

Activities of the Center for Teaching and Learning - Overview

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The mission of the Center of Teaching and Learning is to promote, sustain, and recognize ways to improve the quality of teaching and student learning at Queens College. Accordingly, the Center will foster ongoing discussion about teaching and learning matters, both facilitating those discussions and contributing intellectually to them. Its activities should take place in close collaboration with the academic Deans, who can draw on the insights and experience of faculty in their divisions and collaborate on many of the Center's events.

The work of the Center is supportive, not evaluative or punitive. The intent is not to identify "poor" teachers but to help improve instruction and solve problems. All work of the Center is confidential, unless its users choose otherwise, and voluntary, undertaken only as users request it.

A primary goal of the Center in its first few years will be to assist in the implementation of the college's new general education requirements. Area requirements including designated Perspectives on the Liberal Arts and Sciences (PLAS) courses have just been approved by the Senate to go into effect in Fall 2009. Integration and synthesis courses are currently being piloted in preparation for later Senate consideration of this requirement. Proposals on basic skills requirements are being developed by the UCC and will be considered by the Senate in Fall 2006. As the requirements are implemented, the Center will play a continuing role in assessing how well the requirements' stated learning goals are being met and recommending improvements.

Listed below are a number of possible activities of the Center. The Center will not necessarily do all these things. This is a list of ways the Center might provide programs and services to support faculty in enhancing teaching and learning at the college. Initially, general education will be a major focus of the Center's work. Over time, the Center will begin other activities in this list, following a set of annual goals. The goals for its inaugural year, 2006-2007, are attached.

- 1) Assist in implementation and development of the college's new general education requirements by:
 - a) Assessing the learning goals achieved by the integration/synthesis courses now being piloted and disseminating the results to the faculty to encourage the development of such courses.
 - b) Working with faculty and departments in the development of PLAS courses to be piloted over the next few years and in the assessment of resulting learning goals.
 - c) As requirements go into affect, work with the UCC to evaluate the success of the requirements and formulate recommendations for ongoing improvement.

- 2) Providing opportunities for faculty development in techniques in pedagogy and the incorporation of technology into their courses, for example by:
 - a) Organizing conferences and workshops on "best practices."
 - b) Assisting with the orientation of new faculty.
 - c) Setting up free-hour lunch discussions.

- d) Facilitating visits to classes given by the College's outstanding teachers, as identified by, for example, their deans.
 - e) Coordinating with the Assistant to the Provost for Instructional Technology and offering joint events as the new Faculty Development Lab opens adjacent to the Center.
- 3) Facilitating student and faculty assistance for pedagogical improvement at the request of instructors, such as:
- a) Arranging for "teaching buddies" – faculty pairs in different disciplines who observe each other's classroom teaching and provide comments.
 - b) Setting up other mentoring arrangements.
 - c) Assisting in exploring and establishing "communities of practice" where faculty facing similar teaching issues can collectively investigate solutions.
 - d) Providing videotaping and subsequent analysis of classroom sessions.
 - e) Giving one-on-one assistance with specific issues such as incorporating problem-solving techniques into teaching.
- 4) Helping to instill a culture of outcomes assessment at the college, by articulating its importance and effectiveness in improving teaching and learning. Methods might include:
- a) Providing standardized evaluation instruments, assisting with their administration, and analyzing the outcomes.
 - b) Distributing examples of assessment practices used to improve programs.
 - c) Inviting outside speakers on assessment.
 - d) Assist the Writing Across the Curriculum program in its assessment of WAC.
 - e) Working with individual faculty on, for example, assessment used during the semester to facilitate continuous adjustments of teaching strategies.
- 5) Stocking sources of information on issues of pedagogy, instructional technology, and outcomes assessment, such as books, newsletters from other institutions, videos, periodicals on teaching, teaching, and evaluation, etc.
- 6) Publicizing and disseminating the work of the Center, through such means as a website, a newsletter, a listserv, handbooks, articles in FYI, presentations to divisional caucuses and department meetings, etc.
- 7) Applying for and distributing grants for the development of innovative teaching methods, creative pedagogy, uses of instructional technology, and new course development, both independently and in collaboration with College units and other faculty.