The Care and Maintenance of Faculty Culture: A Small College Curricular Approach

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The authors describe Carleton College's de-centralized model of faculty development that functions through informal structural elements with the assistance and partial coordination of the Perlman Center for Learning and Teaching. A curricular approach to faculty development—with coordinated goals, multiple iterations, and assessment of both goals and events—produces a faculty culture dedicated to collegial conversations and mutual instruction that helps foster a shared sense of purpose and contributes to an overall institutional focus on student learning.

Introduction

Carleton College has much in common with other highly selective liberal arts colleges. Students are bright, inquisitive, and ambitious. Graduation requirements feature first-year seminars; distribution courses that tend to be interdisciplinary and intercultural, and requirements in foreign language, physical education, quantitative reasoning, and writing. While nothing like requirements for undergraduates, Carleton also maintains something like a "curriculum" for faculty, an array of learning opportunities offered through the year that are topic-oriented, iterative, and assessable.

This informal curriculum for faculty works in at least two ways toward coherence. First, while specific topics will vary, faculty can expect annual workshops on writing across the curriculum (WAC), quantitative reason-

ing, and other programs tailored to pedagogical emphases. A multi-day workshop just for new faculty is also part of that annual catalog, if you will. Second, the workshops themselves feature consistent pedagogical approaches for faculty as learners. For example, a WAC workshop may address science writing or some other topic, but it will always include course goals, assignment design, scaffolding of complex tasks, response strategies, and assessment considerations. In short, faculty workshops model good pedagogy as they deliver learning opportunities to colleagues.

In any given year on Carleton's campus there will be two or three major curricular and pedagogical initiatives, largely funded by external grants, that compete for faculty time and attention. Currently we have grants that are aimed at Global Engagement, Arts and Technology, and Digital Humanities. In the recent past, we have also pursued Quantitative Reasoning, Visuality, Geographic Information Systems, and Academic Civic Engagement, and all of these have had a significant faculty development component as part of the overall budget. These initiatives tend to be driven by faculty interest, and funding is pursued with the help of the college's grants office. Because faculty development is written into these externally funded programs, the new initiatives for the undergraduate curriculum will affect the curriculum for faculty. Constant in all of these initiatives, moreover, has been the ongoing work of Carleton's Writing Program to foster faculty expertise in the teaching and evaluating of student writing. One could call all of this the "let a thousand flowers bloom" approach to faculty development, in that faculty themselves generally originate and lead development activities. As Reder (2010) observes, "Faculty ownership is important because small college faculty members are accustomed not only to self-governance but also to administering much of the institution" (p. 298).

It may seem somewhat counter-intuitive, then, that the Perlman Center for Learning and Teaching at Carleton, established in 1992, has become the focus for such a decentralized approach to faculty development. Mooney and Reder (2008) offer the idea of a "metaphorical" center for faculty development (p. 162), and this is partially true of Carleton's LTC. It is a "center" in the sense that it has a physical location and a robust set of programs, but the impetus for that programming is largely driven by this diverse set of faculty-led initiatives on a campus that prides itself on collegiality and a student-centered mission.

As Honan, Westmoreland, and Tew (2013) note, "An engaged faculty is a developed faculty, and development activities are central to creating and sustaining a culture within any institution that values and rewards effective teaching" (p. 38). How did this rich environment of faculty de-

velopment emerge at Carleton, and how does the "Center" apply to such a welter of activity? More importantly, how does the attention devoted to faculty culture pay off in greater student learning? We would like to explore our tentative answers to those questions in what follows.

A Brief History

"Faculty culture" is a vague term, but that does not mean its influence is not vital. Every institution has a culture associated with teaching and learning as part of its ethos, and this culture varies from campus to campus (Cox, McIntosh, Reason, & Terenzini, 2011; Umbach, 2007). In order to understand one college's efforts to harness and influence faculty culture, we need to begin with a bit of history. The Perlman Center for Learning and Teaching (or LTC, as it is broadly known on campus) began operating in 1992 with grant support from the Bush Foundation. Its first few years were spent canvassing faculty about the pedagogical and campus issues that it found most salient and targeting "just in time" programming to address those issues. Without fanfare, the LTC began to establish itself as the *de facto locus* of collegial conversation on pedagogical issues, avoiding the taint of "remedial" help for poor teachers by focusing on the issues that faculty themselves identified as in need of attention, either in their own classrooms or on the campus as a whole.

At almost the same time, dissatisfaction with the campus writing requirement was growing, and a critical mass of faculty were motivated to explore new approaches to how writing might be taught and evaluated on our campus. In general, faculty blamed students for not writing as well as students from days gone by. Students blamed faculty for being arbitrary about their expectations. Faculty development for writing across the curriculum, a Carleton signature program, was limited to occasional one-hour sessions conducted by the Writing Program Director on topics such as responding efficiently to student work; there was little attempt to coordinate either pedagogy or assessment. With the energy and focus introduced by the addition of a new Writing Program Director (Rutz) in 1997, Carleton began its journey toward a new way to assess student writing (portfolios), supported by a robust faculty development curriculum that has become a useful template for subsequent curricular initiatives.

A Curriculum for Faculty—Beginnings

Over the past 15 years, the Writing Program has pioneered and refined a faculty development program apart from the LTC that originated in 2000

with funding from the Bush Foundation (the same foundation whose grant supported the LTC at its birth). The program features shared leadership among faculty, funding for formal workshops on specific topics, and summer support for course development or undergraduate research assistants. Furthermore, the Writing Program ties faculty educational programs to an assessment of student writing, the sophomore portfolio.

To address reservations that faculty would be able to read student work outside of their fields, external grants provided visiting experts in writing assessment, pedagogy, and theory to campus each term. In addition to a public presentation co-sponsored by the LTC (which has become an important ally), visitors attended classes, talked with faculty individually and in groups, met with writing tutors, and were available to students. Outside experts collaborated with Carleton faculty to offer winter workshops on writing across the curriculum, particularly linked with assessment. Summer grants invited departments and individuals to revisit current courses and assignments or to create new ones with writing at their center.

Despite skepticism from a portion of the faculty, a critical mass of Carleton instructors quickly saw the benefits of current research on writing assessment and pedagogy and were willing to test some ideas new to the campus. Three senior faculty helped drum up interest and attendance at speaker events and workshops. When the sophomore portfolio was piloted with a group of students entering in 2000, faculty from across the campus participated and found that reading portfolios was illuminating to them as well as a useful rite of passage for students. The writing portfolio is now integrated into the student curriculum as part of the writing requirement; portfolio assessment is equally integrated into the faculty curriculum as an annual experience of taking stock of student progress. Moreover, faculty now tend to norm their expectations for writing in their own classes based on the work assigned by colleagues and submitted by students for this assessment. Again, with little fanfare, Carleton faculty had begun to change the teaching and learning culture surrounding the teaching of writing by tapping into the campus-wide perception of a need for change and the natural impulse toward collegiality that exists on a small campus.

Creating the Template

As subsequent externally funded curricular initiatives have been launched, the Writing Program's recipe has become a template for the faculty development connected to each initiative. Workshops, public

talks, and summer support are the most common features. In most cases, funding also supports external speakers, conference attendance, and specialized projects, for example, an exhibit, demonstration, or inter-campus meeting. The details vary according to the goals of the initiative; however, the general pattern has appealed to external funding agencies as well as to internal participants. Faculty have shown themselves willing to model lifelong learning in the service of curricular and pedagogical innovation. As Eddy and Garza Mitchell (2012) note, "Organizationally, collaborative work should be encouraged. Current research on teaching and learning notes the benefits of cooperative and collaborative learning (Grant-Vallone, 2011; Millis & Cottell, 1997). These benefits should extend to faculty as learners as well" (p. 294). Indeed, faculty on our campus have come to expect that this is how all initiatives should work. In the early planning stages for each new initiative, at least one, and usually several, faculty members will have experienced some of the Writing Program's activities, and these faculty members naturally want to reproduce that successful model.

One early adopter of the model became the program now known as Quantitative Inquiry, Reasoning, and Knowledge (or QuIRK). Arising from a concern that students were not developing the habits of mind that lead them to use quantitative reasoning in their academic work, faculty wanted to launch some sort of QR-across-the-curriculum program. An exploration of QR programs elsewhere uncovered two common ap-proaches: a required course, usually in the first year, or an exam of some sort. Neither fit the Carleton faculty's hopes for a more iterative student experience through a range of courses, including less traditional sites in the humanities and arts.

A geologist familiar with the writing portfolio observed that sopho-mores often submit work that includes data and other quantitative approaches. Why not look at portfolios to establish some sort of baseline on students' current use of QR? The resulting investigation of student work and the related assignments determined that students were far more likely to employ QR in their arguments if the assignment required them to do so. Otherwise, students seldom turned to QR when not cued—even if data and associated reasoning were appropriate for the subject of the paper. The problem seemed to be related more to reminding students of the power of QR than to assuming that QR knowledge was ignored or forgotten. The habit of mind needed cultivation.

The assessment findings described above provided important argu-ments for backing from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), and QuIRK, borrowing much of the Writing Program's

design, established a faculty development curriculum that continues to the present. Piggybacking on the Writing Program accomplished more than just a paint-by-numbers replication of a faculty development plan. As noted in an article published in *Numeracy* (Grawe & Rutz, 2009), both QuIRK and the Writing Program benefited from integrating their goals: to help students improve their communication skills; to use data to provide precision, clarity, and authority; and to establish context for an argument that may not depend on data throughout. Furthermore, the Writing Program welcomed the additional intellectual heft provided through QR.

Through QuIRK, faculty are challenged to develop opportunities in their courses (with the support of summer grants), regardless of discipline, that would offer students practice in using data rhetorically. Faculty development for QuIRK began with a workshop in 2005 titled "Writing With Numbers," sponsored by the Writing Program. That collaboration continues: The WAC/QR curriculum features regular offerings that combine writing and QR, often including digital media and speaking as well. Workshops are well attended, competition for summer support is vigorous, and the campus is more QR-savvy in general.

In fact, a recent curricular overhaul for students added a QR requirement, which can be met through three "quantitative reasoning encounters," or QREs. The existing curriculum for faculty through QuIRK and the Writing Program influenced the new requirement for students. These changes reveal the potential for institutional improvement that resides in utilizing a development curriculum that nudges faculty culture in the direction of desired student learning outcomes.

Faculty Curriculum Beyond the Template

While we have talked so far about faculty-driven initiatives, we should also note that our LTC also maintains its own ongoing program for faculty as a means of keeping our faculty culture engaged in, and focused on, student learning.

To begin with, the Perlman Center coordinates the college's efforts to introduce new faculty to our campus through an initial two-day orientation and, then, a series of workshops and conversations spread over the entire year (or the first three years for tenure-track faculty) focusing on different areas of interest to new faculty, from teaching to competing for grants. In effect, new faculty experience their own first-year "curriculum" in what approaches the arrangement of a formal learning community (Beane-Katner, 2013). In addition, each incoming faculty member is matched with a mentor outside his or her department.

One long-standing feature of the LTC programming for new faculty is

the New Faculty Workshop that takes place in the first week of December, when the fall term ends. At this point many new faculty are eager to reflect on what they just experienced and are looking for specific ideas for the term ahead. The workshop involves four half-days of micro-teaching, readings, discussions, and meetings with campus staff and administrators. The intensive experience helps to reinforce a natural cohort for the new faculty that can serve as a support group throughout the year (and career for those staying on) by establishing a "peer mentoring" culture (Reder & Gallagher, 2007, p. 328) that complements the "official" mentoring program in place at Carleton.

The Perlman Center also maintains a robust set of programs for all faculty, including weekly lunch presentations, book groups, teaching circles, and individual consultations with the coordinator. The LTC Coordinator also trains a small group of students as observers on behalf of faculty who request a confidential observer of their classroom practices. All of these contribute to the larger goal of maintaining a robust environment of collegial conversation and collaboration. From its inception, the LTC has helped to engender the idea that faculty development is an expected part of faculty life on campus. This, along with the template for initiatives devised by the Writing Program, has made the curricular approach effective in enhancing faculty culture.

The Invisible Arm of Faculty Development

How do we know that attending to faculty culture actually improves student learning? Funded by the Spencer Foundation, Carleton recently completed a multi-year, mixed-methods study on the connections between faculty development and student learning. Research partners from Carleton, Washington State University, and the Science Education Resource Center (a grant-funded affiliate of Carleton), sought evidence that what faculty learn in workshops and other faculty development opportunities changes teaching for the better and, ultimately, improves student learning. Such evidence did emerge, especially at Washington State, where sample sizes were larger and specific programs for faculty had a longer history. At WSU, a rubric for critical thinking showed measurable increases in student performance as a result of faculty participation in various faculty development workshops and other events. At Carleton, the same rubric failed to show as much growth in student learning, which was attributed to the rubric's being less aligned with faculty development programs on Carleton's campus. Another assessment method developed by Haswell (1988) proved more sensitive to student work from Carleton and detected

the kind of growth that paralleled faculty development agendas (Rutz, Condon, Iverson, Manduca, & Willett, 2012).

The research was framed to study explicit, formal events such as workshops, following individual faculty thereafter through analysis of workshop evaluations, interviews with participants, observation of classes, and textual analysis of course documents and student work. A control group of non-participants was expected to provide useful comparisons. Whereas data gathering proceeded smoothly, a surprise for both Carleton and Washington State researchers was the absence of a control group; on both campuses, even interviewees who did not attend faculty development as construed by the study articulated the practices and values delivered in those programs. Space limits preclude a thorough discussion of the study's findings here. However, we can point out that interviews with those less likely to participate directly showed the power of spread of effect: Participation in events is important, and equally important is sharing with colleagues after the fact. This contagious effect is typified by a comment from a regular attendee of Carleton's faculty workshops, who said, "There is a real sense, I think, of collegiality on this campus. And I know if it weren't for those sorts of events [workshops], I would only talk to people in my department" (Rutz et al., 2012, p. 46). Talk in the departments will be a constant; the subject matter is enriched through individual faculty experiences. Spread of effect throughout the institution represents the most important finding from the study.

Rethinking the definition of faculty development, the study identified numerous occasions of "stealth" faculty development—interactions characteristic of department discussions, lunchtime conversations, and other informal settings where teaching and learning are the subject at hand. The loss of a control group was offset by the gain in understanding of the subtle ways that faculty development finds its way into teaching practice. At Carleton, interviews, class observations, and focus groups all emphasized the role of the Perlman Center as an amplifier of ongoing initiatives.

The insight that faculty development has a powerful spread of effect, regardless of direct participation, implies that improvements in teaching and learning are most likely observable at the institutional level rather than in one instructor's classroom after a series of pedagogically oriented faculty development activities. The cumulative effect on the institution was found at both Washington State and Carleton, providing strong support for maintaining and assessing faculty development for the future. With Huber and Hutchings's (2005) approach to the teaching commons, this is what we might consider the triumph of the curricular model of faculty development: It flavors the water that all faculty members drink, even those disinclined toward active participation.

Why the Curricular Model Works

Several factors combine to make this curricular model of faculty development effective. Some are specific to Carleton, but most can be found on any campus. We identify below a few principles that we think apply anywhere.

1. Faculty Crave Collegial Conversations.

As Johnston, Schimmel, and O'Hara (2012) report,

> Survey data found that tenure-track faculty members care more about departmental climate, culture, and collegiality than they do about workload, tenure clarity, and compensation (Fogg, 2006). A regression analysis of the responses indicated that climate was five times as important as compensation in predicting job satisfaction. (p. 6)

This is hardly news for most of us, but it is good to be reminded from time to time just how much we all enjoy discussing the pleasures and trials of our shared enterprise, including teaching students and evaluating their work (King & Moore, 2013). When faculty gather for a focused discussion on a specific pedagogical or curricular issue, it is gratifying how quickly they come to common ground, despite differences in discipline and career stage. In our experience, moreover, nothing clears the mind like examining actual student work. Collegial discussions almost always prove productive when faculty are looking at the student work produced on campus.

2. Stealth Development Can Create a Culture of Reflective Practice.

As we document above, faculty development activities can exert an invisible, but measurable, influence across campus. Programming does not need to reach every faculty member, but it should aim to reach someone in each department or program. Colleagues who are skeptical of an initiative or of new pedagogical approaches usually are more open to a department colleague who can share his or her experience with the new initiative or approach and its benefits. One needs to reach a critical mass of faculty, but provided that they are well distributed throughout the campus, it need not be a large number of faculty due to the "multiplier effect" at small colleges (Mooney & Reder, 2008, p. 165). Such "stealth" development can go a long way in creating a faculty culture that values collegial conversations about learning and teaching.

3. New Faculty Are a Good Investment.

Junior faculty are an especially attractive and, in our experience, receptive, target for development, because they are largely novice practitioners of pedagogy and realize that they may need mentoring in this area (O'Meara & Terosky, 2010). Most campuses offer "orientation" to incoming faculty to varying degrees, but we suggest that institutions seize the opportunity to create a more intentional series of activities for new faculty in their first years on campus. Such a curriculum will promote the kind of reflective practices and expectations for engagement in faculty development that will introduce them to the faculty culture (Palmer, Dankoski, Smith, Brutkiewicz, & Bogdewic, 2011). This is an especially good investment, because what new faculty learn in their development curriculum will "trickle up" to department colleagues, spreading the effect over a longer period of time to reinforce the current faculty culture. It also provides a natural cohort for new faculty members that can serve as a natural support group throughout their time on campus (Reder & Gallagher, 2007, p. 334). The ultimate winners, of course, are the students who benefit from a group of more classroom-ready instructors.

4. The Institution Should Create the Expectation
That Faculty Development Will Happen
at a Regularly Recurring Time.

As Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002; confirmed by Eib and Miller, 2006) discuss, it is important for a community to develop a regular "rhythm" to maintain its sense of "aliveness" (p. 51). The academic calendar provides a natural cycle for faculty to gather for a short period, during a break in the term, and then to pursue individual projects in the summer or over a term when they have leave or reduced teaching. Carleton operates on a nine-and-a-half-week trimester calendar. This means that we have a long break from the end of November through the beginning of January. This break has become the expected time for faculty development activity, often with up to six or seven workshops engaging well over 100 different faculty members (for example, 125 for December 2013). Long before Carleton held so many workshops in December, however, the Writing Program built the expectation that this break would be a time for colleagues to gather and share their experiences and to work together to address issues of common concern in student writing. To be sure, one need not have such a long break, and on many campuses the summer or a post-semester May term will work just as well for faculty development

activities. The important idea, however, is that faculty associate these activities with a particular time in the calendar.

5. Good Faculty Development Work Needs to Find an Audience.

At Carleton the Perlman Center ensures that there is a venue to share an initiative's findings and activities. This provides an "afterlife" for the initiative long after the grant money has been spent. In light of principle 4 above, we should mention that Carleton has a common lunch hour on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the term, and the Perlman Center provides a lunch venue every week for the presentation of ongoing faculty development and assessment results, among other issues of learning and teaching. The expectation that there will be a weekly lunch gathering of faculty (and staff and, more often now, students) to discuss such matters contributes to a culture of reflective practice and reinforces the idea that there is an ongoing "curriculum" for all who are interested.

As we indicated, these principles will surely be enacted differently on different campuses, but to the extent that each one can be supported and integrated into the template of a curriculum, institutions will find success in their initiatives. We believe that a learning and teaching center can be a natural venue for this integration.

Some Cautions

In order to carry out the kind of faculty-oriented curricular template that we have described, an institution will need a source—or more likely a variety of sources—of money, but the good news is that the amounts do not need to be large. Faculty (and, we believe, staff) should be compensated for attending formal workshops. This is one important way that an institution can signal its firm commitment to faculty development as well as to the vital contribution of librarians, writing center staff, tech experts, and others. Stipends for individual summer or off-term work are also critical and, again, do not need to be large. Funds can come from a dedicated operating budget line, gifts, or grants. On our campus, we have used all three sources to fund curricular initiatives that involve faculty development; these strategies speak to the decentralized nature of Carleton's faculty development in general. It requires consistent coordination and communication among the players: faculty initiative leaders, LTC coordinators, and others who meet each spring to plan offerings for the year. The time spent, we believe, is a fair price to pay for the richness of the curriculum that results. The ultimate payoff for the institution, of course, is a robust

faculty culture focused on improved learning experiences for students.

We should also note that if there are several initiatives operating at the same time, an institution, especially a small one, runs the risk of development fatigue. There are only so many faculty and only so many calendar opportunities available. Institutions, therefore, need to prioritize and coordinate their efforts at faculty development so that worthy initiatives do not end up competing for faculty attention and undermining the momentum that can be achieved with a focus on fewer programs. The mechanism for coordination will depend on local governance and administrative structures. One way that we combat this on our campus is to pair the development activities of long-standing initiatives, like writing, with newer ones. This approach leads to fresh synergies and opportunities for the faculty and developers involved while maximizing the precious resources of faculty time and attention.

Of course, not every initiative needs to last forever. Initiatives do, however, need to remain viable and visible long enough to permeate faculty culture in order to accomplish their goals. For this reason "one and done" programs or workshops will not accomplish what a sustained period of institutional attention will. Moreover, new cohorts of faculty arrive every year, and this means that faculty development needs are in some sense never-ending and beyond the capacity of any single faculty developer.

Ultimately, however, faculty development will succeed in affecting faculty culture only if there is a reward structure in place at the institution that recognizes the importance of teaching and learning (Amey, 1999; Diamond, 1993) and signals to faculty that development is an expected part of their professional life in academe. We believe that a curricular approach to faculty development can help do this, but institutions need to understand the implications of such an emphasis and be certain that their review and promotion protocols value participation in the development curriculum. At many institutions, this is not the case, but we are convinced that investing in faculty development, both in terms of resources and rewards, is the surest way to advance the educational mission of the institution.

Conclusions

What has emerged in the most recent 15 years of faculty development work at Carleton is a natural "cycle" of group activity—usually multi-day workshops peer-led or with an invited "expert"—followed by individual grants awarded competitively, and then a sharing of results, which often leads to a new round of the cycle based on what we have learned. Through all of this, our learning and teaching center takes leadership in

promoting and coordinating the early phase of the cycle and then provides a venue for the "sharing" portion of the cycle. In this way, LTC has become both a metaphorical and physical center and a partner for all of the faculty development activities on campus that focus on learning and teaching. The Perlman Center continues to provide its own programming in response to faculty suggestions—book groups, teaching circles, lunch programs, and the like—but the ability of the LTC to attract and support attention for faculty-driven development initiatives remains one of its greatest strengths for "cocreating value" (Schumann, Peters, & Olsen, 2013, p. 21) on our campus.

Institutions that are committed to student learning need to be committed to faculty development as well. At many smaller institutions it is simply assumed that because there are more opportunities for interaction with faculty the students will learn better. This may not be true (Mooney & Reder, 2008; Reder, 2007). As Cox et al. (2011) state, Reshaping a faculty culture . . . requires complex interdependent actions that "together reflect a new pattern of values, norms and expectations" (Kimberly & Quinn 1984, p. 196). No single administrative policy will be sufficient to shape a faculty culture. (p. 810)

The research described above shows that faculty development improves student learning, but that effect is greatly amplified if a broader culture of collegial conversations about teaching and learning is also at work on campus. We believe that a curricular approach to faculty development, decentralized but highly visible and enhanced by our learning and teaching center, makes this faculty culture of learning easier to establish and maintain.

A center for teaching and learning, therefore, has a major role to play in keeping up the visibility and momentum of initiatives while also fostering a broad-based culture of reflective practice from which those initiatives can draw willing participants. Its robust presence on a campus is, thus, both a cause and a symptom of a healthy faculty culture committed to student learning, which is precisely what most institutions, large and small, aspire to create.

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