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When Is a CTL?: A Message From the Editor-in-Chief

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When could have been over the course of that first year's set of "Conversations," which have become our Center for Teaching and Learning's (CTL's) hallmark. Or, it could have been when we found those little-used blue chairs in our library's basement and asked if they could be made available to our new office; and it could have been when our office space itself was moved from the library to a room on one of the main corridors of our campus's central building. Maybe it was even when faculty and staff crowded themselves into a classroom and jotted down on the board ideas for what a regional campus's teaching and learning center might look like. It could have been when our campus's graphic designer started crafting the image of the white tree against the blue background that has become our logo; or it could have been when a task force met weekly to develop a set of guidelines for selecting CTL staff members; or maybe it was when a candidate for our associate executive director's position asserted that the formation of a CTL would be at the top of her agenda. It might even have been when our faculty began winning university-wide awards for effective teaching, using their own scholarship for teaching and learning to make their case; or it might be when the university decided that faculty at their open-access campuses would carry 4/4 loads and not have their disciplinary research weighted as heavily as their main-campus counterparts in promotion and tenure decisions.

Mostly likely, it was and still is in each of these and other *whens* that the CTL at my institution began and continues to begin today. The life of our and other CTLs persists in the intentions and actions that created institutional space for them to begin with and that shape still the ways in which they are perceived across their campuses today. CTLs persist in the day-to-day consultations and conversations that verify their presence; and CTLs thrive in the scholarly activities that affirm their contributions

and suggest possible futures. The contributors to this issue of the *Journal on Centers for Teaching and Learning* (JCTL) continue the work of naming and scrutinizing the many *whens* of CTL work, defining for us the multiple points in time (the CTL's time, its institutions' times, its staff's times, faculty and student times) in which the present and future of effective teaching and learning is at stake.

Leading off this issue, **Plank and Mares's** "The Paths People Take Through Teaching Center Services: A Descriptive Analysis" examines the pathways that individual teachers chart through the services (orientations, workshops, consultations, learning communities, etc.) typically offered by CTLs. The authors identify the combination of services that faculty create for themselves, along with the frequency of their participation. Among other things, Plank and Mares's work challenges any imposed developmental curriculum, say, one moving from fundamentals (taught in workshops) to deeper, extended experiences (i.e., learning communities), because faculty tend to participate in CTL activities according to their own senses of order, their own sequencing. The authors, in other words, describe how the *when* of CTL work can be distributed across an array of activities, beginning always at different points for different individuals. The shifting *when* Plank and Mares describe ultimately calls into question standard categories of programming and asks if new paths can emerge to capture an institution's actual patterns of participation.

Diverging somewhat from JCTL's usual pattern of organization, **Mulnix's** "Communicating a New Model: Learner-Centered Strategies in Faculty Development" begins on the author's sabbatical, highlighting the fact that CTL work often occurs in moments of reflection, before (and after) the staff meetings, before (and after) the assessments, before (and after) the programming. Representing the kinds of revisioning of CTL work that can occur when one has the "luxury of playing with ideas" (p. 23). Mulnix's suggestions as to how CTL-sponsored workshops might be redesigned speak to a disjuncture between best practices and the ways in which those practices are often conveyed to faculty. "Communicating a New Model" intervenes at a point of lack of transfer—where principles of learner-centered teaching have not been seen as applicable to professional development, where the *when* of CTL work has in many ways lagged behind our understanding of how people learn. Mulnix's recommendations seek means for faculty development programs to catch up to their own best intentions.

Marbach-Ad, Schaefer Ziemer, Thompson, and Orgler's "New-Instructor Teaching Experience in a Research-Intensive University: Implications for Professional Development" and **Beane-Katner's** "De-

veloping the Next Generation of Faculty: Taking a Learning Community Approach” show how one of the best *whens* for CTL interventions occurs during faculty members’ first encounters with their institutions. In both articles, efforts to engage new faculty spur imagination into a future of new possibilities for institutions themselves, as programming positions new faculty as change agents. For Beane-Katner, the Faculty Learning Community approach to new faculty orientation “can create the opportunity for reciprocal interactivity, wherein new faculty members begin to push cultural and pedagogical change while being enculturated to the institution” (p. 93). For Marbach-Ad et al., data reveal that “there is no one correct model for supporting new faculty during this transition, because what helps one faculty member (e.g., team-teaching) could hinder another. Therefore, there is a need for institutions to be flexible and offer a menu of professional development and opportunities from which faculty members can choose” (p. 78). These two articles underscore not only the multiple ways through which and points at which professional development can occur, but also the value of considering *when* programming might best contribute to instructors’ success and the opportunities that that success provides for a learning institution over an extended period of time.

The transition from output-based to outcome-based assessment marks another way in which CTLs generate a broader sense of *when* for faculty development. In “Assessing Faculty Development Programs: Outcome-Based Evaluation,” **Chen, Kelley, and Haggart** show how this transition encourages a shift away from a focus on the bulk of work a CTL might accomplish to a consideration of its continued impact over time. Their targeted assessments, based on specific objectives, generate not only methods to gauge how the effects of CTL programming might persist over time, but also a way to map out a course for continuous improvement.

Finally, in this issue’s “Essentials Skills in Building and Sustaining a Faculty Development Center,” a new series featuring practical advice for CTL directors, the map for continuous improvement begins on the neat-lines of budget and staffing concerns. **Todd Zakrajsek’s** ideas for how to talk about budgets and how even to read the requests for “a minute” of your time signal at once the rhetorical and material concerns that pervade CTL work, extending its *when* over a long time horizon.

If anything, the articles in this issue help us view better this long time horizon. Thinking back over all the efforts that established the CTL at my institution and all the activity since that has sustained the Center, it is hard for me to see anything but the inevitability of CTL work, at least the inevitable need for an entity to collocate, examine, and envision efforts for effective teaching and learning at any educational institution at any time.

Like our former editions of *JCTL*, this issue helps readers determine the variety of *whens* in which CTL work persists, the value of scrutinizing, theorizing, and caring for each of those *whens*, and the difficulties and rewards that come with our trying to touch them all.