ever since, is that the CTLS was portraying itself, through PBD, not as a menagerie (or random conglomeration) of services and sessions that had accumulated over time in response to the latest, specific, perceived needs, but as a tangible and intangible "center" for faculty, a faculty's center. Many of those faculty may have never been invited to form interdisciplinary, working teams with colleagues, and the idea of it tapped into a longing to talk and listen about teaching, to confer practically with others, over time, and to apply what is learned to one's own needs and circumstances. The CTLS invited faculty to hang around our figurative banyan tree. When they did, it was like recognizing what had been obscured and hidden in plain sight. If this all was brought about by the CTLS staff's monumental wisdom, or by Georgia Southern's faculty being a rare collection of academics, I'd tell you so. But the CTLS and our faculty are, I don't think, so terminally unique.

I could trivialize the PBD model by saying, "Build it and they will come," but it is more like "they will come because they want to build it." PBD respects different institutional contexts while allowing faculty to intentionally build circles within circles. One faculty member put it this way: "My experience as a member of a faculty learning community over several years was enjoyable for many reasons including the opportu-

nity it offered to interact with colleagues across colleges. It was obvious that we developed a certain level of trust with each other that, in turn, promoted sharing and learning. The outcomes included several campus presentations about assessing student learning" (V. Alberto, personal communication, March 2011). Another put it like this: "It is easy to get overwhelmed when working on a project. I find that the FLCs and Round-tables motivate me and get me excited about teaching and SOTL activities again. It's like an emotional resort, relaxing and invigorating" (D. Hale, personal communication, March 2011). Still another said, "Working in a multi-disciplinary group to examine SoTL practices provided a broader perspective and bridged traditional barriers. For example, I worked in a group with faculty from the Colleges of Education, Science & Technology, and Health & Human Sciences; seeking a common ground to describe and disseminate SoTL practices helped all of us clarify our message" (L. Regassa, personal communication, March 2011).

In February 2011 we had an external evaluation of our Center. From that report emerged some anonymous faculty and administrators' voices about the experience of the PBD approach:

- It creates a space for possibilities.

- It is a 21st century approach to providing quality programming and instruction.

- It creates opportunities for faculty from different colleges to meet each other and exchange creative ideas.

- [CTLS staff] consciously provide a venue for faculty to learn from each other across disciplines or schools. I would not know the people I know on campus had I not attended CTLS events.

- I've personally learned a great deal from peers and more experienced faculty as a new academic—and about the dynamics of both on-ground and on-line teaching.

The external reviewer summarized the comments she heard this way:

> Many felt that CTLS had exceeded the expectations over the past five years, being more substantive and intellectually rich than many had expected. . . . There was broad agreement that GSU is a much better place to work with the CTLS present, and there were many different people who felt that CTLS provides the most appealing and inclusive community for faculty members

> at GSU. It is perceived as a welcoming place with a reputation for including all faculty members and treating them with respect.

Over the last four years, we have developed ways to use online schedulers to find when members of a faculty group can meet (and sometimes not everyone can), and then a first meeting is scheduled and a room at the CTLS reserved. At this first meeting, often with a CTLS staff member present, the group starts to make decisions about its schedule, goals, facilitation of the group, and the like. That initial meeting is to help push the boat away from the dock while being sure the group has its oars, anchor, rudder, supplies, and navigation map. We have a large calendar on a wall in the CTLS's hallway where meetings for the semester can be listed by Patricia, our administrative assistant. Sometimes we have multiple faculty groups meeting simultaneously in the Seminar Room, Conference Room, and/or kitchen, and the place is alive and feels like a "center." Steve used an online scheduler to arrange for the first meetings of the various groups (continuing groups could do their own scheduling), but it still was a complex, tedious, and necessary task, one that we were pleased to have as a "problem."

For four years, and into the fifth, the number of groups and faculty in these and other activities has been large, sometimes very large (around 80 faculty in RRs or 75 faculty in FLCs during a year). The overall participation level has nearly tripled, and the percentage of the faculty participating in some aspect of the CTLS program has probably nearly tripled as well (those stats were not kept earlier). What happened was that hundreds of faculty participated in these ongoing faculty groups during the first years of the PBD model's implementation. An additional major benefit of the PBD model has been the socialization it encourages among faculty, which changes their "sense" of being a member of the academic community and raises the enjoyment level of faculty development. According to a faculty member, the peer model "gives me an opportunity to talk about teaching and learning with other professors, as it creates a space for a dialogue where professors from different disciplines share their own experience. This helps me become a more reflective teacher. . . " (D. Sturges, personal communication, March 2011). While faculty groups work on and discuss important topics, it has become normal around the CTLS facilities to hear laughter and enthusiastic conversations.

Together, faculty at our University have thousands of years of teaching and scholarship experience. They have guided, mentored, or taught tens to hundreds of thousands of students over the years and decades. Could some of that knowledge be gleaned here and now? That is the essential

basis for the PBD model. The CTLS was available for working with faculty with any teaching problems or difficulties, but it needed to be framed in a more spirited, "hallway" context. There was something so obvious that it was fairly hidden and latent: All those faculty had a cosmos of acquired and applied knowledge about teaching and student learning. Much of that knowledge was not theory-based or even systematically organized and recognized by the people themselves. But it was there. But where was it? Was it destined to be lost (except to students and a few colleagues)?

One way we have learned to glean this knowledge is to encourage and structure dissemination to colleagues, by the faculty themselves, of things that are especially valuable to them. Since the model's implementation, such dissemination to colleagues has been ongoing. One form it took was the "Faculty Series," where faculty gave presentations to other faculty across campus as well as to FLCs planning activities, gave presentations or posters, talked about their work in our annual *FLC Forum* publication, and so on. For instance, the annual *FLC Forum* recognizes the people and work of FLCs and may recruit others to the FLC program. It is published electronically and in paper, with copies mailed to faculty and administrators. (The 2010 *FLC Forum* is available at http://academics.georgiasouthern. edu/ctls/Publications/FLC_Forum/FLCForum_2010.pdf.)

Throughout human history, the most profound human stories have often been paradoxical, clashing, and unitive of opposites or contraries. We too have had a paradoxical story on our hands. Faculty who were heretofore "too busy" to attend short workshops or similar events were not too busy to participate in CTLS groups and activities that were much greater in scope and time. The reason is both simple and revealing, both hidden and obvious. Faculty not only like to share teaching and learning stories with colleagues; they thirst for it. By creating venues and providing some logistical and guidance support, teaching doors were opening. Different from one-time workshops, the faculty groups allowed people to develop trust in one another over the course of weeks or months, and from that trust, stories could be told. These teaching or professorial stories are not only informative, but have a healing power about them, wherein faculty can recognize themselves or their situation in some of the stories of others. This story-telling tends towards hope and new ways of responding to circumstances. By its very nature, teaching is an optimistic way of life.

One of our premises for PBD is that faculty themselves can be the best, most effective long-term agents of faculty development. The CTLS would support, guide, coordinate, and provide resources and leadership as needed, but our model rises or falls upon the premise that the effects of faculty development upon students' learning would increase the more

that faculty assumed the leadership of and responsibility for their own faculty development. The CTLS does not abdicate its responsibility or put itself out of existence in the process, however. We still offer solutions to problems when needs arise, but we also seek to keep faculty collaboratively focused and on course. For example, each FLC has a CTLS staff member as a liaison to that FLC who is to keep a eye on the progress of the group and offer any support or resources as needed. Sometimes CTLS staff choose to join FLCs because their topics are of relevant importance to them and their work. The CTLS director also keeps in contact with the FLCs' facilitators to provide resources or information and to remind the FLCs of as-needed CTLS support and of FLCs' role in disseminating their work. We have had some failures when we did not provide enough attention to FLCs and assumed they would be okay, but they were not. The balance is to be supportive without tipping the scale to where the CTLS hinders the FLCs from finding their own identities and foci. We realize now that a few FLCs may not be successful for reasons beyond our control (for example, changes of members' schedules or duties, illness, less time for FLC work than anticipated, personality conflicts, change in interests). Over the first years of the program, however, most FLCs have found ways to coalesce and persevere toward their objectives.

In essence, the PBD model is also a way for faculty further to develop their leadership skills because the groups usually have one or more faculty facilitators. The CTLS offers to do the logistical work for groups so that the groups can focus upon their topics and goals. What we have learned is that the PBD model seems to evoke from within faculty intrinsic motivations for wanting to participate. A good PR strategy helps, as well as being open and honest at all times, but in the end PBD simply situates a crucible for the faculty's energies and aspirations based upon another premise of PBD: Most faculty want to do well by their students and to be good teachers. But because being a good teacher is hard work, for which many faculty were not prepared by an apprenticeship or internship, PBD provides a way to learn at any phase or stage of one's academic career.

The Tree That Walks

The CTLS began in 2006 to emphasize the value of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) as a pivot point and fulcrum for its model. SoTL makes clear that teaching for authentic student learning is itself intellectual work and that, as with disciplinary research, such work requires openness among colleagues to the point of discussing issues, problems, and solutions in public ways through a steady stream of contacts, col-

laborations, and conversations among faculty.

The CTLS soon placed a major emphasis on fostering and supporting SoTL. We started publishing an open-access, online, peer-reviewed SoTL journal and to host an annual, international SoTL conference. An FLC for SoTL formed (currently in its 6th year of existence), and the groundwork was built for an entire "SoTL at Georgia Southern" initiative in 2009. As with traditional research and other forms of scholarship, SoTL can connect with the faculty's scholarly backgrounds, curiosity, and desire to develop knowledge in a collegial way. As will be explained later, SoTL would be important not only for changing the model of faculty development, but also for changing attitudes and beliefs about teaching itself. SoTL would become be a key opener of faculty doors, and even more. SoTL resonated in the hallway. One of our CTLS staff members, Judith ("Dr. J") Longfield, connects in this way with the FLC for SoTL:

> The SoTL FLC has been an amazing "infective agent." Beginning with a small group of faculty five years ago, the "infection" has spread across campus and statewide through the presentations of the SoTL Travelers. This FLC has also been responsible for numerous conference presentations and publications in peer-reviewed journals. Additionally, it has spawned an annual campus-wide SoTL Expo, and three of the last four the winners of statewide SoTL award have gone to Georgia Southern faculty members.

> Although I have been a SoTL enthusiast for years, my interest has grown through my participation in a SoTL FLC last year. Having others with whom to share ideas and to provide feedback on drafts encouraged me to continue my SoTL work by focusing on faculty as my "students."

Dr. Padmini Shankar, a SoTL FLC member, has been inspired by SoTL and the FLC's peer-based approach to it:

> I have had the opportunity to work with an amazing group of my peers, to engage in free thought and discussion. I have learned that there are numerous other strategies that I can use in the classroom to enhance the quality of instruction than merely engaging in the traditional lecture and discussion. I feel a sense of fulfillment that comes from knowing that I am an effective teacher because of my SoTL involvement. Instead of using methodologies that I think will work, I currently employ teaching strategies that are based on evidence-based practice. It is very rewarding to observe how effective these strategies are in achieving student learning outcomes. SoTL not only helps

you practice your art well, but it also promotes a continuous process of self-evaluation. Further, this collaborative venture has resulted in several scholarship outcomes that have been well received by academic partners nationally, as evidenced by feedback from SoTL Commons attendees. The knowledge and experiences gained by being a part of the SoTL FLC have truly enriched my journey as a teacher, and I am looking forward to my continued involvement with this group.

In addition to the role of SoTL, the peer-based, dissemination model has also incorporated other principles for its design and implementation: adult learning theory (since faculty are sophisticated adult learners); interdisciplinarity (vital for peer-based activities); appreciative inquiry (faculty have done much good with their students that can be the basis for further good); and application and assessment (faculty development must lead to actual, evidence-based changes made in course design and learning outcomes).

In time, through faculty needs assessment surveying and surveying of students' perceptions of the level of active learning in their classes, through faculty groups and individual consultations, through the FLC program, and through SoTL literature, the CTLS learned that many faculty continued to teach in ways less conducive for student engagement and significant, enduring learning. Awareness and understanding of SoTL was minimal or modest. Our numbers of faculty participants rose dramatically, but there was still a lot of work to do. As the model developed, the number of faculty who participated not only increased, but also the nature of the participation changed. In the CTLS annual assessment, it was found that many faculty value the manifestations of the model and frequently return again and again to participate. In 2009-2010, 61% of GSU's full-time faculty participated in the CTLS program in at least one way. We don't have real numbers for 2005-2006, the year before the implementation of PBD, but a general estimate based upon available data would be about a 20-25% level of participation. Our goal is over 70% participation, combined with an evolving CTLS assessment plan to measure the actual results of participation upon changes in teaching and in students' learning.

The CTLS made efforts to create additional opportunities for faculty to collaborate and disseminate to colleagues what they were learning. Writing Circles formed as a way to offer to faculty collegial mentoring on academic writing for journals, books, and conference papers or presentations; on creative writing, such as poetry and fiction; and on developing and writing on SoTL projects for publication or presentation. We invited faculty to join any of these Circles, each of which a faculty leader. The Circles

are small because members review and critique each other's work; large groups do not offer the time or familiarity for such deeply professional and personal work. The basis for creating the Circles is similar to the FLCs and RRs, with the added idea that the CTLS is not just for pedagogical enhancement, but also exists to support faculty in their teaching, learning, scholarship, and professional careers. Faculty writing can be very important for professional and personal development.

Additionally, faculty joined another new group, the Thinkaloud Club (TC), which is a group that reads and discusses all sorts of things, most unrelated to teaching and learning. The purpose of the Club is for intellectual stimulation, a kind of interdisciplinary cornucopia for ideas. Just as a few of the RRs have not been about teaching and learning, the TC was organized to allow faculty to read and discuss a large variety of topics in order to foster a sense of intellectual adventure. Faculty are intellectually oriented and are some of the most highly educated people in the world. And whether they are teaching at some of the most well-known schools or much less well-known ones is not relevant to their inherent desire to live and work in an energetic intellectual climate. Part of the CTLS's role, as it understands itself, is to learn from faculty about how best to help generate opportunities for deepening such a climate. Sometimes the CTLS takes the lead with ideas to see if it meets faculty where they are or where they want to be. For example, in addition to the TC, we also started the "Open Doors" program, where small groups of faculty visit one another's classes and then discuss among themselves the meanings of the experience. The more that faculty experience any aspect of the CTLS program as practically and intellectually effective, the more likely they will tend to participate in other aspects of the program as well. The "secret" is to connect with the potentials of an academic life and academic community.

I must include a word about enjoyment. Thomas Aquinas said that "there is no joy in life without joy in work." Our model was not only to be engaging and effective, it was to be enjoyable so that it could be really engaging and effective. Providing some drinks and snacks helped. Having a place where faculty could gather also helped. But the agent for the enjoyment was the faculty themselves, being themselves with others, meeting others from a wide-range of disciplines, and learning things that could be applied to their own work. Stacy Kluge of the CTLS sees it this way:

> The center creates a structure and context for faculty to discover, explore, and reflect with their peers. What is most exciting to me is to see an idea take root in a faculty member as a result of participating in a peer-based program, and suddenly he/she emerges as a leader and starts publishing SoTL research, or

writes a grant, or starts a grass roots movement to get a certain type of pedagogy such as POGIL [process oriented guided inquiry learning] or Service Learning instituted on campus. It creates a ripple effect, and others want to get on board and learn more, so they form a peer-based group or community, often through our center, and the cycle starts over. (personal communication, March 2011)

Horizons of Home

While the focus of the PBD model is our own faculty at our own institution, we have sent out roots and branches beyond the boundaries of our own faculty. These venues provide our faculty with opportunities for contact with disciplinary and interdisciplinary colleagues elsewhere, thus creating further opportunities for the exchange of ideas, practices, research, and stories. Sometimes, by "crossing over" to other places and other concepts of teaching and learning, one can "return home" not only with new possibilities, but can see "home" in a new way. And one of the threads of our model is to allow for faculty to experience their familiar teaching beliefs and practices from new perspectives and to evoke the courage for experimentation and change.

The main "crossing over" activities we founded are SoTL based:

- Publishing an online, peer-reviewed, open access journal, *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning* (http://www.georgiasouthern.edu/ijsotl/). The journal has become very international in its review board, authors, and readership, and to which some of our own faculty have submitted work (some of which has been published). The logo for the journal is the bamboo plant, found around the world, flexible while been extremely strong.

- Hosting an annual academic conference on campus, the SoTL Commons: A Conference for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/ijsotl/conference/2012/index.htm). Attendees come from 10-15 countries, with some of our faculty giving presentations, and with the concurrent sessions chaired by members of our faculty.

- Starting a regional academic society for SoTL, the

Southeastern SoTL Colloquy (http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/cet/ssc/).

• Hosting a regional SoTL Symposium of the South (http://ceps.georgiasouthern.edu/conted/sotlsymposium.html).

• Facilitating some of our faculty experienced in SoTL to provide workshops or conference sessions on SoTL in the region.

These kinds of activities are grounded in a university initiative called "SoTL at Georgia Southern" (http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/sotlgsu/) that was assisted in its formation by the FLC for SoTL and other faculty and is facilitated by the CTLS with the support of a SoTL Leadership Team composed of faculty experienced in SoTL. We hope these activities provide our faculty with a fresh way to look at SoTL beyond merely what our CTLS might say.

Minding the Model

The model we have developed cannot be placed on automatic pilot, nor can faculty participants and participation be taken for granted. A gentle touch—but not a touch so heavy that the spontaneity of the "hallway" is dampened—is needed to stay on course. Ongoing assessment of the model and its results is important for improving the model so as to parallel its purpose in creating ways for faculty to grow in their teaching and understanding of their students' learning. The faculty development model described here (and other models as well) calls for faculty voices to critique it and for a systematic assessing of its directions, outcomes, and trajectory.

The long-range goals for and features of the model can infuse it into the academic culture, no matter who the faculty, administrators, or faculty developers may be at any particular time:

1. Professional faculty development in teaching, learning, and scholarship should be at the center of the professional lives and careers of faculty.

2. The Center has the unified and unifying responsibility for initiating, supporting, guiding professional faculty development in response to faculty needs, for providing evidence-based and current results from research into teaching and learning, and for providing

leadership and support for continuous faculty conversations, collaborations, and applications concerning teaching and learning.

3. An effective foundation for the Center is the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), research into the effects of teaching upon student learning that can serve as the cornerstone for creating and developing a pedagogical culture of inquiry.

4. This model serves to deepen and expand the levels and depths of faculty participation in the overall program and encourages faculty to assume leadership roles in faculty development activities. The Center becomes the physical, psychological, and pedagogical center for faculty life as the Center strives to generate a tradition of faculty engagement with colleagues about teaching, learning, research, and academic careers.

5. Central to the peer-based model of faculty development are the following activities:

   • Application by faculty of what is learned about student learning to courses and work with students.

   • Assessment for improved learning from the results of the applications.

   • Dissemination by faculty of what is learned about teaching and learning to colleagues and the campus.

6. Steady enhancement of the model is needed via such things as the following:

   • Recognition of adult learning theory as relevant in working with faculty who are very sophisticated adult learners. For example, the Center's model operates with the knowledge that faculty

     —want to integrate past experience and knowledge with their present experience and learning,

     —are self-directed learners,

     —enjoy the pedagogical and social values of working collaboratively with colleagues,

—seek to apply what they learn to specific courses and contexts,

—appreciate positive results from teaching changes or innovations, and

—find value in reflecting critically upon the process of their own learning.

• Recognition that professional faculty development as inherently interdisciplinary, encompasses all manner of teaching approaches and methods, and can involve faculty in any and all stages of an academic career, from new faculty to senior and soon retiring faculty.

• Appreciation and recognition of the individual and collective faculty experience, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom about teaching and learning and building upon that wisdom in the present and for the future.

8. The Center has a unique role and opportunity both to advocate for teaching, learning, and scholarship (in all its forms) and to be an agent for changing, even transforming, the academic culture.

9. The Center is an organization and needs to model the learning organization model and culture it seeks to promote across the whole campus.

Faculty still schedule individual consultations with the CTLS staff. Some workshops (now called "seminars") continue to be provided. Problems are addressed by staff who themselves continue to learn. But the model is not only about providing answers; it is also about stimulating questions that place current ideas, beliefs, and practices into new contexts and expectations. It is also about finding ways to feature the faculty and their work so that teaching is understood not to be an epiphenomenon of research, but intellectual and scholarly work in itself. When faculty collaborate, the intellectual demands of teaching well become more apparent and motivational.

The CTLS creates publications to keep faculty aware of what their colleagues are doing and what the CTLS is about and to encourage participation. Mention has been made of the *FLC Forum*, but there is also a newsletter for new faculty called *The Learning Quest*, a newsletter about the "SoTL at Georgia Southern" initiative entitled *SoTL Chronicles*, and

the CTLS newsletter, *The Banyan Tree* (see a sample at http://academics. georgiasouthern.edu/ctls/Publications/BanyanTree/TBT_V5N2_01-2011. pdf).

As the PBD model is enhanced and grows, we are in the process of more systematically developing a way to regularly assess it beyond the quantitative results. When that component is more fully in place, it could help others who may be interested in adapting or replicating the model among their own faculty. Increased levels of participation is a very positive indicator, but ongoing, systematic assessment is important for improvement and for raising the cultural value of professional faculty development and faculty development centers. The assessment planning for the CTLS currently has the following as the unit's overarching goal: Foster scholarly teaching practices that enhance student learning. We identified our outcomes for this goal to be the following (there are to be activities, collection of data, and benchmarks for each):

1. Facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations relating to teaching, learning, and scholarship.

2. Promote faculty initiatives in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL).

3. Respond to the professional development needs of faculty, instructors, and TAs.

4. Cooperate with other campus units on issues related to teaching, learning, and research.

5. Promote continuous improvement of CTLS programs and services.

Assessment can be the impetus to keep the momentum of PBD going and growing, enabling us to know why there are successes and failures and to make changes accordingly. And, especially in tougher economic times, the PBD model can be implemented in some ways that require limited, or even no, funding to begin.

Who Knows?

Years ago, when I was applying for a faculty development position while still a full-time tenured professor, someone at a campus interview event asked what I would do about a faculty member who was known not to be a good teacher. Looking back, it was a simple, challenging, even provocative question. I was a newbie and said I didn't know. Somehow,

I still got the job.

Why was this such a provocative question? As a faculty developer, I would have neither the power nor the desire to single out a faculty member as being in need of help, and it would certainly be a death knell for a faculty center if faculty thought it was evaluating them rather than supporting their professional growth or development. The professional faculty development pillars of confidentiality, competency, and voluntary participation are important, but deeply so is that the Center's work is formative, not evaluative or summative. If it is not, that Center will be at the end of its rope with no hanging on.

Back to that irritating question. At the time my not knowing was accurate. Since then, through having re-generated a couple faculty centers, I've learned at least a few things and would respond differently. There's still a lot I don't know, but the model discussed here would enable me to say to that questioner that the Center is not just to provide help to faculty struggling with their teaching (knowing that many faculty, very much including me, were strangely and almost systematically unprepared for the very teaching career they had chosen), but also to be a resource, a nexus, even a crucible for all faculty. Since then, I have learned that regular participants in faculty development are often people who already are good teachers and have reputations as such, but for whom professional life and responsibility means professional (and often personal) growth. Good teachers want to become better. They are the choir. No one compels them to participate in the Center's programs; they *want to* because these opportunities are important to them to grow. They enjoy the comings and goings of the "hallway," and they are the unofficial mentors for others, whether they even realize it or not.

I have gone from answering this question, "I don't know," to something like "the faculty knows." While we cannot predict all interpersonal dynamics, our model gives any faculty member a way to meet and work with others so that no one is singled out as being wayward or pedagogically deprived. The faculty themselves, simultaneously, individually and collectively, teach one another about teaching and learn from one another about learning. The CTLS selects focal topics, provides some guidance, resources, and follow up, but in the long run it is the faculty who are the best faculty developers of themselves. Why? Imagine again those hundreds of faculty with their thousands of years of experience of teaching and scholarship, and imagine the hundreds of thousands of students they have taught over the years. Combine this with a learned assumption that most faculty want to do their work well and benefit the learning of their students. What you have, right at hand, is a somewhat elusive, sometimes

hidden cornucopia of faculty wisdom.

The peer-based model is simply one way to channel and chronicle the scope and depth of that wisdom so that faculty may become part of those wisdom chronicles. In the process, they meet colleagues they would normally not meet, and they work on things they might not otherwise do alone. They, thus, become agents of social, organizational, and cultural development. Going to work takes on a different feel. There are a far fewer faculty strangers at college and university gatherings, far fewer strangers just walking through hallways, and as the choir expands, so do the sights and sounds of growth.

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