

Report on
Visits to Teaching Excellence Centers in USA

June 21 – July 4, 2003

To: Provost Peter Heath
From: Saouma BouJaoude and Amal BouZeineddine
Subject: USA Trip Report

Dear Provost Heath,

Below please find our report on the trip we took to the USA between June 21st and July 4th of 2003 during which we visited teaching centers at George Washington University, Penn State University, University of Delaware, and Harvard University. The first part of the report provides the names of the universities, dates of visits, centers visited and general information about the centers. The information in the first part of the report was acquired from the websites of the teaching centers at the universities we visited, literature collected during the visits, and meetings held with staff in the centers. The second part of the report sums up our observations from each center. In the last part, we report our recommendations based on the visits.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTERS VISITED

Visit 1

University Visited: The George Washington University

Date of Visit: June 23 and 24, 2003

Center Visited: Center for Instructional Design and Development (CIDD)

Individuals we met: Mr. Yordanos Baharu, Manager Instructional Technology Lab

General Information about CIDD

The Center for Instructional Design and Development is a resource and networking center that assists faculty and teaching assistants in achieving their full potential as teachers and scholars. The Center promotes innovation, collaboration, collegiality, and the scholarship of teaching by providing instructional consultations, workshops, events, grants, print and web-based resources, and an instructional technology lab.

Professional staff, including Instructional Designers/ Developers, Research Consultants, and Graphic Specialists provide expertise to the George Washington University community in identifying instructional objectives, designing and developing instruction, creating technology-enhanced teaching material, and assessing learning outcomes.

The Center for Instructional Design and Development offers grants to faculty to facilitate the design or redesign of courses or to allow faculty to take a scholarly look at their teaching. It sponsors events showcasing GW faculty involved in interesting or innovative teaching. It offers consultations to interested faculty and teaching assistants, as well as a library of resources available in the Center office and an extensive list of web resources.

There are many tools available to faculty at GW that help enhance the learning experience. Many of these tools are available at the Instructional Technology Lab or through the staff at the Center for Instructional Design & Development. In addition, the center assists faculty and teaching assistants in achieving their full potential as teachers and scholars, and supports and promotes scholarly inquiry into the teaching process.

Visit 2

University Visited: Penn State University

Date of Visit: June 25 and June 26, 2003

Center Visited: Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence

Individuals we met:

1. Ms. Brenda Yingling, Administrative assistant
2. Dr. Jill Lane, Program Manager, Course and Curricular Development Program
3. Dr. Suzanne Weinstein, Program Manager, Assessment and Measurement Program
4. Dr. Neil Johnson, Program Manager, Professional Enrichment Program.

General Information about the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence

The Schreyer Institute at Penn State University has University-wide responsibilities to design and foster new teaching and learning improvement strategies; advance testing and assessment activities; and provide faculty and graduate instructors with programs, services, and resources that promote excellence in teaching and learning.

The Institute has three major programs: Assessment and Measurement program which has responsibility for a wide array of educational testing initiatives and assessment and evaluation tools for teaching and learning. The Course and Curricular Development Program provides instructional design and learning assessment support to course innovation projects, including those that involve active learning. Moreover, it coordinates a grants program for innovation in teaching projects. The Professional Enrichment program creates and coordinates the teaching and learning events including seminars, workshops, and conferences. Each of these programs has its own director and a number of professional and support staff members.

Visit 3

University Visited: University of Delaware

Date of Visit: June 27, 2003

Centers Visited: Center for Teaching Effectiveness

Instructional Technology Unit for faculty

Problem Based learning at the University of Delaware

Individuals we met:

1. Dr. Martha Carothers, Interim Faculty Director
2. Dr. Gabrielle Bauer, Teaching Consultant
3. Ms. Janet de Vry, manager, User Services, Information Technologies
4. Dr. George Watson, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences and The University of Delaware Institute for Transforming Undergraduate Education.

General information about the Center for Teaching Effectiveness

The Center for Teaching Effectiveness (CTE) at the University of Delaware is a University-wide unit that supports faculty, administrators, and staff in their instructional activities. Specifically, the

Center provides a range of instructional services to help all members of the teaching community improve the teaching and learning process. The Center coordinates teaching conferences, workshops and colloquia; publishes and disseminates materials on instructional practices and improvement; serves as a liaison with University committees, task forces, and units involved in instructional support; and administers an annual grant program for instructional improvement. Moreover, CTE staff are involved in presenting and publishing research in their academic fields. CTE staff offer a variety of services to help instructors in the ongoing improvement of the teaching and learning process including teaching effectiveness workshops, individual instructional consultations, group instructional consultations, conduct classroom observations, assist in the student feedback process, facilitates the professional pedagogical development of teaching assistants, and manages a library of college teaching resources which includes books, journals, articles, and instructional videotapes available for loan. CTE also publishes and provides access to a number of print, video and online resources.

General Information about, User Services, Instructional Technology Unit for faculty

User Services provides and delivers the services that enable the faculty, staff and students of the University to effectively use information technology in research, instruction, public service and administration.

User Services has the following core responsibilities:

1. Installation and configuration of desktop computing hardware and software that conforms to campus information technology standards, and meets the academic and administrative needs of faculty, staff and students.
2. Support of student computing through operation of campus computing facilities, network connection in student residence halls, and departmental computing.
3. Support of research computing through consulting on data collection, analysis and extraction, statistical and mathematical software, geographic information systems, and scientific visualization software, and providing access to databases essential to scholarly research, policy formation, information infrastructure, development, and economic growth.
4. Support of the use of technology in the curriculum through consultation on effective integration of technology to meet instructional objectives, selection and provision of appropriate tools, and operation of a computing facility dedicated to faculty who use technology in instruction.

General Information about The University of Delaware Institute for Transforming Undergraduate Education

The University of Delaware Institute for Transforming Undergraduate Education has been created to promote reform of undergraduate education through faculty development and course design. Institute Fellows receive hands-on experience in employing active learning strategies and effective use of technology in their courses. One of the major activities of the Institute is the promotion of using problem-based learning in the college classroom. The Institute organizes workshops and supports The PBL Clearinghouse that is an international collection of problems and articles, compiled at the University of Delaware, which are used to assist faculty with problem-based learning.

Visit 4

Date of Visit: July 1 and 2, 2003

University Visited: Harvard University

Center Visited: Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning

Individuals we met:

1. Dr. James Wilkinson, Director
2. Dr. Richard Olivo, Associate Director

General Information about the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning

The Derek Bok Center is in the College of Arts and Sciences. It offers a variety of services for faculty members such as:

1. Fall and Winter Teaching Conferences, held before classes start in September and January, present lectures, discussions, and workshops to initiate new teachers into the craft and refine the skills of experienced teachers.
2. Early evaluations, online or through printed forms, tell you how your class is responding to your efforts. Bok Center consultants can help in interpreting the evaluations.
3. Videotaping and analysis of classes: Schedule your class for taping in one of our classrooms, and later view and discuss the tape privately with a Bok Center consultant.
4. Classroom observation: A representative from the Bok Center will visit a lecture, section, or tutorial and afterwards discuss observations and suggestions informally with the instructor.
5. Walk-in clinic: Stumped on how to handle a class? Bok Center consultants are available on short notice.
6. Discussion Leadership Seminar: A semester-long master class for faculty and experienced teaching fellows to improve discussion-leading skills through the exploration of real classroom cases.
7. Writing-related services: A variety of programs designed to enhance the use of writing in courses.
8. Teaching with technology: In collaboration with the Instructional Computing Group, the Bok Center provides advice on the use of technology to improve learning.
9. Library Resources: Print and video materials for browsing and borrowing.
10. New Faculty Orientation, sponsored by the Dean of Faculty, is held prior to the start of the academic year.

11. Junior Faculty Luncheons: A monthly interdisciplinary gathering to discuss teaching practices and theories.
12. Lecture presentation skills: Individual coaching sessions that include work with the Voice and Speech Coach at the ART, videotaping consultations, class visits, and lecture design consultations.
13. Course consultations: Training sessions, course-specific workshops, attendance at course meetings during the semester, individual consultations with teaching fellows, course and lecture design, and help with other Bok Center services.
14. Departmental training: In conjunction with departments, developing and running programs for new teaching fellows, coordination of department-wide teaching fellow meetings and workshops, guidance for semester-long teaching practicums, and support for departmental teaching.

II. OBSERVATIONS DURING THE VISIT

The following are our observations about the centers and their activities:

1. The centers are well-established centers. They all have independent budgets, office and training space, and professional and support staff.
2. The centers cater for the needs of faculty members and teaching assistants, mainly doctoral students.
3. The centers conduct many activities similar to the ones that were conducted at AUB in the past three years. The main differences between these centers and the work done at AUB are activities that require full time staff such as one-on-one individual consultations and assistance and videotaping of classes and activities that require independent budgets such as grants for improving teaching.
4. None of the centers conducts follow up activities to gauge the effect of the programs and activities they conduct.
5. The centers do not have a structured tool for needs assessment that would assist in developing activities relevant to faculty needs.
6. The centers encourage regular informal luncheon meetings with faculty, especially faculty of large classes, to discuss and/or communicate their teaching experiences.
7. The centers promote small grants to faculty who submit proposals on some innovative instructional challenge.
8. The centers publish their own newsletters in which they include announcements of upcoming events and other topics on teaching excellence.
9. The centers we visited could be classified into three models:
 - A comprehensive center such as the Schreyer Center at Penn State university that houses most of the activities related to improving teaching or the Center for Instructional Design and Development at George Washington university which houses the instructional Technology Lab.
 - Several independent centers that provide different services such as the three centers we visited at the University of Delaware (Center for Teaching Effectiveness, Instructional Technology Unit for Faculty, and Problem Based Learning at the University of Delaware).
 - An independent center that serves one college such as the Derek Bok center at Harvard University that serves the College of Arts and Sciences.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

It has become evident to us that establishing a teaching learning excellence center is a necessity. Thus, based on the proposal submitted in May of 2003, we recommend that such a center be developed, and that it have the following functions:

1. offer continuous workshops/seminars that would assist faculty (and graduate assistants whenever applicable) in their teaching practices;
2. develop a needs assessment as well as a follow up mechanism upon which teaching excellence activities are offered;
3. incorporate an instructional technology unit and an assessment and measurement unit within the center;
4. provide a course management system in which faculty train to use technology in their courses, lectures and academic advising;
5. provide one-on-one consultation sessions for faculty and upon the request of concerned faculty;
6. establish a grant to faculty who submit proposals on innovative instructional challenge;
7. plan informal yet structured regular luncheons for large class faculty to discuss and share experiences;
8. establish an AUB teaching excellence newsletter and website that address issues and upcoming events in teaching excellence pertinent to the AUB context;
9. establish a list-serve that would cater to the needs of faculty teaching practices, specifically faculty of large classes.