



Faculty Development at Ithaca College

Progress Report, January 2009

Susanne Morgan
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Faculty Development at Ithaca College

Preliminary Project Report

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Executive Summary

The first semester of the two-year planning process accomplished the major part of a needs assessment. As suggested by Susan Ambrose in her report to Kathleen Rountree and David Garcia, this process will culminate in the articulation and implementation of a faculty development model for Ithaca College. The Fall 2008 activities involved over 200 people from multiple areas of campus and included preliminary interviews, a campus-wide online survey, and a series of focus group interviews. The needs assessment explored the scope and breadth of our potential faculty development model.

The data indicates that faculty members imagine a center that would support them in all three main elements of work: teaching, scholarship, and leadership. Reflecting the institutional mission, teaching is identified by virtually all participants as the primary focus of the model we would develop. Most believe support for teaching should take the form of information and resources on topics such as pedagogy, teaching skills, course design, technology, and learning theory. Fewer but still over half believe a center should also provide resources on advising, curriculum development, or legal issues. There is a contradiction between what participants believe a center should include and what they would actually use; resources that are accessible, personalized, and quick are more promising than traditional workshop formats. In addition, a substantial number refer to the value of the individualized assistance of a consultation model, recalling the services of Spike Stamos or their graduate school's teaching center.

When provided with prompts about topics beyond teaching, however, around two-thirds of survey participants and virtually all the focus group members indicated their desire for help with various aspects of the work of scholarship. Most people are eager for financial support for professional travel and a lighter course load. But they also identified services that would be valuable in their scholarly work, such as help with grants, with writing and priority-setting, and with the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Institutional leadership skills and support, such as for department chairs, was identified as important primarily by two kinds of respondents. Some newer faculty perceived that their chair was not very helpful to them in their early years. Tenured faculty members who serve in leadership roles, or anticipate doing so, expressed the desire for help with skills or resources for managing the work more effectively.

The next step in the planning process is to explore organizational models and mission statements, with the assistance of a small advisory group and additional widespread conversations and interviews. The report on models and mission will be submitted by June 2009 and will be followed by a recommendation for staffing and space. A limited number of

new activities (a pilot consultation program and a summer writing institute) will be initiated during Spring 2009, to begin the implementation of our faculty development model.

Needs Assessment

A very wide cross section of the campus community has been involved in this process. One preliminary step took place in the fall of 2007, when Stacia Zabusky and I interviewed deans or associate deans from each school to identify what faculty development resources exist in the schools in addition to those at the college level. These interviews were the basis of a presentation at the annual meeting of the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education, POD, the national organization for faculty development.

Individual interviews were held during the summer and early fall of 2008 with 18 faculty and staff members, to elicit general perceptions of faculty development and the best strategies for exploring the issue. The formal needs assessment process began with a survey developed during September. An additional consultative process, involving 10 people on campus and through electronic networks, led to designing the survey for Survey Monkey. The survey was approved by the All College Review Board for Human Subjects Research. An invitation was sent to all faculty and 125 faculty members completed the survey. Basic findings were posted on the Center for Faculty Excellence page and linked from an Intercom announcement.

A series of eight focus group interviews followed the survey, with the goal of understanding some of the nuances in the findings. I selected over 130 people to invite to participate, attempting to obtain a representative balance of schools, experience, and levels of engagement. Many more responded than anticipated, (over 75) so I added three additional groups and closed the sign-up at 55. Forty eight were involved in the groups. More detail on the methodology and detailed findings of the needs assessment are below.

The fundamental findings of the needs assessment are these:

1. Faculty members would appreciate resources and services in all of the major areas: teaching, scholarship, and leadership/administration. The highest priority should be on teaching and on new faculty, because those are institutionally primary.
2. Teaching is of high interest and the consultation model was appealing. Additional opportunities for collaboration, peer review, and resource-sharing would be appreciated.
3. Scholarship is the area in which faculty express particular concerns and desires. They would like more institutional support for collaboration, grant-writing, technical research resources, and academic writing itself. Newer faculty members find that it is less difficult to engage in helpful conversation about teaching challenges than about scholarly work.
4. Support for department chairs is a concern both for chairs and for new faculty members. Generalizing to leadership skills in general, faculty members see the value of such support but might not seek it out unless it was expected by deans.
5. The potentials of technology include instructional support, resource-sharing and faculty communication, and many believe we could use technology to provide faculty

Spring 2009

The final objective of the fall 2008 semester is to select an advisory group. I have begun to identify potential members and will invite them to a time-limited task force. The group should begin meeting monthly in February 2009.

The plan for the spring semester is to explore, evaluate, and recommend possible organizational models based on the findings of the needs assessment. In addition we will draft a mission statement for faculty development at Ithaca College. The process will include researching models in other institutions, drafting two or three contrasting models, and interviewing targeted people about the strengths and limitations of each. In addition, more detailed analysis of the data from the needs assessment will be completed.

In parallel with the planning process, I will undertake a limited number of new activities to begin to implement our new model. These are recommendations from the needs assessment and it should be possible to provide them without additional cost. One is a pilot faculty consultation program, a second is a scholarly writing institute, and a third is a year-long orientation program for new faculty members and if possible an ongoing program for department chairs. More robust collaboration with Technology and Instructional Support Services will also be explored. Each of these activities will be designed and implemented in collaboration with a faculty member, in order to build faculty leadership in our new model.

- Faculty consultation is the fundamental service of most teaching centers, and we had such a program here before the mid-1990s. The model I plan to offer, on a very limited basis, involves confidential conversations with a faculty member, visiting his or her class and interviewing students, and reviewing teaching materials.
- Scholarly writing emerged as a major concern for many participants in the needs assessment, primarily but not exclusively among newer faculty. I believe our faculty development model should include a variety of kinds of support for scholarly writing. In addition to the ongoing writing groups, I plan to design and offer a 2-3 day writing workshop in the early summer.
- During 2009-2010, I plan to design and present an ongoing orientation program for new faculty. It will incorporate elements of the existing tenure seminar, workshops on course design and assessment, activities of Information Technology Services, and campus resources. Depending on the level of support from the deans, I would plan a parallel series for department chairs.

Findings

Survey Fall 2008

Summary of Basic Patterns

Available at Center for Faculty Excellence from 10 November 2008

One hundred twenty five responses were collected with the online survey offered through Survey Monkey. The demographics show that most respondents are newer and also mid-career: roughly half are between 40 and 55 years old; just under 50% have been here 7 years or fewer, 40% are assistant professors and 20% full professors, and the schools are represented as one would expect. Full frequencies are attached as a pdf document.

The main set of questions named a large set of resources that our Center might provide, categorized as teaching, scholarship/creative, balance, and leadership. Examples include course design and assessment as “teaching resources,” scholarship of teaching as “scholarship support,” career development as “balance concerns,” and reviewing faculty as “leadership.” The full text is attached. For each of the topic stems, respondents had three response areas: **should** our center include this; **would** I participate; and the **priority** of this area.

Teaching Resources:

All of the 9 areas of teaching resources received more than half “yes, it should provide” responses. The range was wide, though. Nearly all respondents said it should provide support for teaching skills, course design, pedagogical innovations, and technology enhancement; while just over half said it should support advising, legal and policy issues, or curriculum development.

When asked whether they themselves would participate, fewer responded unequivocally “yes” to the choice of “Yes, Maybe, At a different career stage, and Probably not.” The areas in which the dominant response was “yes” were teaching skills, technology enhancement, pedagogical innovation, and teaching conferences (support to attend.) Over 40% responded “Probably not” to support on advising, curriculum development, and legal/policy issues. To my surprise, few responded with the choice of “at a different career stage.”

The pattern of responses to the question of whether the resource should be a top, middle, or low priority followed a comparable pattern and two-thirds said teaching skills should be a top priority. Surprises were that more than half thought course design and assessment was a top priority while only 28 thought they would certainly use it. In the other direction, people were likely to say they would use support in pedagogical innovation or to attend teaching conferences, while most saw those as middle to low priorities.

Scholarship/Creative work support:

The pattern was similar in the area of support for scholarship and creative work. More than half responded that our Center should support each of the five areas, with the highest percentages for funding/grants and scholarship of teaching and learning and the lowest response to writing assistance or help with work process.

The only area in which most people said they themselves would participate is support strategies (funding/grants) and most did not think they would participate in writing assistance. The priorities followed this pattern: most thought support strategies in general, and SoTL as well, should be a top priority and the other areas were rated a middle priority.

Balance concerns:

The resources in this area included ones in the general area of activities that fall outside teaching or scholarship. More than three quarters said our center should include resources in the areas of successful reviews, resources for part-time faculty, and integration of retired faculty. Responses to the other three areas were almost evenly divided with one half saying our center should and should not support community engagement, career development, or work/family issues. Interestingly, the largest number of respondents said they would probably not participate in any of these areas, except perhaps for the successful reviews topic.

Institutional leadership:

Four items dealt with this general area: leadership possibilities, skills development, reviewing faculty, and support for chairs/coordinators. The majority of respondents thought our center should include them. However, fewer than one third said they would definitely participate in any of them and they indicated them as “middle” priority for our center.

How our Center might provide support:

A final section asked people to rate different approaches to providing services, such as individual consultations, workshops, online communication, or serving as a conduit to administration. Individual consultations were seen as very valuable by nearly two thirds of the respondents and workshops were seen as very valuable by a bit under one-half. In the other categories, roughly half saw them as moderately valuable. Interestingly, newsletters and library were seen as least valuable overall.

Summary and next steps

This preliminary report presents only the percentages who responded in certain ways. The next step in analyzing this data will be to examine patterns within the data. Are some resources particularly likely to be valued by new or mid-career faculty? Which resources are seen as very important even if the respondent will probably not actually use them? Are there clusters of areas in which support is generally high, or generally low? Those are questions we can answer soon.

The overall pattern is that people perceive a possible center as primarily about classroom teaching but also about supporting scholarship. They believe it should help in multiple aspects of the review process and integrate part time and retired faculty members. Categories that indicated a center would provide resources in the form of funding or time were viewed particularly favorably. The respondents did not seem to have a strong view on *how* resources and support might be provided, though individual teaching consultations was identified as very valuable by more than half.

Focus Groups Fall 2008

Summary of Basic Patterns

Available at Center for Faculty Excellence from 19 December 2008

The second step of the needs assessment was a series of eight focus group interviews following the campus-wide faculty survey. The goal was to further understand some of the nuances in the survey findings. I selected over 130 people to ask to participate, attempting to obtain a representative balance of schools, experience, and levels of engagement. Many more responded than anticipated, (over 75) so I added three additional groups and closed the sign-up at 55. For each group I asked a person to be a scribe, entering as much of the conversation as possible on a laptop. This supplemented my notes as I facilitated the conversation. Forty eight were actually involved in the eight groups.

Following is a summary of themes from the focus group data. There was no effort to quantify this data. It was to serve to explore some of the fundamental questions from the needs assessment, including the scope of a potential faculty development model and specific areas in which faculty would like support.

Scope of our model:

- Yes, our model should involve more than teaching. Teaching is our first priority; should be primary
- Yes, our model should support more than early-career faculty. Early-career should be the focus if resources limited.
- Physical space: To get away, and a place to do work. There is a belief that people would come to a physical space and engage in conversation over coffee.
- There is a desire for a single source for faculty of links and networks. Note that we have no “faculty” tab on college web page
- Electronic: when prompted people thought resources would be useful; just in time Faculty Development; networking groups
- Any kind of resource has to be efficient; it has to save time or take little time

Teaching:

- Collaboration works to improve teaching: co-teaching, visiting classes; master classes; taking a class
- The consultation model is appealing to many; some who recall Spike Stamos; some who experienced the service at other institutions
- Filming of faculty for personal review: It could be done by a work study student in the MAT program; Could use lecture capture technology
- We should use local expertise: could film mini-talks on teaching topics
- Electronic resources should be user-friendly: links to research on best practices from elsewhere

Scholarship:

- Collaboration opportunities should be stronger: faculty can share resources and use networking to find collaborators.
- Our potential Center should be a strong voice for the variety of scholarship at Ithaca.
- Faculty would like better support on grants both internal and external: information, collaborators, networks, writing help
- Technical research resources should be more available, such as guidance about dealing with editors or deciding what to pursue. The college could also provide expertise on statistics and other technical areas, whether internal or contracted from CU
- Coaching or writing group whether in person or electronic should be supported through a center

Leadership:

- Newer faculty wanted chairs to provide better support and mentoring
- Faculty want help with leadership skills, but perhaps they would not see it as a priority unless expected by deans

Accessible steps:

What would be quick, modest projects that would signify the commitment of the college to a fuller faculty development model?

- Pilot consultation program. If possible include one faculty member released for it
- Scholarship support: summer writing institute?
- Electronic: follow up face to face meetings by forming networks or listservs or wikis on topics such as:
 - Cohorts: could launch with a “what to know in Year 2” event
 - Grants: those who wish to explore the possibility as well as successful recipients
 - Tenure file: network for those preparing files
 - Writing groups: electronic facilitation of groups
- Talk at the Treadmill: invite faculty to present on their field in the Wellness Clinic.
- Recruit a faculty member to affiliate with the fledgling center on a release time basis; one course, 1-2 semesters. This possibility depends, of course, on budget and staffing factors.

Methodology

Survey Development Process

I searched the topic on the POD archives and identified several tools used in other institutions. I sent an email query to the POD list and received responses from four very prominent faculty development professionals:

- Mike Theall, Youngstown State University
- Bonnie Mullinex, Teaching and Learning with Technology Group
- Karron Lewis, University of Texas
- Tara Gray, University of New Mexico

I undertook internal consultation with:

- Howard Kalman, Communication Management and Design
- Danette Johnson, Speech Communication
- Marilyn Dispensa, Information Technology Services
- Steve Sweet, Sociology
- Pranay Bhatla, Residential Life

HSR approval for survey was obtained through expedited review. I was provided access to their Survey Monkey account by the Division of Residential Life, with the agreement that no student would have access to the site. This restriction does not apply to students reviewing my data as a pdf or an SPSS data set, but just the Survey Monkey account.

The invitation to participate was sent to all faculty members through HR list. A reminder was sent a week later through Intercom. One hundred twenty five people participated in the survey. They were not asked for their name, but some volunteered them, to express an interest in following up with additional conversations. I invited all of those people to participate in the focus group process.

The form of the data analysis is a pdf of the graphic and numeric report of the frequencies of responses to each question as provided by Survey Monkey and also a statement of basic themes that I wrote, included elsewhere in this report. The data is in SPSS and the process of determining further patterns is underway. Preliminary review of the data shows a modest amount of variation by factors such as age and gender, with younger or newer faculty and women expressing a higher degree of interest in a number of areas than more senior faculty or men.

Focus Group Process

The way I selected names to invite to participate in the focus groups was to review each academic department from the online directory and to select one or more names from each. I kept a rough balance of people on factors such as seniority, rank, institutional leader or not, engagement in faculty development activities or not, gender, minority status, etc. I did not include members of the Faculty Development Committee as I discuss the project at each of their meetings. I did include people who had volunteered their names on the survey.

To each person I sent an individual email invitation, with a link to a form I had designed in Google Docs. The form indicated the dates/times for the groups and asked them to click those they could attend. So many responses came in quickly that I added three more groups the following week and asked people to indicate whether they could move.

From the spreadsheet of respondents, I constructed 8 groups which varied in size from 5 to 8. In addition, I approached 8 people to be scribes, selecting them based on their expressed interest in faculty development and my prediction of their skills at the task. I sent all participants a confirmation of their group, and reminder emails the week before and the

afternoon before its meetings. In addition, I sent them the survey data, the survey themes, and the questions I expected to use during the focus groups. I made it clear that they were not expected to review these documents before the meetings.

Meetings took place in the Gerontology Resource Room, which is near my office. The meetings took place during the last two weeks of the fall semester of 2008, between December 2 and 12. Forty eight people were involved in one of the focus groups.

I facilitated the groups as open conversations. I made a point to include questions about the scope of a possible center and about the value of a consultation program here and now. The text of the scribes' notes is not included here as it includes indentifying information about some of the participants. A summary is posted online and included in this report.

Communication

The campus community has been involved in all phases of this process. The original announcement from Provost Rountree, reporting my appointment and the Susan Ambrose consultation, was sent on Intercom and announced at the opening faculty Convocation in August. I have provided updates and requested feedback at every meeting of the Faculty Development Committee. Faculty Council has been informed through conversations with its chair. All faculty members received the invitation to participate in the survey, which was also repeated in Intercom. My mid-semester report, describing the survey and linking to its findings, was also distributed through Intercom. This end-of-semester report will be handled the same way. I have made use of the more informal ICTeach discussion list at several stages and refer to the planning process at the public programs I facilitate. All documents related to this project are available to download at a dedicated page of the Center for Faculty Excellence and as new announcements are available I feature them on the front page of CFE.

Project Summary January 2009

Phase One of the two-year project was a needs assessment to determine the focus and scope of a model for faculty development at Ithaca College. The process involved:

- Interview and consult with 28 faculty and staff here and faculty development professionals off campus
- Design and administer an online survey, completed by 125 faculty members
- Analyze the data and make it public
- Design and carry out eight focus group interviews involving 48 faculty members
- Analyze the data and make it public

Major findings of the needs assessment include:

- Support and resources for improving teaching is most important
- Resources that are accessible will be used most
- The consultation model, which existed here at one time, is very appealing
- Scholarship is the area in which many, particularly newer faculty members, believe support could be stronger
- Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is of high interest to many
- Support for department chairs and other institutional leaders is valued by faculty

Implications include:

- Our model should not focus exclusively on teaching and learning but should include support in the other two major faculty roles, scholarship and leadership.
- We should explore the consultation model
- We should collaborate more fully with ITS to provide resources that are more flexible than traditional workshops.

Next steps are:

- Identify possible organizational models and engage both a small advisory group and a wider process to explore them.
- Engage with ITS in planning academic services.
- Initiate a pilot consultation program and a summer writing institute.
- Expand new faculty orientation to a year-long program that incorporates existing activities.
- Enhance resources for department chairs and other institutional leaders.