The Broad Spectrum of CTL Initiatives:
A Brief Introduction from the Editor-in-Chief

Tony Cimasko

Despite ongoing efforts from certain administrators, governments, and other stakeholders to standardize and homogenize pedagogy, educational effectiveness always relies on the ability of everyone involved in the process of teaching and learning to respond to the unique needs and interests of those on the ground, in the pedagogical moment—the teachers and learners who meet together and create learning on each campus, in each department and program, and in each classroom (or online venue). The contributing authors of volume 16 of the Journal on Centers for Teaching and Learning provide seven different snapshots of institutions working to meet the immediate and localized nature of education. These varied snapshots begin to hint at the broad spectrum of circumstances in education that must all be addressed in order to improve outcomes.

Readers will begin to see the variety of these initiatives in the motivations that led to them. Some, such as Hartman et al.'s "Supporting Teaching Excellence: A CTLA Case Study" and McNeill's "The Making of a Teaching Center: Insights from the Frontlines," encountered a need for CTL to match institutional priorities and to make CTL efforts coherent, visible, and effective. In some cases like Hartman et al., McNeill et al., and Addy and Gillette's "How Student Involvement Can Support CTLs in Navigating a Changing Educational Landscape," evolving educational conditions, political and social pressures, and perceived lack of institutional clarity made the need for successful projects even more urgent. Others, such as Kilgore et al.'s "Side Channels: Faculty Support Networks," Kaslow et al.'s "Maximizing the Psychological Benefits of Writing Group for Faculty," and Marcketti et al.'s "The Far-Reaching Benefits of a Fellowship Grant Program," sought solutions to high levels of burnout among faculty who encountered inadequate support along with other ways of supporting and promoting well-being and development. Of course, enhancing student

learning and experiences is a constant motivator, and Saucier et al.'s "What GTAs Need: Implications from a Survey of the Goals, Concerns, and Questions of Graduate Teaching Assistants," Marcketti et al., and Addy and Gillette in particular highlight this. Ongoing ties between pedagogy and scholarship highlight writing groups and grants in Kaslow et al. and Marcketti et al. For McNeill et al., the designers were able to think more long term toward sustainability and scalability.

As you begin reading, you will not be surprised to see that all of the articles have as their core concern connections to advancing teaching excellence, whether through conceptual clarity, programming, faculty or student involvement, or support structures. However, each article approaches this shared concern from a different angle, highlighting the multiplicity of CTL functions in the process: creating infrastructure, training instructors, promoting collaboration, supporting scholarship, or engaging students. These different entry points result in data driven papers (e.g., Saucier et al., Marcketti et al.) as well as experiential, process-based accounts (e.g., McNeill et al., Kilgore et al., Kaslow et al.).

More than simple solutions, we expect that this volume of JCTL will encourage your own continuing search to find avenues of research that are meaningful for your learners and instructors, and that it will serve to guide and inspire your curricular choices.