One Instructor at a Time:
Measuring the Impact of Instruction Consultation Services

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Utilizing a sequential mixed-methods design at a research-intense, public university, this study examined individual instructional consultation, determined its effectiveness and impact, and identified areas of improvement to better meet instructor needs. Findings indicated: (1) a tendency toward a collaborative approach by consultants, though with some inconsistency regarding consultee roles; (2) improvements in teaching effectiveness demonstrated via self-report data and changes student evaluation scores; and (3) overall instructor satisfaction, though coupled with a belief that greater administrative support will be necessary for (a) improving the importance of teaching relative to research, and (b) promoting the usage of the center by the instructional faculty.

Introduction

The presence of faculty development units in higher education began to emerge during the 1960s (Lewis, 2010) and, by the next decade, instructional consultation had become a key practice among many institutions (Erickson & Erickson, 1979). Today, consultation is just one of many higher education faculty development services available to support instructors (Amundsen, Abrami, McAlpine, Weston, Krbavac, & Wilson, 2005). Although consultants may lack technical or content expertise in the instructors' specific fields (Boice, 2000), they are trained to assist with pedagogical decisions and/or actions by providing "outside, unbiased perspectives" on faculty members' teaching (Lenze, 1996, p. 2). Indeed, individual instructional consultation has been shown to be both impactful (Erickson & Erickson, 1979; Hampton & Reiser, 2004; Stevens & Aleamoni, 1985) and highly-rated in terms of instructor satisfaction (Steinert, Mann, Centeno, Dolmans, Spencer, Gelula, &

Prideaux, 2006). Research has also demonstrated that consultation intervention approaches improve teaching performance and that even a single meeting can have a positive impact on one's teaching (Lenze, 1996).

However, to date, the majority of consultation studies have been conducted typically using one stakeholder group (most prominently consultants), and these studies have tended to focus on a single topic regarding consultation. Steinert et al. (2006) called for more rigorous designs with mixed methodological approaches to evaluate faculty development services. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine one teaching and learning center's (TLC's) consultation services at a large, public, high-research institution. Specifically, three research questions guided this study:

1) What is the process of approaching and conducting instructional consultation from the perspective of both the consultant and the instructor?
2) How effective is consultation and what impact does it have on teaching and learning?
3) In what ways can consultations be improved to better meet the needs of instructors?

Given the current climate of quality assurance and accountability in higher education (Leveille, 2006), sole reliance on measures of satisfaction and self-report data was deemed inadequate. Rather, to determine effectiveness and achieve some sense of triangulation, this study utilized a mixed methods approach involving multiple participant groups. The next section of this paper includes a review of the relevant literature related to (a) instructional consultation in higher education and (b) the evaluation of faculty development consultation programs and services. What follows is a description of the mixed methods approach, a presentation of findings, and finally, a discussion of implications for both research and practice.

Literature Review

Since the practice of instructional consultation began to emerge in the late 1960s and early 1970s, various ways to view or categorize this service have been identified, including consultant approaches (e.g., Rutt, 1979), consultation activities (e.g., Finelli, Ott, Gottfried, Hershock, O'Neal, & Kaplan, 2008; Piccinin, 1999), phases of consultation (e.g., Bergquist & Phillips, 1975; Da-

vies, 1975; Marsh & Roche, 1993), and practices based on instructor characteristics, e.g., junior/senior or international faculty (Cox, 1999; Huston & Weaver, 2008; Porter & Kozuh, 1997). In regard to the aforementioned categorizations, of particular interest in the present study were (a) consultant approaches and (b) actions or activities that took place during consultation.

Approaches to the Consultation

As noted, one may consider the approaches the educational developer takes in working with a faculty member. Several articles have focused on this aspect in terms of what the consultant's objectives are or the interaction style he or she employs in working with an instructor (Blake & Mouton, 1978; Davies, 1975; Price, 1976; Rose & Reigert, 1976; Schein, 1969; Tilles, 1961). Rutt's (1979) categorization condensed these works into four approaches: (1) the *product* approach, through which the consultant strives to meet the instructor's need by providing a product or service, such as books, resources, or redesigned test; (2) the *prescriptive* approach, through which the consultant prescribes specific solutions to the problem(s) faced by the faculty member; (3) the *affiliative* approach, through which the consultant seeks approval from the instructor while also avoiding any potential conflicts that may arise; and (4) the *collaborative* approach, through which the consultant emphasizes the interchange of ideas with the consultee through joint decision-making, mutually established goals, and the expectation that instructor will be able to later apply the skills.

Consultation Activities

Other researchers have considered the activities that take place or even the means through which these activities occur (e.g., Finelli et al., 2008; Hampton & Reiser, 2004; Piccinin, 1999). In one study, Piccinin (1999) differentiated three consultation designs according to the activities that took place: (1) feedback-consultation, in which the consultant engages in a discussion with the instructor on issues related to improving his or her teaching; (2) feedback-consultation-class observation, which expands the first approach to include an observation of the instructor's class followed by one or more meetings to offer additional feedback; and (3) feedback-consultation-class observation-student feedback, which builds upon the second category to include direct, anonymous student feedback. Others have also studied the use

of video of one's teaching as a valuable consultation activity (e.g., Marvel, 1991; Taylor-Way & Brinko, 1989).

Evaluation of Faculty Development

The existing research on determining the effectiveness of faculty development is somewhat limited in terms of systematic evaluation (Chen, Sugar, & Bauer, 2012). In order to determine whether a faculty development program effectively improves teaching practices, several factors may be considered, such as participant (instructor) satisfaction, changes in attitudes and behavior, and changes in student learning (Chen et al., 2012; Chism & Szabo, 1997; Steinert et al., 2006). One of the earlier studies on the topic, carried out by Hoyt and Howard (1979), identified three broad types of data relevant for evaluation in faculty development. The first type addresses how participants feel about their experiences via their rating of satisfaction, likelihood of recommending the experience to others, and a general sense of well-being. The second, evaluative data, describes changes in behavior related to teaching, such as trying new approaches, reading more faculty development literature, or demonstrating increased interaction with colleagues. The third type of data relates to improvements in effectiveness and includes factors which can be measured for change. Chism and Szabo (1997) conducted a national survey to review how faculty development programs assess their effectiveness, and found that approximately 70% of consultation programs were evaluated only "sometimes," which "indicat[ed] that evaluation of consultation [was] not consistent" (p. 57).

Earlier research on faculty development program effectiveness commonly employed measures of instructor satisfaction (Levinson-Rose & Menges, 1981; Weimer & Lenze, 1991). Other studies, however, have utilized pre- and post-consultation student evaluations of teaching (SETs), as well as individual face-to-face interviews (Amundsen et al. 2005; Chism & Szabo, 1997; Marsh & Roche, 1993). Some of the more recent consultation-focused studies have utilized a variety of data sources to collect information from faculty (Finelli et al., 2008), such as instructor surveys (Adkoli, Al-Umran, Sheikn, and Deepak, 2010), audio or video recordings of what takes place during instructional consultation (Brinko, 1990; Finelli et al., 2008; Taylor-Way & Brinko, 1989), student feedback or course ratings (Finelli et al., 2008; Hampton & Reiser, 2004; Marsh & Roche, 1993), and even classroom observation data (Piccinin, 1999; Sinkinson, 2011).

It should be noted that, for decades, there has been much controversy sur-rounding the use of student evaluations of teaching (SETs) as a measure of teaching effectiveness (Clayson, 2009; McKeachie, 1997; Short et al. 2008). However, SETs remain a common consideration in promotion and tenure decisions, tend to be favored by administrators (Emery, Kramer, & Tian, 2003), and continue to be the most common method for evaluating teaching (Clayson, 2009; Davis, 2009). Damron (1996) found that SETs are not indica-tive of teaching effectiveness, while Adams (1997) concluded that students are actually not equipped to evaluate certain evaluation components, such as effective pedagogy or instructor expertise. Other research has reached more positive conclusions. That is, some evidence in the literature suggests that SETs can be a useful form of teaching feedback (Centra, 1993; Marsh, 2007; Marsh & Roche, 1994; "Using Student Evaluations to Improve Teach-ing," 1997), while other consultation studies have utilized student feedback in helping faculty to improve their practice (Allison-Jones & Hirt, 2004; Marsh & Roche, 1993).

Methods

Research Design

This study utilized a sequential mixed method design as described by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) and is described in more detail in Brinkley-Etzkorn, Schumann, White, and Smith (forthcoming). In this type of design, two strands of quantitative and qualitative research occur sequentially, and the conclusions reached from the first strand of research are used to inform the formulation or design components for the next strand (p. 153). The pre-sent study was conducted in two phases. First, a survey was carried out, and the findings of this phase of the research were used to inform the design of the subsequent qualitative component in terms of the developing interview questions. The third source of data, existing student evaluations of teaching, was used as an additional source for triangulation of the findings.

The intent of this two-phase, sequential mixed methods study was to ex-amine one TLC's consultation program at a large, public, high-research in-stitution. The survey was designed to collect general information about the consultation process, instructor satisfaction, demographic data, and to iden-tify areas in need of more detailed investigation. Information collected from the survey guided the development of two protocols used to further refine the questions to be employed in speaking one-on-one with both consultants

and instructors. The reason for including the second qualitative phase of this study was to better understand and explain the results from the quantitative portion. Lastly, as an additional source of non-self-report data, student evaluations of teaching ratings were used to triangulate the findings.

Participants and Data Sources

Participants for this study included two groups of individuals: (1) instructors who had utilized the TLC for individualized instructional consultation within the last five years, and (2) the five consultants who were currently working in the center and provided this service. The consultants consisted of both professional staff and faculty scholars associated with the center, reflecting an average of 28 years of teaching experience at the college level. Of the five consultants who participated in the interviews, four were teaching at the university at the time of the study, and four of the five held doctoral degrees in four distinct disciplinary areas.

Due to a strict policy of confidentiality in the center, the director initially contacted each of the 67 instructors/consultees, informing them of the purpose and scope of this study, which was to examine this particular center's approaches and effectiveness in the consultation program. Instructors were given the opportunity to decline any additional contact if they did not want their names to be shared with the researchers conducting this study. Following this initial email from the center's director, the researchers received a list of 61 instructors who had utilized the service and agreed to be contacted with a formal invitation to participate. The instructors were then contacted individually and invited to complete an anonymous survey online.

Online Survey

The first phase of data collection for this study involved sending a 50-item, anonymous online survey to all 61 instructors. This survey was created and distributed using the software *Qualtrics.* It consisted of 22 Likert-scale items about their consultation experience, 15 additional quantitative items, six qualitative (open-ended) questions about the consultation process, and seven demographic items. Of the 61 instructors, 43 submitted a completed survey (response rate of 70.5%). Of those who completed the survey, 57% were male, 40% were female, and 3% did not report their gender. Five major disciplinary categories were represented: STEM fields (34%); professional

schools (31%), social sciences (20%), agricultural sciences (9%), and human-ities (6%). Regarding instructor teaching status, 60% were tenured or on the tenure-track, 37% were non-tenure track (including lecturers and adjunct faculty), and 3% were graduate instructors. Participants were relatively evenly distributed in their total teaching experience across four categories: 0-3 years (29%); 4-9 years (20%); 10-19 years (31%); and 20+ years (20%). Overall, survey respondents appeared to be highly representative of the uni-versity's intructor population profile as a whole, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1
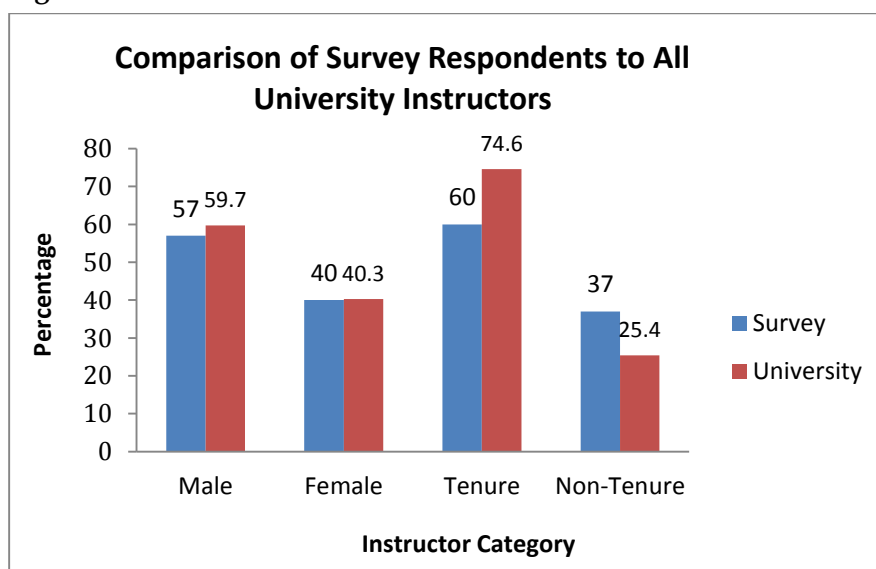
Interviews

After all survey responses were collected, analyses of these data were car-ried out. Survey responses were then used to inform the design of in-depth, semi-structured interview protocols for both consultants and instructors. For example, the survey results indicated that some instructors experienced feel-ings of nervousness or uncertainty prior to their consultation. Therefore, questions were added to the interview protocols to allow the researchers to further explore this topic. Consultants and instructors were asked about the reasons behind this, as well as practices and/or suggestions for alleviating concerns for instructors in the future.

As stated, the five consultants who worked in the center at the time of this study participated in interviews, each of which lasted approximately one hour. While interview protocols varied for the consultants and the instructors, many of the questions were mirrored, and were structured such that responses could be compared among consultants and instructors. Consultant interviews also consisted of questions regarding their training, experiences, and approaches in faculty development, as well as their general beliefs about the consultation process.

After the consultant interviews were complete, invitations were then sent again to all 61 instructors on the original consultation list to request their participation in confidential, one-on-one interviews about the experience of receiving instructional consultation. Instructors were informed that the researchers were continuing this study by following up on the results of the online survey. Of these instructors, 19 agreed to participate in an audio-recorded interview about their experiences, each of which lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Interview participants included 15 males and 4 females; 18 were tenure-track faculty and one participant was a lecturer; 8 of 11 academic colleges at the university were represented. The majority of instructor questions fell under the broad areas of (a) the instructor's perceptions of the consultant and his/her approaches; (b) the activities that took place prior to, during, and after the consultation meeting(s); (c) the instructor's overall satisfaction with the experience; (d) the resulting impac of the consultation; and (e) perceptions of the teaching culture within the university as well as the instructor's specific department.

Student Evaluations of Teaching

The final set of data utilized in this study consisted of pre- and post-consultation student evaluation scores for the 61 instructors initially contacted. The student evaluation of teaching forms at this university include six common Likert-scale items on a scale of 1 (Very Poor) to 6 (Excellent). These common questions ask students about: (1) the course as a whole; (2) the course content; (3) the instructor's contribution; (4) the instructor's effectiveness in teaching the subject material; (5) the organization of the course; and (6) instructor clarity. To complete the data set, evaluation scores in these six areas were collected for all of the instructors' courses for two semesters *prior* and two semesters *following* consultation.

The rationale behind these decisions was (a) to include all courses because it was not possible to determine the course for which the instructor

sought consultation services or if the instructor just had general teaching-related questions, (b) it was assumed that changes in overall teaching practices would carry over to other courses, and (c) to capture a range of scores before and after consultation since uncharacteristically high or low scores have been known to occur. To be included in the analysis, the following criteria had to be met. First, instructors needed to be employed at the university and have received consultation between Fall 2010 and Spring 2013 to allow for pre/post comparisons. Second, adequate data needed to be available, which required that (a) enough students filled out the evaluation to generate a report for the class (at this institution there is a five-student minimum) and that (b) courses could be matched, meaning that undergraduate courses could be compared with other undergraduate courses, and graduate courses could be compared to other graduate courses. These limitations resulted in complete student evaluation data set for 29 instructors.

Data Analysis, Reliability, and Validity

Two software programs were used in data analysis. SPSS was employed for analysis of frequencies and descriptive statistics from the quantitative portion of this research, which included the online survey and the student evaluation items. In order to analyze the qualitative data, all audio recordings from the interviews were fully transcribed by the researchers and subsequently entered into Nvivo10 for analysis. Regarding qualitative analysis, data were coded under eight broad codes and an additional 38 subcodes, which were also checked against frequencies and a word cloud for any themes not covered.

In order to enhance the reliability of the qualitative research collected in this study, transcripts were checked for accuracy, and two features were used in Nvivo to ensure that there was no evolution in the definition of codes: (1) detailed descriptions of each code were logged and rechecked after each iteration of coding and (2) memos were used to track the decision process about code creation and analyses. The third source of data, student evaluations of teaching, were included for the purpose of triangulation, since this added relevant information and perspective from an entirely different group of individuals who were completely uninfluenced by either knowledge of the study or that consultation had occurred at all.

Findings

The Consultation Process

The first research question for this study asked, "What is the process of approaching and conducting instructional consultation from the perspective of both the consultant and the instructor?" In order to gain a thorough understanding of what takes place, findings pertaining to the process will be presented in terms of three phases for the purpose of this study. The first phase, *pre-consultation*, is what takes place before any meetings actually occur, and includes such factors as how participants learned about and contacted the center, the instructor's initial concerns, any pre-consultation requests made by either party, and scheduling of the initial meeting. The second phase is what takes places *during consultation*, and includes all of the meeting(s) and other scheduled consultation activities such as classroom observations, talking to students, and offering materials or other resources to the instructor. The third phase, *post-consultation*, is what follows contact between the instructor and consultant, and addresses points such as changes in one's teaching practices, confidence in one's own teaching, overall satisfaction with the process, whether the instructor's goals were achieved, and the extent to which any sustained interaction takes place with the teaching and learning center. The following sections will address these three phases and the findings that emerged for each.

Pre-Consultation

Of the instructors who completed the survey, nearly half (46%) had learned about consultation services by attending another teaching center event; others reported that they learned about this service via a referral or word of mouth (17%), directly from a center staff member (17%), or other means such as the center's website, social media sites, or various promotional materials (20%). Survey respondents also indicated that they typically received a response to their request for consultation within two days of their inquiry (82%) and came in for their consultation meeting within two weeks of their initial contact (78%). Some participants requested to work with a specific consultant (38%), although a majority (62%) did not. Instructors also indicated in their responses to the survey that they had initiated contact with the center for a variety of reasons. The five most common reasons included

a desire to: (a) foster more student engagement; (b) learn new teaching strategies; (c) create a more positive classroom environment; (d) improve overall instruction, or (d) develop new activities and assignments. A detailed breakdown of all reasons instructors sought consultation are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Reasons Instructors Reported Seeking Instructional Consultation*

Topic of Interest	n	%
Learning ways to engage students	25	74%
Developing new teaching strategies	25	74%
Creating positive classroom environment	21	62%
Improving instruction	21	62%
Developing new activities/assignments	20	59%
Course delivery methods	19	56%
Course design	17	50%
Collecting student feedback	16	47%
Defining learning objectives	15	44%
Interpreting student feedback	13	38%
Classroom observations	11	32%
Presentation skills	11	32%
Syllabus creation/review	10	29%
Student evaluations	9	26%
Curriculum design	9	26%
Communication skills	6	18%
Test construction and item writing	5	15%

* Survey respondents were instructed to check all that applied and were given the option to write in responses as well.

As reflected in the survey and later described in more detail during the interviews, five instructors described feeling nervous prior to the first consultation meeting, citing the following reasons: feelings of insecurity and inadequacy; a fear of asking for help; feeling like a failure; and concerns about confidentiality or having a "leak" making its way to one's department. Five instructors who participated in interviews suggested several solutions to this that could be used to address this issue, including: discussing consultation services more openly at orientation events, seeking greater support from deans and department heads, and increasing the TLC's visibility overall on campus. Two interview participants recommended specifically targeting

younger faculty who, they believed, were more likely to be receptive to accepting and implementing suggestions for improvement.

During Consultation

One research objective to this study regarding the consultation process was to determine if there was alignment between the type of approach the instructor expected from the consultant and the approach that was actually taken. During interviews, the five consultants stated that they were influenced by disciplines including psychology, counseling, and reflective practice, and all five described a strong desire for a "client-centered" approach that emphasized "relationship-building" and "collegiality." The instructors who participated in interviews appeared to be in agreement with this notion; the five most commonly-used words that appeared in more than two-thirds of the instructor interviews to describe consultant-instructor actions were "casual," "conversational," "constructive," "helpful," and "full of suggestions."

During the interviews, both consultants and instructors were also asked to describe the primary role(s) of the consultant during the process. Overall, there was very clear alignment between the two, as indicated in the most commonly-repeated phrases, shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Perceived Consultant Roles

Instructors' Consultant Perceptions	Consultants' Self- Perceptions
Mentor	Mentor
Guide	Guide
Supporter	Supporter
Fresh Perspective	Outside Analyst
Colleague	Collaborator
Helper	Partner
Sounding Board	Facilitator
Ego-Massager	Coach/Motivator
Evaluator	Critical Thinker
Expert	Teacher
Parental Figure	Conversationalist

   While both consultants and instructors viewed the consultant's role positively, nearly all characterizations described a knowledgeable and supportive role. Consultants and instructors were also asked during their interviews about perceived instructor roles during the process and to describe the nature of the relationship. Unlike the consultant roles, however, there was considerably more variation in the responses to this question, with instructors viewing their role ranging from passive to highly active. A comparison of the responses to instructor roles is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Perceived Instructor Roles

Instructors' Self-Perceptions	Consultants' Instructor Perceptions
Process Leader	Equal Roles
Decision Maker	Free with Information
Driver	Honest
Active Participant	Open-Minded
Active Learner	Trusting
Content Expert	
Receiver of Information	
Implementer of Ideas	
Child	

   Instructors were asked additional questions about the activities that took place during consultation and the nature of the interaction with the consultant. These items, along with the item mean, standard deviation, and the percent of instructors who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Instructor Survey Responses about the Consultation Process

Survey Item	M*	SD	%
The consultant created a positive environment	4.88	0.7	97
The consultant encouraged me to be an equal contributor	4.72	0.77	97
The consultant supported my efforts to improve	4.82	0.72	91
The consultant provided me with added perspective	4.79	0.74	97
A timeframe for achieving my goals was established	4.03	0.82	69
Specific goals were identified during my consultation	4.44	0.79	88
The consultant offered concrete ways to achieve each goal	4.56	0.91	94
A 5-point Likert scale of Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree was used			

Lastly, in the online survey, instructors were asked several items about the approach used by the consultant as well as to what extent this matched their expectations prior to consultation. These findings are illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Comparison of Instructor's Expected and Observed Consultant Approaches
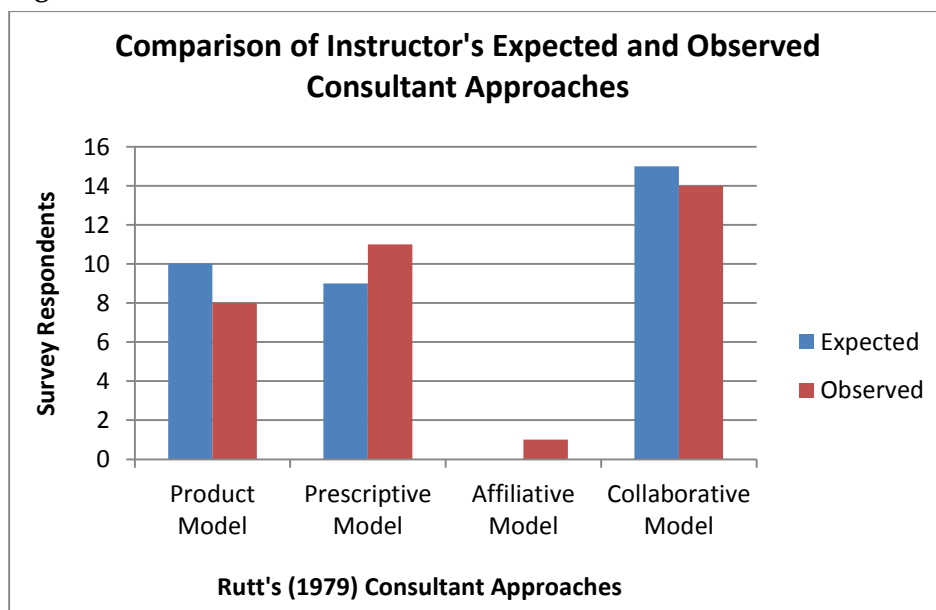
Post-Consultation

Most of the survey respondents (82%) reported that their consultation meetings lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, with a majority of instructors visiting for 1-2 consults (54%); others visited 3-4 times (26%), while some participated in five or more visits (20%). During interviews, both instructors and consultants consistently agreed that it was the instructor who typically determined the end of the consultation process. When, exactly, this does or *should* occur could not be pinpointed by either participant group, although one instructor described it as "when the pain point had been resolved." About one-third of the instructors emphasized that an email or a call just to check in can serve as a reminder of what was discussed without adding the pressure of a follow-up visit. All five consultants emphasized the importance of follow-up; however, it was revealed during these interviews that follow-up does not always occur or does not occur consistently. Interestingly, nearly all instructors (91%) who completed the survey reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with the follow-up that they received.

Most of the instructor survey respondents (89%) also indicated that they were satisfied with their consultation experience overall. Without any prompting from the interviewer, five instructors emphasized their appreciation for the availability of this service and stated that they would likely utilize other faculty development services in the future. Eighteen of the nineteen instructors who were interviewed stated that they would refer a colleague having difficulties in teaching and learning issues for instructional consultation, including the two interview participants who reported being dissatisfied with their own consultation experience. When asked to elaborate on what led them to feel satisfied about the experience, instructors consistently stated in their interviews that "consultation works really well," that they experienced "considerable improvement in teaching evaluations," and that the process was both "helpful" and "constructive." Survey items that measured instructor satisfaction are shown in Table 5, along with the mean, standard deviation, and percent of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed.

Table 5

Instructor Survey Responses Indicating Satisfaction with Consultation

Survey Item	M*	SD	%
I gained important insights from my consultation experience	4.68	0.59	94
My concerns were addressed during the consultation process	4.71	0.68	94
I was satisfied with the amount of time it took to address my concerns	4.7	0.53	97
The consultation process met my expectations	4.56	0.7	94
The consultant's recommendations adequately addressed my concerns	4.56	0.93	91
I would refer other instructors for consultation	4.71	0.68	94
I would return for assistance in the future	4.68	0.77	94
Overall, I was satisfied with the consultation process	4.62	0.7	94

A 5-point Likert scale of Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree was used

Consultation Effectiveness

The second research question for this study asked, "How effective is consultation and what impact does it have on teaching and learning?" Two approaches were used to answer this question: (1) by comparing pre- and post-consultation student evaluations of teaching (SETs) and (2) by analyzing self-report data on changes in behavior and attitudes noted in the online survey. Following the established approach to analyzing SETs as outlined in the methods section, pre- and post-consultation student evaluation scores were compared across a sample of instructors (n= 29). When averaging the scores for the six common questions across semesters and instructors, there was a pre-consultation mean score of 3.55 (on a six-point, 0 to 5 scale) and a post-consultation mean score of 3.91 on the same scale, indicating an average increase in SET scores of +.36 or approximately 10%. As a whole, approximately two-thirds of the consultees saw improvements in SET scores (*M*= 19.69%, *SD*= 33.79%), although 31% of instructors experienced a decline in their SET scores (*M*= -7.83%, *SD*= 6.52%); one instructor experienced no change at all in SET scores following consultation. Again, while it is acknowledged here that there is much debate over the use of student evaluation scores (as noted in the literature review section), there are few consistent measures that can, with confidentiality kept intact, reflect actual effectiveness in teaching and student learning. Thus, student evaluations were employed here as a surrogate for other, more direct measures.

The second measure of instructor changes following consultation came from a set of self-report, Likert-scale items included in the online survey.

Nearly all instructors who completed the survey reported positive changes as a result of consultation. Table 6 provides the results of the survey items related to self-reported changes in attitudes and behaviors, showing the mean, standard deviation, and percent of instructors who agreed or strongly agreed with each item.

Table 6
Instructor Self-Report Data on the Effectiveness of Consultation*

Survey Item	M	SD	%
I felt comfortable implementing suggestions provided during consultation	4.68	0.54	94
I continue to apply skills I learned during my consultation	4.59	0.61	94
As a result of my consultation, I now feel more comfortable addressing similar concerns on my own	4.42	0.75	85
After the consultation process, I felt more confident in my abilities	4.26	1.11	79
*A 5-point Likert scale of Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree was used			

How to Better Meet Instructor Needs

The third research question for this study asked, "In what ways can consultations be improved to better meet the needs of instructors? Specifically, the objectives of this research question were: (1) to determine whether there should be any standardized procedures in the consultation process; (2) to identify any challenges or barriers that exist to meeting instructor needs; and (3) to identify any changes that instructors believe would improve this service or, more broadly, faculty development overall.

Regarding whether or not any standardized procedures should be followed during consultation, both consultants and instructors were asked during interviews about their opinions of formalized processes, such as establishing clear goals, action items and who should complete them, and a set timeline. In earlier faculty development literature, these formalized processes have been referred to as a contract (see Davies, 1975). Instructors were split nearly down the middle in their preferences. Those who were in favor of having such a plan stated that it would be "a good idea to have [one]" since these instructors "preferred structure," and believed "it would have helped to tie up any loose ends." Alternatively, those instructors who were not in favor of such a plan felt very strongly, with one instructor noting that he "hated formal plans." Two other instructors stated that they "wouldn't

have enjoyed it," with the other saying she "would have avoided the process entirely."

Consultants, however, were more moderate in their feelings toward a formal plan. Overall, the five consultants believed a "quasi-standard" structure works best, but they noted that "ensuring a fair amount of leeway" is crucial. There was strong agreement that some aspects of consultation should remain consistent, such as the completion of intake forms, the collection and storage of data, the request that all instructors bring their syllabus, the expectation that the consultant's behavior should be "relaxed" and "collegial," and that follow-up should be carried out as part of the process. However, when asked about the approaches of other consultants in the TLC during interviews, all agreed that there was great value in emphasizing and maintaining differences among individual consultants.

Also of concern, with regard to improving this service for consultees, was the identification of any challenges or barriers that may prevent instructor needs from being met. The balance between research and teaching as a challenge was discussed by ten of the instructor interview participants. Two of these instructors stated that they believed teaching is "undervalued" and "secondary to research." A third stated that instructors are "paid to research, not teach," while a fourth claimed that he viewed teaching, for the most part, as an "optional activity." Several instructors touched on the notion that the value of teaching is "departmentally different," although they emphasized their belief that most instructors at the university do care about the quality of their teaching, despite feeling the pressures of research on the tenure-track.

When instructors were asked during interviews about the ways in which consultation services could be improved overall, they offered several specific suggestions across two broad areas. The first area addressed what takes place specifically during the consultation process. Four instructors noted a dislike for the paper copies they received during their instructional consultation; instead, they would prefer that all documents be given to them electronically. It was also suggested that the TLC turn several of the most common consultation topics, such as exam creation, into campus-wide workshops that were not already available. One instructor believed that offering comprehensive course evaluation services could be extremely useful (although very time consuming for any TLC).

The second category of instructor recommendations pertained to the larger faculty development and university contexts. In this regard, instructors recommended that the TLC seek greater support for service utilization

from department heads, as it was believed that this would further minimize the "stigma" of seeking teaching support, particularly in certain areas of administration and in departments with a much heavier focus on research. One instructor remarked:

> I don't think I'm the only person in this position, because I've had conversations with others, but the work [instructors] do with [the TLC] is of no importance to certain levels of administration and, in some cases, it's counter to what administration wants…and that is a reflection of priorities. And I don't know what you can do about it. There have been times where I hear of [an innovative teaching practice] I want to try and get grief over it… so, if you can find a way to integrate administration into [the plans of the faculty development center], it would help.

It was also recommended that simply being more visible around campus, perhaps at events sponsored by other centers and offices, may draw in more instructors for this important service. Several instructors also suggested incorporating more disciplinary-specific and relevant examples into consultation and in faculty development training overall. Elaborating on this, one instructor noted:

> Maybe [my consultant] could pull some work from [my discipline]…and it doesn't have to be something that I don't have a clue about; it would just be nice to have that because it's something I want to lean on [my consultant] for. I also know my colleagues are going to need [that kind of support] because they're not going to be able to start from [a position of minimal teaching experience] and get to that level on their own.

Yet another instructor participant suggested involving other faculty members more in the work of the center via programs like those offered at many institutions, including faculty fellows or working alongside faculty developers in various workshops around campus. One instructor recalled that the university has a practice of recognizing a researcher every week and suggested that an instructor be recognized each week as well, so as to emphasize what teaching practices other instructors are using. Overall, the instructors

who participated in the interviews indicated that they enjoyed having the opportunity to provide their feedback through this process, and suggested making this type of assessment ongoing, perhaps by sending out an annual survey to instructors who had utilized consultation services.

Discussion

Summary of Findings

This study sought to address three major research objectives. The first was to better understand the consultation process from beginning to end in this particular TLC. This began by identifying the ways in which instructors learned about this service, what topics were of particular interest, and what took place during and after their consultation meetings. The data collected in this study provided a rich understanding of the events as well as the perceptions of those involved, and revealed that while both consultants and instructors viewed the process as highly collaborative, there were noticeable inconsistencies for the role of the instructor.

The second objective was to determine whether the services provided in this center are effective and to determine the impact that consultation has on teaching and learning. To answer this question, student evaluations of teaching (SET) scores were employed. The findings revealed that approximately two-thirds of the instructors demonstrated noticeable gains in their SET scores. As Adams (1997) noted, students may not be equipped to evaluate their instructors' teaching effectiveness in some areas. However, as some of the previous research involving the use of student evaluations of teaching concluded, this study also found the use of SETs to be a useful form of teaching feedback (Centra, 1993; Marsh, 2007; Marsh & Roche, 1994).

The third objective of this study was to determine how consultation services could be modified to better serve instructors. While the findings revealed that instructors were highly satisfied overall with their individual experiences, the most commonly cited source of improvement would be in greater administrative and departmental support for the service. This is an interesting finding, given the differences in attitudes toward the value of teaching across disciplines, and will be an important consideration for consultants, administrators, and instructors as they continue to work toward placing greater emphasis on instructional quality in higher education. It should be noted that satisfaction data is just one piece of information in evaluating faculty development programs and services such as consultation.

That is, while satisfaction with the service itself may be an appropriate measure to gauge how much participants enjoyed the service or received the assistance they sought, it is also extremely beneficial to look more deeply into other sources of data that can demonstrate measureable impacts of programs and services delivered by TLCs.

Takeaways and Recommendations

Based on data collected from both instructors and consultants, there are several recommendations resulting from this study that can be offered to other faculty developers and that are already in various stages of implementation within the center studied here. First, centers should consider if, and to what extent, they wish to market and/or grow their consultation services. As noted, the instructors who participated in this study indicated that they would like to see the teaching and learning center promoting its services more, particularly consultation, across campus. It is important to note that, whether there are two or twenty consultants on staff, deliberate planning can aid in the best allocation of center resources, including staff time, clearly-identified actions, and reporting.

Second, it is important that TLCs purposefully address issues of internal consistency. That is, when there are multiple consultants working in a center, it can be beneficial to discuss practices with one another and to come to a consensus about whether there should be standard procedures such as records maintenance, formal plans, or perhaps even a plan for follow-up. Faculty developers working together within a unit may also benefit from discussing variation/consistency in their approaches, such as those identified by Rutt (1979). Following the conclusion of this research, the teaching and learning center involved in this study implemented a new practice among the staff: holding discussion groups to review scholarly research as well as important or challenging issues brought up during individual consultations (though always maintaining instructor confidentiality). These conversations have created the opportunity to talk through consultation-related issues from the literature, while also providing an outlet to discuss various approaches for handling new or unique instructor issues in practice.

Third, centers that have not done so already may opt to discuss the logistics of creating a more formalized training or mentoring program for new consultants and graduate assistants working in these centers. Such a program may include a series of mentoring meetings, readings, observations, or

peer evaluations. This recommendation relates to the aforementioned practice of determining if and, to what extent, a TLC seeks to standardize not only the consultation processes and procedures, but also the philosophy guiding the approach(es) used by the individual consultants. To this end, the present study illustrated two key findings. First, there was a high degree of consistency in (a) the approach that the instructor desired and (b) the approach the instructor received. Second, there was a high satisfaction rate reported by the participating instructors through both the survey and the interviews. Thus, by establishing processes for the professional development and training of new and existing consultants, it is possible to develop both individually and cohesively for the betterment of the TLC and meeting the needs of instructors.

Fourth, faculty development centers might also consider further exploring and solidifying partnerships across campus, so as to better meet the needs of special cases. For example, by partnering with Disability Services, Libraries, Judicial Affairs, Technology Services, and Student Success, co-consultants may be brought in (if desired) and information can be shared quickly and effectively while maintaining confidentiality requirements for instructors utilizing this service. As noted in the findings of this study, there are, at times, feelings of nervousness experienced by the instructors who seek consultation services. Indeed, as the instructors suggested, simply increasing the faculty development presence on campus can serve as one means of alleviating these concerns. Additionally, such partnerships can potentially provide new opportunities that can better meet instructor needs.

Fifth, faculty development centers may wish to consider expanding their definitions of what consultation means. It is not uncommon for one framework or approach to guide the work of consultants, whether that pertains to the topics covered in consultation, the processes/actions that are followed, or ensuring certain stages are met. Conceptualizations of consultation may change by also considering who can or should be involved in the process. In some circumstances, group consultation may be appropriate, where either multiple instructors or multiple consultants are involved at one time. Likewise, it is worthwhile to consider the impact of what this center refers to as "informal" consultation or discussions that take place not in formal meetings, but rather over coffee or simply running into one another on campus.

Finally, it is recommended that centers move beyond only "sometimes" evaluating their services and instead develop and implement a long term plan, perhaps incorporating new sources of data such as instructor self-evaluations, database audits, or peer reviews, when available. As previously

noted in the review of the literature, Hoyt and Howard (1979) identified three broad categories of data sources for the evaluation of faculty development programs and services: satisfaction, evaluative, and improvement data. This study attempted to incorporate these three sources via satisfaction items in the survey, self-report data through both the survey and instructor interviews, and improvements as reflected in student evaluations of teaching. As the culture of assessment continues to grow across higher education, the demonstration of effectiveness in service provision is increasingly important. This TLC has established an ongoing evaluation plan by sending an annual survey to instructors who received consultation services with the intent of both internal and external reporting.

Limitations

The primary limitation of this study is the degree to which the method and findings can be generalized and thus applied to other faculty development centers. The findings in this study reflect only one center at one university setting, not a comparative study of centers. While caution should be urged in directly adopting the methodology employed here for all centers, this type of study can provide value to other centers in three ways. First, it builds upon the extant literature to examine practice as has been attempted here. Second, it provides a reasonably comprehensive process for evaluating consultation that can be either fully or partially adopted within another center's context. Finally, the findings may result in a tailored set recommendations that may prove beneficial in improving this service overall.

Future Research

Future research should consider longitudinal studies of instructional consultation. Comparison data, as opposed to a single investigation at one point in time, might prove especially useful in examining changes in practice over time as well as changes in the growth of the center. Longitudinal studies may also provide a more detailed look at the long-term impact of instructional consultation on both teaching and student learning. Finally, future studies should also consider additional sources of data (e.g., student performance data or changes in faculty peer evaluations).

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