

# The Ithaca Faculty Commons

A Model for Faculty Development at Ithaca College

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## Executive Summary

We propose a new model for faculty development that maximizes support for faculty as the college is in a period of restricted resources. We believe strongly that Ithaca College faculty should have a fully staffed and supported center. The current half-time faculty development coordinator position has built valuable resources for faculty, particularly in the areas of teaching and tenure preparation, and it is critical to maintain at least this level of support. The proposed Ithaca Faculty Commons serves to supplement the existing activities, as a transition to fully integrated resources for faculty development. This model builds from face to face opportunities and incorporates electronic communication, resources from many campus offices, and the faculty community itself. The term “commons” links our model to those of prominent organizations in contemporary higher education.

Specifically, this model retains the current faculty development activities, which have become known as the Center for Faculty Excellence, and the half-time position of Coordinator of Faculty Development Activities. It adds many Affiliates, who link with the Ithaca Faculty Commons as part of another activity. The Coordinator is at the hub of the Ithaca Faculty Commons and also provides the current CFE activities. The enhanced online environment is the mechanism through which Affiliates contribute to the Ithaca Faculty Commons, vastly enriching the faculty development resources of the community and their accessibility to all.

## Background

Faculty development at Ithaca College is supported through multiple resources. Internal funding supports professional travel, released time, summer research, and special projects. Information Technology Services provides hardware, software, and training related to teaching and scholarship. Mentoring and other support is found in departments and schools. Multiple committees and special projects, most prominently the Faculty Development Committee, sponsor programming and faculty awards.

Since 1995 the Provost released a faculty member half time to serve as Coordinator of Faculty Development Activities. This arrangement followed the retirement of a full time instructional development staff person. The current Coordinator, Susanne Morgan, served since 2001 and developed a web page called the Center for Faculty Excellence as well as expanding activities to include a several day institute in May, an all-college group mentoring program, and support for faculty in the tenure track.

During her first year, Provost Kathleen Rountree employed Susan Ambrose as a consultant about the faculty development needs of the institution. Based on recommendations in that report, Susanne Morgan was assigned to undertake a planning process to develop and begin to implement a full model for faculty development. The process, referred to as Faculty

Development at Ithaca College (FD@IC,) includes an Advisory Group formed in January 2009. A needs assessment was undertaken in Fall 2008 and various models explored, in a process that involved faculty and staff from across campus. Cut short by budget challenges, the planning assignment was reduced to one year and the recommendation cannot include new resources. This report presents the outcome of that year-long process. It should be noted that the present situation is seen as temporary and as a transition to the fuller model that is most appropriate for faculty development at Ithaca College.

## Elements of the Ithaca Faculty Commons

Three core elements of our model distinguish it from others, and build on our institutional strengths. One is that it links existing resources that provide faculty development of many kinds while retaining their separate identities and support structures. Beginning with activities such as now provided by the Center for Faculty Excellence, the Ithaca Faculty Commons serves as a portal or coordinator of all faculty development activities, which take place *through* the Commons rather than being *at* or *in* or *of* a more typical center.

A second is that the Ithaca Faculty Commons is grounded in the faculty and staff community. Although it will benefit from a professional director, to be included when the budget permits, the model supplements the current half-time Coordinator with structured and rewarded engagement by multiple faculty Affiliates. By facilitating exchanges across campus, we engage the social capital of the entire faculty and staff, drawing upon existing knowledge, scholarship and resources.

The third core element of our model is its fundamental nature as a virtual space that extends and enhances the current face to face activities. Through close collaboration with Information Technology Services we are building linked web pages, electronic discussions, and a variety of social networking environments that will be the virtual nature of the Ithaca Faculty Commons.

## Rationale for the full recommendation and for this proposal

In the introduction to her report from March 2008, Susan Ambrose said

This effort constitutes a response to needs expressed by faculty as well as the recognition that, without a physical faculty development center, Ithaca College lags behind most of its peer institutions. There is broad support within the community at all levels (e.g., Faculty, Department Heads, Deans, Associate Deans) for moving from a “virtual” faculty development presence to a real center with dedicated space and dedicated full time staff.

The process Dr. Ambrose outlined was begun and the needs assessment demonstrated that within our culture, faculty want support in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and engagement/leadership and also want support across the career. They do identify supporting teaching and new faculty as the primary need, as that is consistent with the mission of the college and the expected generational transition.

The planning process did not arrive at a description of a proposed center, since it became necessary to abbreviate it before fully exploring varieties of models. Nevertheless, there is

consensus about the importance of a director who is also a faculty development professional who has been a faculty member, whether that person comes from our faculty or not. There is also consensus about the value of faculty engagement in the work and leadership of a center. A physical location, supported by administrative staff, would be a significant statement of the centrality of faculty development to our college.

In the present environment a physical center with a professional director and support staff is unrealistic, though a critically important goal. The transitional Ithaca Faculty Commons can exist with the current level of support and only modest organizational change. Should physical space become available, the title and model will be suitable for a gathering place and resource center as well. As the Ithaca Faculty Commons develops, it is important for the college to retain a fully functioning center as a priority.

The term Ithaca Faculty Commons is drawn from the concept of a common space, such as for animals to graze, which is collaboratively maintained by its users. The metaphor has been adopted by the Carnegie Foundation and others<sup>1</sup> to refer to the shared body of ideas about teaching and learning. Here at Ithaca the CFE has used the term to emphasize that our sessions about teaching and learning are based on a body of scholarship and that work our faculty do contributes, formally or informally, to that scholarship. The term also relates to the concept of social capital, a descriptor of the kind of resource inherent in connections between people.

### Features of the Ithaca Faculty Commons Model

Partnering with other areas of the college that offer services and programs for faculty development, the Ithaca Faculty Commons provides faculty seeking opportunities for professional growth with a single point of access to the many and diverse resources offered here at Ithaca College. Since it is partially virtual, it is the channel through which any faculty development activities take place. Since it is visible, it is the locus for inquiry about any faculty development resource. Since it is a mutually-supported Commons, faculty and staff from all areas provide information, resources, scholarship, and thinking which is then available through the Ithaca Faculty Commons.

### Opportunities provided through the Ithaca Faculty Commons

- 1) Programs offered by the faculty who are explicitly assigned to the Ithaca Faculty Commons
  - a) Design and carry out, or coordinate, existing face to face programs, listed at the end of this document.
  - b) Maintain the content of the Ithaca Faculty Commons web page to feature both local resources and links to external ones

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Huber, Mary Taylor and Pat Hutchings, "The Advancement of Learning: Building the Teaching Commons," 2005, Jossey-Bass. The Carnegie Foundation site is here: <http://commons.carnegiefoundation.org/> Also see the Academic Commons, an online community sponsored by the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at Wabash College and also by NERCOM, is here: <http://www.academiccommons.org/>

- 2) Collaboration with Information Technology Services<sup>2</sup>
  - a) ITS provides technical support for the virtual Ithaca Faculty Commons and also for networks that grow from it
  - b) Through the Ithaca Faculty Commons, faculty members provide feedback, guidance, resources, and concepts to ITS. Some potential formats:
    - i) The Ithaca Faculty Commons Advisory Group serves as a formal advisor to ITS and a member serves on ITPAC, the presidentially-appointed Information Technology Planning and Advisory Committee.
    - ii) The Commons Coordinator serves on ITPAC and a separate users group is formed to advise ITS.
  - c) Training, workshops, discussions, and resources of the Center for Educational Technology (CET) are announced as “through the Ithaca Faculty Commons ” and marketed by both entities
  - d) Physical space of the CET is available for Ithaca Faculty Commons events when feasible
- 3) Internal and external grant support
  - a) The process for identifying and applying for CFRD, Summer Grants, and other opportunities are accessible in the virtual Ithaca Faculty Commons. An archive of sample proposals is available.
  - b) The ad-hoc committees selected by the Associate Provost are assigned to the Ithaca Faculty Commons for the purpose of grant review and their announcements are made through the Ithaca Faculty Commons.
  - c) The office for Academic Funding and Sponsored Programs is linked to the Ithaca Faculty Commons and faculty programs related to external grants are identified as being offered by AFSP “through the Ithaca Faculty Commons.”
  - d) The Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects is linked to the Ithaca Faculty Commons and guidelines and sample proposals are provided there.
  - e) Existing mini-grant programs (e.g. Sustainability, Health Data in the Classroom, H&S Experiential Learning, Gerontology) are coordinated so that expectations and process are comparable. They are marketed through the Ithaca Faculty Commons as well as independently
- 4) Faculty development provided by major entities within the institution (e.g. Library, Online Learning, Academic Enrichment Services, Affirmative Action, Organizational Development and other areas of Human Resources, offices of Student Affairs and Campus Life such as Counseling Center, Judicial Affairs)
  - a) Faculty development activities are routinely announced through the Ithaca Faculty Commons. When appropriate, the Coordinator or an Affiliate consults with these entities as they plan faculty development activities.

## Organizational Structure of the Ithaca Faculty Commons

- a) The Ithaca Faculty Commons is led a faculty Coordinator<sup>3</sup> who is released from teaching to do this work. The position reports to the Provost.

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<sup>2</sup> This collaboration is described more fully in a document approved by both ITS and the Provost, which can be downloaded at <http://www.ithaca.edu/cfe/>

- b) The Coordinator for Faculty Development Activities serves as Commons Coordinator if necessary, shifting some of the current CFE activities to faculty volunteer Affiliates. If possible, an additional faculty release would support the Ithaca Faculty Commons. Better yet, a full time professional will direct both the CFE and the broader Ithaca Faculty Commons.
- 2) General goal-setting and direction for the Ithaca Faculty Commons is provided by the Faculty Development Committee, a Committee of the Institution established by and reporting to Faculty Council.
  - 3) Regular guidance and monitoring of the Ithaca Faculty Commons is provided by its Advisory Group. The group is appointed by the Provost and includes a selection of Affiliates, a representative from ITS and from the Library, and other entities.
  - 4) The Ithaca Faculty Commons web page or its substitute is central, and is part of the collaboration between ITS and Academic Affairs. This web page is currently called the Center for Faculty Excellence.
  - 5) Affiliates are the means by which faculty leadership in the Ithaca Faculty Commons is identified and recognized. Faculty members are designated as Affiliates if they have a direct faculty development role due to position or interest. Affiliates are selected by the Advisory Group based on an application process that identifies the activity and role and the intended work within the Commons. For instance:
    - a) Function-based: Representatives from entities that exist independent of the Ithaca Faculty Commons, who engage Commons resources in planning their faculty development activities and announce them as “through the Commons.”
      - i) Examples could include representatives from the Faculty Learning Community, the Diversity Awareness Committee, various sustainability groups,
    - b) Task-based: Faculty engaged in specific activity that are otherwise supported by schools, divisions, or internal grants and that include faculty development elements.
      - i) Examples could include integrative curriculum initiatives, school-based assessment coordination, technology integration in particular contexts, Ithaca Seminar program
    - c) Project-based: Faculty interested in a particular initiative or concern, who pursue that interest as part of the Ithaca Faculty Commons. This interest-based Affiliation is proposal-driven and might lead to a more formalized project.
      - i) Examples could include networking among those engaged in scholarship of teaching and learning, or assembling support for a particular faculty cohort, or capturing substantive ICTeach discussions. An additional example could be a proposal to collaborate with the Coordinator in one of the current activities of the CFE, with the intention of assuming responsibility for that activity in future.

## Expectations of Affiliates of the Ithaca Faculty Commons

- 1) Affiliates of the Ithaca Faculty Commons are expected to comprise an active face to face and electronic network. They are expected to exchange planning documents so that others

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<sup>3</sup> For editing reasons the Coordinator will be in the singular form but it could be that Co-Coordinators would be selected.

can suggest ideas or resources. They are not governed by the Ithaca Faculty Commons, however, and are not obliged to follow the suggestions of any other affiliate.

- 2) Affiliates of the Ithaca Faculty Commons have access to the Ithaca Faculty Commons web page or its equivalent. They are expected to announce faculty development activities there and to provide related documents or links. This is an effort to spread leadership and to more effectively coordinate programming.
- 3) Affiliates of the Ithaca Faculty Commons receive annual recognition from the Provost but any compensation for their work in the Ithaca Faculty Commons is related to the entity they represent.
  - a) Recognition is a formal letter; potentially as part of a new annual event celebrating the Ithaca Faculty Commons, honoring Affiliates, and featuring scholarship of teaching and learning by faculty during the year.
  - b) A budget to provide stipends for project-based Affiliates, as an incentive to build the Ithaca Faculty Commons in its formation stage, would move the project forward.
- 4) Appropriate staff members from Institutional Technology Services collaborate with the Ithaca Faculty Commons, as separate entities.

### Staffing of the Ithaca Faculty Commons

- 1) The Ithaca Faculty Commons is staffed by a Coordinator with roles in two main areas, activities and affiliates.
  - a) The Coordinator designs and implements or coordinates face to face activities that support faculty members in teaching, scholarship, and leadership in all career stages
  - b) The Coordinator also supports the Affiliates who link their activities with the Ithaca Faculty Commons and maintains the content of the virtual elements of the Commons.
  - c) The Coordinator has the same amount of release time as the present arrangement (half time release) during this transitional period. When possible, a full time professional will direct the entire Ithaca Faculty Commons.
- 2) The face-to-face activities will continue unless assessment suggests a change. Affiliates may take leadership in some of these activities
  - a) New Faculty Orientation
  - b) Tenure Seminar and other programs to support particular cohorts of faculty
  - c) Fall Faculty Workshop on a Saturday in late August or early September
  - d) Ithaca College Faculty Commons, scholarship-based explorations of topics in teaching, scholarship, and community engagement
  - e) All-college group-based Mentoring Program, small groups organized each fall
  - f) Consultation services to individuals or groups
  - g) Spring Faculty Development Conference, half-day event during Senior Week, featuring recipients of internal funding whose work represent each of the five types of scholarship
  - h) May Faculty Institute, 2-4 day event following Commencement that is designed around an institutional priority
  - i) Department chairs networking, resources and support
  - j) Center for Faculty Excellence web page and the ICTeach discussion list
  - k) Collaboration with Information Technology Services to maintain the formal partnership and to exchange resources

- l) Faculty development library
  - m) Annual goal-setting and assessment
  - n) Service on institutional committees such as the Faculty Development Committee (ex officio,) and Information Technology Planning and Advisory Committee (H&S faculty representative,)
- 3) The Coordinator of the Ithaca Faculty Commons is expected to engage in the scholarship of higher education, through reading and conference participation and through presentations and publications in such areas.
  - 4) A part time administrative assistant with the skills to perform the routine maintenance of the Ithaca Faculty Commons would be extremely valuable even before a full center is possible. All of the event management and the design and maintenance of the Center for Faculty Excellence page is at present done by the half-time faculty member. It may be that the next faculty in that role would not be able to do all of the tasks.

## Implementation Plan

- 1) The full report and recommendation of the Faculty Development at Ithaca College Planning Process is completed and submitted to the Provost.
- 2) The basic model of the Ithaca Faculty Commons is endorsed by key institutional actors:
  - a) The Provost
  - b) The Faculty Development Committee
  - c) Information Technology Policy Advisory Committee
  - d) Deans Council
- 3) The virtual environment of the Ithaca Faculty Commons is reconstructed.
  - a) A formal collaboration between ITS and the Provost's Office is approved by both entities
  - b) The Center for Faculty Excellence web page is reviewed and modified or replaced
  - c) The ICTeach is reviewed and marketed more widely among senior faculty
  - d) A plan for the virtual elements of the Ithaca Faculty Commons is created and implemented (e.g. iTunesU archive of discussions, gallery featuring brief reports of teaching projects.)
  - e) As necessary, Marketing Communication is involved with the design and placement of the Ithaca Faculty Commons within the college web environment
- 4) The organizational structure is assembled.
  - a) The duties of the Coordinator are defined
  - b) The Advisory Group is appointed by the Provost
  - c) A role description of Affiliates is designed and Affiliates are recruited by the Coordinator and appointed by the Provost
  - d) A plan for 2009-2010 is created by the Advisory Group and the Coordinator
  - e) A process for succession planning as the Coordinator retires in 2010 is begun
- 5) The incentives and expectations for those engaged with the Ithaca Faculty Commons are approved and announced by the Provost in multiple venues.
  - a) The budget for the current level of support is affirmed for the near future
  - b) The proposal for full support (full time director, administrative staff, and stipends for Affiliates) is put forward in the budget process
  - c) Possibilities for external funding are explored and supported by the Provost

- d) Acknowledgement of the work of Affiliates is formalized by the Provost and communicated to the Deans
- e) Expectation that the faculty development aspects of existing entities (e.g., internal grants, library) be a part of the Ithaca Faculty Commons is articulated and implemented

### Assessment of the Ithaca Faculty Commons

The Ithaca Faculty Commons, as a new kind of model, will be assessed in terms of the use of its multiple elements and also in terms of the broader goals of building social capital through faculty exchange and networks. Implementation will be assessed through items such as:

1. Number of face to face activities and their attendance are recorded at the start and end-of-year
2. A modified or transformed web presence exists and the number of visits or other usage measures increases
3. Activity level of the ICTeach list or its substitute increases and key content is archived
4. The Ithaca Faculty Commons Affiliates meet regularly and each individual has addressed the objectives of his or her individual project.
5. Analysis of the year-end reports by Affiliates reveals a pattern of infusion of ideas through multiple areas of the campus.

The broader goals of the Ithaca Faculty Commons have to do with creating a common resource of materials, contacts, and people to which faculty across campus contribute and from which they draw. Progress in establishing that community resource will be assessed through focus groups, conducted by the Advisory Group at the end of each of the first two years. At that time, more specific objectives will be identified and different kinds of assessment can be undertaken.

*The Advisory Group* for this phase of the planning process includes

Aimee Dars Ellis	Business
Ali Erkan	Computer Science
Barbara Morgenstern	Television/Radio
Susanne Morgan	Center for Faculty Excellence
Debbie Rifkin	Music Theory
Stan Seltzer	Mathematics
Rachel Wagner	Philosophy & Religion
Carol Henderson	Assoc. Provost

Documents related to the planning process can be downloaded at the Faculty Development at Ithaca College page of the Center for Faculty Excellence. The url is <http://www.ithaca.edu/cfe/fdatic/>