
Center for Teaching Effectiveness

The University of Texas at Austin

Program Overview

How do most college and university faculty members learn how to teach? What do they find the most difficult part of teaching? Is there anyone who is available to assist them when they run into teaching problems?

Even though faculty members spend 85-90 percent of their time on teaching related activities, very seldom, if ever, are they exposed to methods which will assist them in more effectively guiding the learning of their students. This lack of specific training in teaching techniques can be extremely stressful and is very inefficient. Typically, faculty members use a teaching method just because that is how they were taught or because someone else they know uses that method. Seldom do they think about the consequences. This results in a great deal of wasted time and effort which could be put to much more productive use if they knew more about the basics of teaching.

To help provide assistance to faculty members who wish to know more about effective teaching techniques, numerous colleges and universities are establishing Faculty/Instructional Development Centers or Centers for Teaching Effectiveness. The Center for Teaching Effectiveness at The University of Texas at Austin has been in existence since 1973 and has been a leader in the faculty development movement. At The University of Texas, it is felt that the Center conveys an important practical, philosophical, and psychological statement about the commitment of the University of Texas to excellence in all areas, teaching as well as research and service.

The University of Texas at Austin is a *Public, Research University I* (Carnegie classification) with approximately 2300 full time equivalent faculty with an additional 600 FTEs of assistant instructors and teaching assistants, 40,500 undergraduates and 10,000 graduate stu-

dents. It is the main campus of the statewide system. This paper will discuss the history of this particular Center and the programs and activities which are available to the 2600+ faculty members.

Philosophy

The Center for Teaching Effectiveness began its operation almost simultaneously with the onset of the faculty development movement in higher education. The philosophy of this movement is that the most important and productive resource any institution has is its faculty; therefore, time and money invested in the development of faculty members return many times their value for as long as the faculty member is a part of the institution.

One way this investment pays dividends is that when an individual instructor becomes a more effective teacher because of our efforts, the change has an impact on his or her current students as well as on all future students who enroll in that class and any other class taught by that person for as long as he or she teaches. And once a faculty member realizes what can be done, he or she becomes a self-renewing resource and continues to improve without the need for much more than encouragement. Also, by showing an interest in that individual's teaching, we are communicating the message that the University cares about teaching in general and that person in particular. This demonstration of commitment on the part of the institution then results in a return of that commitment by the individual and an improved identification with the institution.

The translation of the faculty development movement philosophy into specific programs at various institutions takes many forms depending on the character and goals of each institution. Some programs concentrate only on the improvement of teaching, some assist faculty in

their professional development (grant writing, publication, time management, etc.), some in their personal development (crisis management, career change, etc.). Some programs work more at the institutional level with departments, curriculum design, and program revision. Each approach to faculty development has its advantages and disadvantages, and what an individual center chooses to highlight must be in accord with the goals of the institution.

The Center for Teaching Effectiveness (CTE) at The University of Texas at Austin has always had the improvement of teaching as its central focus, although programs in other areas have occasionally been offered. The restriction of emphasis is due primarily to the original charge given by the Faculty Senate and to a continuing commitment to that charge by subsequent Advisory Boards. Although we feel that a broader focus, one which includes professional development programs, might be more consistent with the overall goals of the University, for now the small size of the staff prevents us from expanding into other areas more representative of those overall goals.

In spite of the restrictions in size and emphasis, CTE has served as a leader in the field and a model for many other centers across the country and internationally. Nevertheless, we believe that our first responsibility is to *this* campus and its faculty. We view ourselves as a *service organization* for the U.T. faculty, and we can be depended upon to do whatever is needed to help instructors find an answer to their questions as quickly as possible. We believe it is this determination which has helped us win the respect of those with whom we've worked. It is the respect of our U.T. colleagues which we prize, more than the national recognition we already have.

The History of CTE

In September of 1972, in response to Faculty Senate interest, a Senate Committee composed of five senior faculty members was appointed to investigate the matter of the improvement of teaching effectiveness. After seven months of investigation, discussions with other faculty members, and deliberation, the committee presented its report to the Faculty Senate which recommended the establishment of a Center for Teaching Effectiveness. This report was adopted by the members of the Senate without dissent, and in April of 1973 the report was brought before the University Council. The Council concurred and forwarded the report to the President with a recommendation that a Center be established. The President approached the Board of Regents with this proposition in the summer of 1973, they approved it, and the Center began operations in the 1973-74 school year.

The broad mission of the Center for Teaching Effectiveness is to provide the faculty with assistance in making teaching/ learning more effective on the UT campus. The Faculty Senate Committee which initially proposed the formation of the Center stated that the focus should be on support for faculty members, although the Center has since become involved with the training of teaching assistants. The Committee also intended that the Center should work primarily with faculty members who were trying to improve undergraduate courses. While this is predominately the case, much of the work which is done also assists faculty in their graduate courses as well.

During the first semester of its existence, the Center's Advisory Board (composed of five faculty members, two students and two administrators) decided upon the following program activities as a set of short-term (five year) emphases, listed in descending order of priority:

1. Courses in college teaching for faculty members;
2. Courses in college teaching for graduate Teaching Assistants;
3. Consulting services for faculty members;

4. Information and referral services;
5. Periodic workshops for faculty members on a variety of topics related to teaching improvement;
6. A detailed examination of general-purpose classrooms to determine their suitability and to note the type of equipment they contain with an eye to upgrading substandard classrooms.

ACTIVITIES

The activities conducted in response to the Advisory Board's recommendations are briefly described below.

INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATION

One of the most effective and yet time-consuming activities of the Center is the consultation service. All the professional staff members engage in one-to-one consultation with faculty clients. These consultations range from helping the client find resources or references relating to things they want to try in their teaching, to long-term consultation lasting for a semester or more.

During the consultation process, the consultant typically reviews course materials, evaluates in-class teaching behaviors, examines the tests, and reviews student evaluations of the course and instructor. Occasionally, the instructor's class will be videotaped to allow the instructor to take a more objective look at his or her teaching behavior. If, by chance, the consultant does not feel completely qualified to determine solutions for a particular teaching problem, additional resource people may be consulted. All interactions which take place during these consultations are *strictly confidential*.

Although the time spent on this service is great, the pay-offs in terms of amount and duration of positive change in the client are also great, and we feel that this has been one of our most successful activities.

INFORMATION/REFERRAL SERVICE

This service comes in three forms. The first is a **Newsletter** put out twice a semester containing information about Center activities as well as articles written by the staff and others in the field of faculty development on topics of interest. Occasionally, we also solicit articles from faculty members who use innovative techniques in their classes or who have expertise in teaching-related areas. A recent addition to the newsletter has been the inclusion of an annotated list of interesting articles from journals and other sources. Faculty members may request single copies of these articles on a lending basis. This addition to the newsletter has allowed us to reach a whole new group of faculty who have been unable to attend other Center functions.

A second type of information/referral is our small **Reading Room** containing books and articles on teaching. These materials are available to the faculty and graduate students to read at the Center, however, our book holdings *do not circulate*.

Many of the Center's handouts are included in this sourcebook.

Though our books do not circulate, they may be used during regular Center hours (8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.); photocopying is available for a minimal fee (either paid at the time of copying or through IDT - Inter-Departmental Transfer of funds). The collection of books includes works ranging from the evaluation of faculty through teaching writing across the curriculum and are classified as follows:

Computer-Based Instruction
 Educational Administration
 Educational Philosophy
 Educational Psychology
 Educational Technology
 Evaluating Faculty
 Evaluating Students
 Faculty Development
 Instructional Design
 Objectives
 Reference
 TAs (Graduate Assistants)

Teaching Writing
Teaching Methods
Journals
Newsletters

The Center also maintains a lending collection of articles relevant to a variety of aspects of teaching. Because of copyright rules and printing costs, these materials may be borrowed for 3 days only. Requests for these may be made either in person or through campus mail.

In order to help faculty members find information in the Center's library quickly, we have compiled a computerized listing of the library holdings. In addition, we are planning to produce a series of booklets that cover the most frequently requested topics in a condensed version, including an annotated bibliography for each topic.

A third, though less formal, means of information/referral is our **availability to answer questions over the phone**. We receive numerous telephone inquiries about questions on teaching, such as grading policies, ways to help struggling students, where to find equipment and many more, and have been able to answer a large percentage of them. When we can't find the answer, we can usually refer the caller to someone else who can.

WORKSHOPS

The Center conducted regularly scheduled workshops for the faculty and graduate teaching assistants up until 1985. They were offered approximately once a month with some extending over a several week period when the topic was particularly complex. In general, the workshop topics were aimed at the theory and practice of teaching including such things as lecture methods, testing, grading, discussion leading and so on.

In 1977, the Center began to experiment with workshops which were aimed at the personal development of faculty. The first of these was a self-assertion skills workshop. This program was so successful that it has been offered several times since and has been included in the offerings for many of the teaching courses

for graduate TAs. In 1980, other personal development topics were added including "Dealing with Stress" and "Surviving the Mid-life Transition." The latter was quite successful and has been repeated periodically.

Attendance at these workshops has varied widely, depending on the topic. While those who attended them rate them highly, the relatively small numbers reached by this format have caused us to question their usefulness given the time required to prepare for each one. Since 1985 we have discontinued these workshops and instead concentrate our efforts on individual consultations, our written communication modes (i.e., the Newsletter, handbooks, handouts) and our expanded workshops, the *New Faculty Teaching/Orientation Seminar* and *Experienced Faculty Teaching Conference*.

UNIVERSITY-WIDE AND DEPARTMENTAL CONSULTATION AND SPECIAL PROJECTS

The CTE professional staff members periodically are requested to assist with special projects, provide consultation to departments or serve on University-wide committees. Some examples of these kinds of activities include:

- Conducting workshops on teaching-related topics for individual departments
- Acting as facilitators on departmental/college faculty retreats
- Assisting in the analysis and design of curriculum
- Assisting in the design of teaching portfolios for specific departments and colleges
- Serving on the committee to examine the general purpose classrooms and make recommendations for improvements that will facilitate teaching in them
- Helping colleges design and implement conferences with teaching themes
- and so forth.

These activities help us get to know the individuals in various departments and provide them with resources who have expertise in the teaching/learning process in a variety of situations.

RESEARCH

Over the course of our existence the Center has been involved in numerous research projects concerning teaching. Although research is not our primary function, we find that many of the questions we have are peculiar to the U.T. environment and are best answered by study on our own campus.

Hogg Foundation Assertiveness Study

Mention was made earlier about the expansion of Center workshops into the personal development area. One of these efforts began as a research study funded by the Hogg Foundation. When we initially considered the possibility that assertiveness training would be beneficial to instructors, we felt the need to study the process before embarking on a full scale program. With the grant we received we were able to bring a clinical psychologist onto the staff temporarily to design a program for us. The program was then tested for its effectiveness before being officially implemented.

Sloan Foundation PSI Project

In this project a number of faculty from Engineering and Natural Science plus a few from other areas such as English and Library Science developed various courses using the Keller Personalized System of Instruction, better known as PSI. The process involved modularizing course materials, training proctors, setting up management systems and so on. The Measurement and Evaluation Center evaluated the success of the developed courses separately and collectively, and reports describing each course and the overall project were produced.

Exxon Foundation SIP Project

In the **Student Input Project** we investigated a process for supplying rapid feedback on teaching effectiveness to instructors while at the same time involving students more intimately in their own instruction. In the study each course had a team of students who met with the instructor on a regular basis to discuss the class and talk over ideas on how to im-

prove the teaching/learning in that class. The study involved about two dozen classes from across the campus which made it possible for us to compare a whole range of variations on the SIP theme (i.e., that frequent, direct feedback will help increase teaching effectiveness). We found that the variable that made the biggest difference in the success or failure of the process was the degree of involvement of the individual. The more an instructor or student became actively involved in the feedback process, the more he or she derived from it. The study convinced us, however, that it was not feasible to institute the process on a large scale because of the need for commitment on the part of the participants.

Large Class Analysis Project

In 1985, we completed a study of the attitudes of students and faculty toward large classes and the practices which contribute to the success or failure of such classes. During the course of this project, observers from the Center staff sat in on the classes of faculty participants for the entire semester and recorded data on what went on in class. In addition, student and faculty attitudes about large classes before and after the semester were sampled to determine if any changes could be detected. Other instructors who taught large classes were interviewed about their own methods, successful or unsuccessful. Course materials were reviewed. The results indicated that students and faculty in general did not care for large classes, but the students preferred those large classes in which the instructor challenged them intellectually. The results of the interviews have been compiled into a handbook for instructors of large classes (*Taming the Pedagogical Monster*) which contains many suggestions on all aspects of teaching such a course.

FIPSE Grant

This project involved an analysis of the ways in which departments differ in their methods for preparing teaching assistants for their assignments. The grant ran from June 1992 through May 1993. In studying the 398T courses on campus, we attempted to document whether or not

there were important disciplinary differences in learning to teach and how one develops an identity as a teacher. Questionnaires were administered to graduate students enrolled in departmental 398T classes to assess: 1) teaching attitudes, skills and knowledge, 2) identification with teaching roles and concerns, and 3) problem-solving sophistication in classroom situations. Over the duration of the grant, more than 1000 questionnaires were administered in forty-two departments.

COURSES IN COLLEGE TEACHING FOR FACULTY MEMBERS AND GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS

College Teaching Course for Graduate TAs - 398T

Our primary goal in this area is to help departments develop programs to introduce their TAs to teaching. To do this, we have taken two complementary approaches described below.

During the summer of 1972 the Director of the Center and a member of the Measurement and Evaluation Center staff initiated a graduate course in the Department of Chemical Engineering entitled "College Teaching in Engineering and the Sciences." This course was intended to provide education and training in the various engineering and scientific disciplines for students thinking about a career in college teaching. The course has been offered each summer since then, and has been used by many other departments as a model for the "398T" graduate teaching assistants' course taught by their own faculty. Many of these faculty actually audited this summer course prior to teaching their own version.

In addition to teaching the summer course, the Center has been active in providing direct assistance to professors who teach the 398T courses in a large number of departments. Center staff members serve as design consultants, guest

presentors, and assistants in consultation for microteaching and videotaping. We have conducted short summer courses for 398T faculty in which the design of these courses was studied. We have offered special workshops and gatherings for 398T faculty during the long semesters. We also produced a handbook which covers a variety of topics in teaching which can be used by the instructors of 398T to plan their own courses.

The efforts to upgrade courses for Teaching Assistants have been quite successful. A recent report to the Graduate Assembly dealing with 398T cited the Center's efforts as being one of the important variables in successful 398T classes. (*A Study of the 398T Requirement*, by T. Demetri Vacalis, Associate Professor.)

Orientation/Assessment for International TAs

In 1987, the Texas Legislature passed a rider to the appropriations bill requiring all public institutions of higher learning to provide a program or short course to insure that all courses be taught clearly in the English language. In response to this law, The University of Texas at Austin developed a three-part program for International Teaching Assistants and Assistant Instructors (ITAs): an assessment, an orientation, and a course for the conditionally certified.

In the Fall of 1988 we conducted this program for the first time. First, the English speaking skills of the International Teaching Assistants are assessed via a locally developed test which concentrates on the TA's ability to understand and explain clearly information from his/her major discipline. The ITAs who are certified or conditionally certified then attend an orientation seminar in which they are given information about teaching practices in American higher education in general as well as an orientation to teaching and working at U.T. in particular.

Those ITAs who make below a certain score on their spoken English assessments (i.e., are conditionally certified) must take a semester-long course and be re-assessed at its conclusion. If their

departmental appointment will include contact with undergraduate students, they must pass this re-assessment of their spoken English at an acceptable level. In this course (*Culture and Communication for University Teaching*) they are given training in English pronunciation and additional instruction in the specific teaching skills they will need as a TA. They are also given a chance to practice some of the skills they are learning in a micro-teaching situation. (NOTE: ITAs whose assessment scores are so low that they cannot be certified or conditionally certified must take an Intensive English course and pass the assessment before they are allowed to attend the orientation.)

New Faculty Teaching/Orientation Seminar

Attempts to establish courses for faculty members have met with mixed success, primarily because of the time commitment involved. We have conducted short, six-week courses as well as semester-long versions. Neither of these were as successful as the *New Faculty Teaching/Orientation Seminar* which was initiated in 1980. This Seminar, held just prior to the start of the Fall semester, is a program designed to introduce all new faculty to the campus, and to provide them with information which will improve their teaching effectiveness.

For the first five years, participants attended classes and workshops about seven hours per day for five days. The program is voluntary, but, prior to the 1985 financial problems, new tenure-track faculty received a stipend for attending. Funds for the program are provided by the President. (Due to the financial problems of 1985, the funds for the Seminar were severely cut, allowing no stipend for the faculty. Initially, the Seminar had been canceled, but the Center staff petitioned for permission to conduct the Seminar anyway on a no-stipend basis and reduced time-frame of three days, rather than depriving incoming faculty of its benefits.)

The program's agenda covers topics from course design to evaluation of student learning, from practical in-class techniques to the philosophy of grading

systems. Presentations in the program are made by Center personnel plus "veteran" faculty members from various colleges around the campus. These veterans have been chosen because they are themselves outstanding teachers and are willing to share their time and experience with their new colleagues. A majority of the format consists of three or four 50-minute concurrent sessions from which participants choose one to attend. The *Seminar* takes place the first three days of the week prior to registration so usually the new faculty members do not have departmental responsibilities to worry about.

Evaluations of the program have been extremely positive, and it has received national and international attention. Of all the course formats we have tried, this has been the most successful. (A detailed description of this program may be found in "Filling the Gap: Introducing New Faculty to the Basics of Teaching" by Lewis, Svinicki and Stice in *The Journal of Staff, Program, & Organization Development*, vol. 3, no. 1, Spring 1985, pp. 16-21.)

Experienced Faculty Teaching Conference

After the *New Faculty Seminar* became established, experienced faculty members began asking if they could attend because it had not been available to them when they were new faculty members. For two years we let any experienced faculty member who called with that request attend. However, the requests became so numerous we decided that there was a need for a similar workshop for experienced faculty members.

The *Experienced Faculty Teaching Conference* has been designed as a two-day experience which takes place in January just prior to registration for the Spring semester. The format for this conference is very similar to the *New Faculty Teaching Seminar*, but we have tried to aim the content at a higher cognitive level. The afternoon of the first day and the morning of the second day consist of three or four concurrent sessions from which the participants choose one. The morning of the first day and the afternoon of the second

day we bring the whole group together and do something which will focus on the conference theme. Themes from past conferences are:

- 1986 - *Rejuvenating Your Teaching*;
- 1987 - *Teaching Students to Think: It's a Dirty Job But Somebody's Got To Do It*;
- 1988 - *Grand Opening of the American Mind*;
- 1989 - *Both Sides of the Desk: Why We Teach...How They Learn*;
- 1990 - *Expanding Perspectives: Yours and Your Students'*;
- 1991 - *Playing with a Full Hand: Your Strong Suits for Effective Teaching*;
- 1992 - *Whad ja git? A workshop/conference on the Evaluation of Student Learning*;
- 1993 - *Looking at Teaching Through Different Lenses*;
- 1994 - *From Chalk to Computers: Twenty Years of Progress in Teaching*;
- 1995 - *Learning Together*;
- 1996 - *Redesigning the Wheel*.

We want this conference to be something which will attract previous participants as well as first-timers so we engage a group of past participants in planning for the next year. We also want this to be a "conference" at which colleagues share their expertise with each other so, the CTE staff coordinates and facilitates, but we don't do too much of the presenting/sharing.

At the first *Experienced Faculty Teaching Conference* (January 1986) we had 62 participants. At the January 1989 Conference, there were 140 and attendance has remained at over 100 since then. We feel like this is a definite indication of a successful program. (A detailed description of this program may be found in "A Conference on Teaching for Experienced Faculty" by Lewis, Svinicki and Stice in *The Journal of Staff, Program, & Organization Development*, vol. 7, no. 3, Fall 1989, pp. 137-142.)

Summer Seminar for 398T Instructors

In conjunction with the FIPSE Grant

we obtained in 1992, we started a three-day, *Summer Seminar for 398T Instructors*. This seminar provides an opportunity for current 398T course instructors to come together to share ideas obtain information about TA development and training techniques. The seminar is limited to 12-15 participants to promote discussion and networking. Each participant is also given a copy of *Teaching Pedagogy to Teaching Assistants: A Handbook for 398T Instructors* (310 pgs.). This seminar is continuing past the grant funding period with support from the VP & Dean of Graduate Studies.

SUMMARY

We of the Center staff feel that we have been successful in meeting the goals originally set out for us by the Faculty Senate and Advisory Board. We have a strong base of support in the faculty and receive a lot of positive feedback on our current programs. Although we have no immediate plans to expand our activities, we try to be alert to new needs of the faculty, such as those brought on by new curricula and new instructional methods. We try to be proactive by initiating new ideas as well as reactive by responding to expressed needs. With the continued support and input from the University community, we intend to play an active part in the University's drive toward excellence in teaching.

THE STAFF

The Center for Teaching Effectiveness at The University of Texas has a small, but competent staff consisting of:

Director

Marilla D. Svinicki, Ph.D.

Marilla's Ph.D. is in Experimental Psychology and Cognitive Learning from the University of Colorado. She was a faculty member at Macalister College in St. Paul, Minnesota and has taught graduate courses in Learning & Cognition and Teaching in Higher Education at the University of Hawaii and U.T.-Austin. She has written numerous chapters and journal articles and is currently the Editor of the *New Directions in Higher Education* series published by Jossey-Bass. She has served as the President of the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network in Higher Education and has been active in Faculty Development since 1974 when she joined the CTE staff.

Associate Director & Faculty Program Coordinator

Karron G. Lewis, Ph.D.

Karron's Ph.D. is in Educational Curriculum & Instruction with specializations in Teacher-Student Interactions and Music Education from Texas A&M University. Prior to receiving her Ph.D. she taught Jr. High and High School Vocal Music. In higher education settings, she has taught teaching methods courses for undergraduate education majors at Texas A&M and worked extensively in developing and implementing training programs for Chemistry TAs at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She has written numerous journal articles and book chapters and is currently the editor of *The Journal of Graduate Teaching Assistant Development*. Karron served as President of the POD Network in 1994-95. She has been active in teacher training and faculty development since 1972 and has been a member of the CTE staff since 1978.

Coordinator of International TA Training Program

Ghislaine Kozuh, Ph.D.

Ghislaine's Ph.D. is in Germanic Language Pedagogy from UT-Austin. She first came to the U.S. as recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship to participate in the International Teacher Development Program at UT. She has taught Dutch and Germanic Civilization in the Department of Germanic Languages and

English as a Second Language at the Texas Intensive English Program. She has co-authored two textbooks on language learning and is currently president of the regional TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) affiliate. She has been with CTE since 1989.

Assistant ITA Program Coordinator

Dr. Susan Murphy

Support Staff

ITA Conference Coordinator

Ms. Claudia Snowden

Computer Specialist

Mr. Steve Knoll

Estimated Yearly Contacts

Activity	Estimated contacts per year
Individual Consultations	50-75
New Faculty Seminar Attendees	50-60
Experienced Faculty Conference Participants	140-160
398T Courses	
Class presentations made	10 (10 TAs per class)
Taping/critiques	100
Materials provided to new instructors	12-15
ITA Assessment/Orientation Participants	400
Information Network	
Faculty Newsletter distributed	2300 x 4 times per year
Article requests filled	100 x 4 times per year
TA newsletters distributed (new activity)	3500 x 3 times per year
Handbooks sold or given away (5 varieties)	40-50 total each year
Special Presentations/Consultation with individual departments	10-20 per year
