President’s Message

Recently I have wondered whether the most distinguishing characteristic of POD is our core set of values rather than our mission—in brief, the advocacy of the on-going enhancement of teaching and learning through faculty and organizational development. Together we need to clarify our core set of values but community, cooperation, collegiality, equality are a good place to start. Would we be a different kind of organization with different and broader areas of concern if we lived more fully into our core set of values?

According to Bill Bergquist, faculty development is the prime exemplar of the developmental culture. The developmental culture arose in the 1960s and 1970s as a direct response to the dominant culture of the academy, characterized then and now by the values of specialization, autonomy, competition, and objectivity. In the dominant culture, the focus is on the individual with an emphasis on individual striving and escalating levels of activity in the pursuit of an elusive “more-than”: more publications, more grants, more committee service, more external commitments, more students than our peers. Malaise, fatigue, hollowness of purpose, aridity of spirit, loss of balance and perspective are widespread symptoms of the toxic tendencies of this environment.

In its place, the developmental culture substitutes the community and related values of collegiality, cooperation, support and nurturing, and relationships. The focus is on the other rather than the self and the conditions that promote the holistic growth and development—mind, heart, body, spirit—of the other. In place of “more-than,” we strive for a deeper sense of meaning and purpose that lies somewhere beyond ourselves as individuals.

Similarly, POD’s core traditions and practices are rooted in a compassionate approach that extends the object of our concern and those with whom we work beyond our own selves and interests. In this context the other can take several forms:

Students. As advocates for students as learners, we constantly ask instructors to shift their perspective away from academic disciplines as spheres of their own competence and accomplishment to academic disciplines as vehicles for learning for their students. In order to make this shift in perspective, instructors need, first, to adopt a beginner’s mind, seeing their discipline’s methodological and conceptual challenges as though for the first time; second, to see the potential of their discipline to further the development of their students on broad, general lines (for example, critical thinking, responsibility for their own learning) that, paradoxically, are embedded in but also transcend the peculiarities of their discipline; and finally, to see their students clearly including their prior knowledge and misconceptions; their strengths, weaknesses and preferences as learners; their sources of motivation; and the frames of reference in which they think, act, feel, live and dream.

Community. As advocates of community, we focus on the good and advancement of the organization rather than the good and advancements of individuals. We promote the attributes and processes of communities—whether classrooms, departments, or whole institutions—that promote human growth and development. These processes include collaboration, active listening, and

—Continued on page 2
Notes from the POD Office

Sincere thanks to Matt Ouellett (University of Massachusetts at Amherst), POD Past President, and Virginia Lee, (Virginia S. Lee & Associates) POD President, for helping to organize the one and a half-day Multicultural Organizational Development Institute, in collaboration with the AAC&U, in Seattle on January 20 and 21. Thanks also to institute presenters Linda S. Marchesani (University of Massachusetts at Amherst), Leslie Orquist-Ahrens (Otterbein College), Christine Stanley (Texas A & M University), Frank Tuitt (University of Denver), and Phyllis Worthy-Dawkins (Johnson C. Smith University). What a great way to start 2009!

Mark your calendars: the 34th annual 2009 POD Conference will be held in Houston at the Houston Hyatt, October 28 – November 1. Conference Co-chairs Kevin Barry (University of Notre Dame) and Debra Fowler (Texas A & M University) and Program Co-chairs Suzanne Tapp (Texas Tech University) and Shaun Longstreet (University of California at Irvine) are already at work planning a strong conference. Watch for the Call for Proposals in February! (Conference sites are booked two to three years in advance. While every effort is made to avoid all holidays, overlapping with Halloween (Saturday night) was unavoidable in 2009 due to hotel availability.)

If you haven’t yet ordered your copy of the 2008/09 Teaching Excellence Essays, please consider doing so. Individual and institutional rates are available. Just click on the publications link on the POD website. Here’s the list of this year’s essays and authors:

- Teaching Scientific Report Writing Using Rubrics
  PJ Bennett, University of Colorado – Boulder
- A Whole New World, A New Fantastic Point of View
  Ron Berk, The Johns Hopkins University
- Making Sure Peer Review of Teaching Works for You
  Nancy Chism, Indiana University
- Orienting Students to an “Inside-Out Course”: Establishing a Classroom Culture of Interactive, Cooperative, Learning
  Karlene Ferrante, University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point
- Non-science for Majors: Reforming Courses, Programs, and Pedagogy
  Jennifer Frederick, Yale University
- It Takes Discipline: Learning in a World Without Boundaries
  Stephen Healey, University of Bridgeport

“How did I spend two hours grading this paper?!”: Responding to Student Writing Without Losing Your Life
Eric LeMay, Harvard University

Anatomy of a Scientific Explanation
Cassandra Volpe-Horii, Harvard University

Thanks to Elizabeth Chandler O’Connor (University of Chicago) for again editing the series!

– Hoag Holmgren, Executive Director

-- President, continued from page 1

reflective inquiry. Further, POD’s own governmental structure including a volunteer Core Committee and fifteen volunteer committees; shared leadership among the President-Elect, President and Past President; and an emphasis on consensus decision-making (see also Dakin Burdick’s Connecting with our Past column) minimizes the power and authority of any one individual in deference to the organization as a whole.

Those Who are Different from Ourselves. As advocates of inclusivity, we work to make our institutions more open and hospitable to those of all racial and ethnic identities, social classes, sexual orientations, and physical abilities. Reflecting the social activism of many of our founding members, POD has tried over the years to become an increasingly inclusive organization. Led most notably by the efforts of the Diversity Committee, POD has welcomed representatives of institutions that serve under-served and under-represented populations and mentored them into leadership positions. At the same time we have encouraged the widened participation of our international colleagues and the different perspective they bring. We must continue to challenge the limits of community and stretch our capacities to hold ever more diverse constituents, whether faculty, students or staff, in our communities.

Recalling Debra Rowe’s sustainability keynote at the 2008 POD/NCSPOD Joint Conference, I wonder whether an even more radical test of inclusivity is the ability of our communities to hold future generations whose identities are largely unknown and to promote their growth and development. Sustainability has not been a real priority for us as an organization, but perhaps it should be.

POD’s core values are rooted in a compassion that extends beyond our selves to others. Daily we try to bring a sense of meaning and purpose to our institutions and to higher education that transcends “more-than.” We revitalize our institutions through a broader and clearer collective vision of human capacity. We revitalize faculty through renewed engagement with students and other faculty. And we revitalize the organizational structures and processes required to further our enlarged vision of human capacity within an ever wider and more diverse community.

– Virginia Lee
POD Diversity Travel Grants Renamed in Honor of Former POD President Don Wulff

The POD Diversity Committee Travel Grants (now in their 15th year) have been renamed the “Donald H. Wulff Diversity Travel Fellowship” in honor of former POD President Don Wulff, who passed away in February 2008.

Don, President of POD during 1993/94, was recognized for his longstanding commitment to diversity, mentoring, faculty and graduate student development, and strengthening the inclusiveness of POD as an organization. Moreover, his initiatives as POD President led to the establishment of the Diversity Committee, the Internship Grants, and the Travel Grant Program.

For more information about the Internship Grant Program and the Wulff Travel Fellowships, see http://www.podnetwork.org/grants_awards.htm.

Upcoming Conferences

International Team-Based Learning Conference, March 5th and 6th, 2009 at the University of Texas at Austin. Join us this year as we celebrate the expansion of the TBL Collaborative to include all postsecondary disciplines and an invigorated focus on the scholarship of teaching and learning in TBL. To get more information and register, visit the conference website at: http://www.utexas.edu/academic/diia/teambased/

The 2nd annual SoTL Commons: An International Conference for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (in higher education) on will be held on March 11-13, 2009 at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia, USA. 235 presenters are from Australia, Canada, China, Jamaica, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, South Africa, Taiwan, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States. The conference website is at http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/ijsotl/conference/2009/index.htm.

The January 2009 issue of International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning is online at http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/ijsotl/v3n1.html.

Core Committee Elected

POD Welcomes 2009-2012 Core Members

Congratulations to the five new Core Committee members and sincere thanks to all 13 candidates for their willingness to serve and guide the POD Network in Higher Education.

Class of 2012

Peter Felten is POD’s next President Elect

Peter Felten is Director of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning at Elon University.

Kevin Barry, University of Notre Dame

Bonnie Mullinix, Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLT) Group

Therese Huston, Seattle University

Laurel Willingham-McLain, Duquesne University

Mary-Ann Winkelman, University of Illinois
Institute for New Faculty Developers
Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota
June 21 – 26, 2009

To be held at Macalester College

Co-sponsored by The Collaboration for the Advancement of College Teaching & Learning and the POD Network in Higher Education, and held at Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota (June 21-26, 2009), the Institute for New Faculty Developers is a program for anyone wishing to develop professional expertise in planning, leading, and managing college and university teaching and learning centers and faculty and instructional development programs.

Tap into a talent pool of presenters, facilitators, and consultants who are recognized leaders in the field. Learn how to apply key concepts and skills to meet the needs of your home institution. Discover resources available to help you in your work and sustain your professional development.

For information about the Institute for New Faculty Developers, please contact The Collaboration at: collab@collab.org. Or visit us on the web at: www.collab.org.

Books by POD Members


Associate Editor sought for To Improve the Academy

Members of POD are invited to apply for the position of Associate Editor of To Improve the Academy, beginning in the academic year 2009-10. The work involved is rewarding and of tremendous service to POD and the larger higher education community. While the duties are not overwhelming, it is a four-year commitment – two as Associate Editor and two as Editor. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to distributing the Call for Proposals, selecting reviewers, reading and editing manuscripts, and communicating with Jossey-Bass.

If you are qualified and interested in serving, please request an application form from the incoming Editor of To Improve the Academy, Judy Miller (judmiller@clarku.edu). Applications are due by Friday, Feb. 20, 2009.

Essential qualifications:

• Outstanding organizational skills
• Attention to detail (including conformance with APA format)
• Excellent writing/editing and proofreading skills
• Adherence to strict deadlines
• Firm command of the faculty development literature

Co-sponsored by The Collaboration for the Advancement of College Teaching & Learning and the POD Network in Higher Education, and held at Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota (June 21-26, 2009), the Institute for New Faculty Developers is a program for anyone wishing to develop professional expertise in planning, leading, and managing college and university teaching and learning centers and faculty and instructional development programs.

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For information about the Institute for New Faculty Developers, please contact The Collaboration at: collab@collab.org. Or visit us on the web at: www.collab.org.

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Michele DiPietro receives POD Innovation Award

Michele DiPietro, working with a talented team from the Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence at Carnegie Mellon University, developed “An Online Tool for Teaching Consultations.” The 2008 POD Innovation Award was given to Michele and his team at the annual POD conference, held this year in Reno, Nevada. Innovation Idea Awards are presented each year at the annual POD conference to honor faculty developers who have implemented creative ideas for the enhancement of teaching and learning and/or faculty development. The winning submission, based on an online consultation tool, takes users through 3 critical teaching consultation steps. After selecting a teaching problem, instructors are presented with a set of possible underlying reasons for the issue. Clicking on a reason gives a bit of background about the research in that area, and then a list of solutions tailored to the reasons. The tool, available for free at http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/solveproblem/index.html, is useful to both instructors and educational developers.

Six finalist were recognized, with innovations including building an online master course syllabus database (Shelly Peacock, Blinn College), increasing attendance at events through a Teaching Academy Program (Tara Gray, New Mexico State University), providing rubric information with grading goody bags (Sally Kuhlenschmidt, Western Kentucky University), implementing a 20-minute idea exchange session (Sal Meyers, Simpson College), building a customized student rating system based on the institutional mission statement (Edward Nufher, California State University Channel Islands), and implementing a system to simplify the IRB process for scholarship of teaching research (Mary Wright, University of Michigan).

Additional information and summaries of all winning entries since the award was established, can be found at the POD Innovation Award website: http://www.wku.edu/teaching/db/podbi/

– Todd Zakrajsek, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill

In Memoriam

Frances Johnson, Associate Professor of Writing Arts and Director of the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, touched the personal and professional lives of many people at Rowan University and across the country. She is remembered with great fondness and admiration and sadly missed by all who had the privilege of knowing and working with her.

She earned her BA in English from Christopher Newport University, her MA in English from Old Dominion University, and her Ph.D. in English with a concentration in Composition, Rhetoric, and Literacy Studies from the University of Oklahoma.

Arriving at Rowan in 1996 she taught graduate and undergraduate courses in Writing Arts. In 2001, she became Director of the Faculty Center. Frances was also active in the University Senate and the AFT.

A tireless champion of teaching and learning, Frances elevated the profile of the Faculty Center and shaped its mission as a hub for faculty growth and development. The Faculty Center under her leadership actively promoted the scholarship of teaching and learning and became a key resource for both new and experienced faculty. Frances encouraged collaboration among faculty through mentoring partnerships and learning communities. In 2004, she was nationally recognized with an Innovation Award from POD for her “Mentoring Minutes” program. Frances also applied her skill at bringing people together to her work as chair of the AFT Grievance.

Frances was a spirited, compassionate, and fun-loving person who was devoted to her family, friends, and community. Her interests included gardening, traveling, food and wine, dogs, and detective novels. She was an active member of Our Lady Queen of Peace church in Pitman, serving as a Lector, President of the Rosary and Altar Society, and member of the Alternative Options Committee.

She is survived by her mother, sister, husband, and four sons.

– Don Stoll

Members on the Move

Rhett McDaniel joins the Vanderbilt Center for Teaching team in January 2009, as an Educational Technology Specialist. Most recently, Rhett has been a Learning Systems Manager at Vanderbilt’s Medical Center, but prior to that he worked for 15 years in instructional development at IUPUI (Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis), including 8 years as Director of Instructional Technology in the Center for Teaching and Learning. Welcome back to POD, Rhett!

Theresa Moore, formerly instructional design specialist, becomes Director of Faculty Development at Viterbo University.

Dr. Frances Johnson 1947-2008

Rhett McDaniel receives POD Innovation Award plaque from Todd Zakrajsek

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– Don Stoll
In Reno, many participants asked about how the conference is run, and especially, how they might get involved. We are delighted to outline recent conference practices here. Of note, the conference is led by a different volunteer team each year, and the practices evolve. These practices are guided by a manual which is updated regularly.

What principles guide the conference team?

In making decisions, the 2007 and 2008 conference teams have followed these criteria: representation, fairness, mentoring, quality, community building, respect for tradition, and welcoming of new ideas. We have sought to promote these values: "POD believes that people have value, as individuals and as members of groups. The development of students is a fundamental purpose of higher education and requires for its success effective advising, teaching, leadership, and management. Central to POD's philosophy is life long, holistic, personal, and professional learning, growth, and change for the higher education community." (http://www.podnetwork.org/about.htm)

How is the conference team connected to POD’s governance structure?

The conference team is connected through the executive director and president to the Core Committee. Often one of the conference chairs is also a member of Core. In planning the conference, the team seeks to support POD strategic planning and committee initiatives as much as possible.

Who organizes the conference and what are their areas of responsibility?

Several hundred people helped make our most recent conference in Reno a success. Here is a list of "conference roles in a nutshell." The list is not exhaustive, but highlights some of the major areas of responsibility.

• Executive Director:
  Selects hotel site selection and conference dates, with approval of Executive Committee. Manages the registration process and all finances. Negotiates the contract and serves as primary contact with the hotel. Liaison between the conference team and Executive Committee.

• Conference Chairs:
  Lead and oversee the entire planning process, working closely with the Executive Director.

• Program Chairs:
  Coordinate the call for proposals, review process, program development, technology, and communication with presenters.

How are the chairs selected?

Each year, the conference chair(s) and program chair(s) for the upcoming conference are chosen by the President in consultation with the current conference team, and with approval by the Core Committee. In 2007 and 2008, two people have shared each of these key leadership positions. Generally, the chairs have previously served in conference volunteer roles, and sometimes, the program chairs become the next year’s conference chairs.

What do the chairs do?

The chairs and the executive director form the steering committee for the conference, and they meet weekly (online) for a year prior to the event, in close consultation with the President. For example, they choose the theme, invite plenary speakers, conduct a hotel site visit, select a menu, and determine the program schedule. They select the other members of the team, using criteria such as the development of future leadership, diversity, and national and institutional representation.

Who else is on the team and what are their roles?

Several POD members support the conference as peer-reviewed session coordinators:

• Pre-Conference Workshops: Coordinates the review of pre-conference sessions, recommends a preconference program to the program chairs before registration, and assists pre-conference presenters on site. In the past few years, the pre-conference coordinator has become a program chair.

• Concurrent Sessions: Helps coordinate the review and selection of interactive and roundtable sessions in consultation with the program chairs. This can be two separate positions.

• Poster Sessions: Helps coordinate the review and selection of posters, communicates with presenters, and helps set up the poster exhibit.

The conference team relies on about ten other coordinators to ensure the conference runs smoothly. Each has a specific area of responsibility:

• Topical Interest Groups (TIGs): Proposes a range of topics (aligned with proposal topics), consults with POD committee chairs to invite session facilitators, provides guidelines, and coordinates the TIGs on site.

• Resource Fair: Through the registration process, the Executive Director compiles a list of resource fair presenters. The resource fair coordinator then contacts the presenters, and on site, assists them in locating their table.

• Job Fair: Coordinates an event at which people
advertising positions, and those looking for positions, are able to distribute their ads and CVs, and meet informally.

- **Educational Expeditions:** Often a local POD member who coordinates a variety of expeditions, including transportation, and where needed, meals. Consults closely with Executive Director and chairs on the types, costs, and timing of expeditions.

- **Volunteers:** Invite POD members to get involved in working at the registration desk and providing directions to meeting rooms. This is often the entry point for people to become involved in the conference. More experienced POD members are asked to staff the welcome area to help newcomers get the most out of the conference. In 2008, many people also volunteered as photographers.

- **Conference Evaluation:** A POD member not serving on the conference planning team conducts an evaluation of the conference. He or she involves other POD members in analyzing the data and preparing a report.

- **Conference Newsletter:** A conference attendee prepares a daily newsletter of changes in the schedule, announcements, and POD news items. In 2008, the newsletter was distributed primarily by email, with a print copy at each lunch table.

- **Roommate Assistance Coordinator:** Helps attendees defray costs by finding a roommate prior to the conference.

- **Conference Proposal Reviewers:** Well over 100 reviewers are needed to conduct blind peer review of conference proposals through the conference database online. On the volunteer form, reviewers indicate areas where they have expertise.

- **Innovation Award & Menges Award Reviewers:** The chairs of these committees are chosen by Core, and they submit the winner information for the program and present the awards at the conference. The award selection process is not part of the conference team responsibilities.

**What is included in the conference and how are proposals reviewed?**

**Session review process**

POD is committed to using teams of reviewers to evaluate proposals without knowing the author’s identity or institution (i.e., blind review). Teams of three reviewers with varying levels of POD experience evaluate each proposal using a list of questions. The program chairs rely on the careful review of each proposal, the ratings, and comments. Reviews that include descriptive comments are most helpful when a reviewer is unsure whether or not to recommend the proposal for acceptance, or whether the session type for which the author has submitted the proposal is the best fit. The session coordinators and program chairs work together to compile a program using the quality of the proposal as the primary criterion, but also reflecting the diverse topical interests, institutional contexts, and professional experience of POD members. In the past two years, approximately 70% of proposals have been accepted.

In the past, there seemed to be an unspoken hierarchy of sessions with pre-conference and 90-minute interactive workshops being the most highly sought after, and roundtables and posters seen as somehow lesser. Now, all session types are reviewed with equal rigor, and each proposal is considered for its fit: interactive sessions include application, roundtables feature discussion, and poster sessions demonstrate a technique or present research findings.

**POD-sponsored sessions**

The Core Committee approved a policy in 2007 to oversee sessions that do not undergo blind review. They are offered by POD committees to serve the membership. Some are regularly repeated (e.g., getting started; how’s it going? submitting POD grant proposals; publishing in *To Improve the Academy*, multiculturalism and diversity; and small college faculty development). Others respond to a timely issue, such as campus violence.

POD-sponsored session proposals are presented for approval to the Core Committee in March prior to the conference. Presenters are then required to collect participant evaluations of the session and submit a summary of these. The number of non-blind reviewed sessions remains small (currently about 7 sessions per conference), and the quality is monitored by the Core Committee.

**Vendor exhibit**

POD’s statement of “Ethical Guidelines for Educational Developers” emphasizes the importance of allowing “no personal or private interests to conflict or appear to conflict with professional duties or clients’ needs” (section 2h). To avoid potential conflict of interest, POD does not permit any conference session the sale of materials or the solicitation of consulting work.

The vendor exhibit was created in 2007 in direct response to concerns attendees raised about some presenters inappropriately promoting materials and services in peer-reviewed sessions. Vendors pay a small fee. In 2008, the exhibit was extended to two days.

**Resource fair**

The resource fair is open to anyone who wants to showcase programs or give out free materials. Anyone attending the conference can sign up for a table when registering. POD members are known for their generosity in sharing.

**When do conference decisions get made?** (approximate timeline)

- Site selection – two years in advance
- Selection of chairs – one year in advance; announced at previous conference
- Selection of other team members – 3-6 months in advance depending on the task
- Selection of theme and invitation to plenary speakers – January
- Call for proposals – February
- Approval of POD-sponsored sessions – March
- Core meeting

– Continued on page 11
Teaching, Learning, and Spirituality in the College Classroom

Allison Pingree, Vanderbilt University

A range of recent developments in the U.S. higher education landscape is provoking a heightened focus on spirituality and religion in the academy. For example, UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), best known as the administrators of the CIRP Freshman Survey for over 40 years, is conducting a major research project, Spirituality in Higher Education (www.spirituality.ucla.edu), drawing data from over 112,000 students and 40,000 faculty at over 420 institutions. Defining spirituality in broad strokes (as the “interior” and “subjective” aspects of our lives, that which reflects the “values and ideals that we hold most dear”), gives us “meaning and purpose,” and invokes “inspiration, creativity, the mysterious, the sacred, and the mystical”), the project’s reports show that significant majorities of both students and faculty place a high priority on cultivating such qualities within the academy. For example, a large majority (74%) of students are searching for meaning and purpose of life, and believe that college should play a strong role in this development: more than two-thirds see it as essential or very important that their college enhances their self-understanding, and almost half say it is essential or very important for their college to encourage their personal expression of spirituality. Results from faculty show a similar interest in spirituality: 81% consider themselves to be spiritual persons, and 69% actively seek opportunities for spiritual development; a majority of faculty believes that enhancing students’ self-understanding (60%), developing moral character (59%) and helping students develop personal values (53%) are essential or very important goals of an undergraduate education.

Similarly, College Learning in the New Global Century, part of the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ Liberal Education and America’s Promise project, insists on the importance of engaging students in the “Big Questions.” Initiatives such as the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching’s Integrative Learning, Wellesley College’s Education for Transformation, the Ford Foundation’s Difficult Dialogues, and ventures supported by a range of other foundations (including Teagle, Templeton, and the Fetzer Institute), are spurring colleges and universities to cultivate discussions about meaning, value, and purpose, and to develop practices that allow for the integration of mind, heart, and spirit in higher education. A growing number of articles, books, and conferences on these issues give further evidence of their increasing importance in the academy (e.g., Chickering, Dalton & Stamm, Diamond, Hoppe & Speck, Jacobsen & Jacobsen, Tisdell).

Despite the interest and value that both faculty and students seem to hold for spiritual development, over half of the students (56%) in the HERI survey reported that their professors never provide opportunities to discuss the meaning and purpose of life, and only 55% are satisfied with how their college experience has provided “opportunity for religious/spiritual reflection.” Thus, while students want support in their quests for meaning and purpose during college, few are finding it in their interactions with faculty. This may be due, in part, to the fact that attending to this kind of development in the academic setting calls traditional forms of authority and security into question. As Robert Connar (2007) describes, “The Big Questions . . . are intimidating; they seem to press us to move beyond our professional expertise and force on us an unfamiliar discourse. In this area, we are not confident about our mastery. Why can’t we leave these questions to some other set of experts--the moral philosophers maybe, or the clergy, or the writers of pop-psych books? Let me teach what I know.” Indeed, many academics consider spirituality to be a private matter that has no place in the classroom. While it may be appropriate for spirituality to be an object of analysis in a religious studies course, the argument goes, what place could it possibly have in, say, mathematics?

Moreover, the use of “spirituality” as a broadly inclusive term can, in fact, be confusing and even alienating. Goodman & Teraguchi (2008) point out that some students “see spirituality as primarily concerned with religion” while for others, “spirituality invokes inner development or existential well-being,” and or for still others, “is not a relevant concept at all.” With this lack of a clear definition, they claim, “students, faculty, and staff will find themselves talking past each other when attempting meaningful conversations about difference.”

Thus, an “all-inclusive” definition of spirituality actually conflates two separate terms: religion and psycho-social development. Because of the conflicts associated with the term ‘spirituality, we believe it is time to retire the spirituality framework and address these two components separately.”

Even if we narrow “spirituality” to refer to Goodman & Teraguchi’s second category of inner development (including such dimensions as reflection, creativity, and core values), questions still remain: what forms might the support of such development actually take in the classroom? What pedagogical practices might foster (or inhibit) explorations of meaning and purpose, for both students and faculty? Can (and should) such development ever really be assessed? The following are strategies designed to be useful to faculty as they begin to address these questions.

Incorporate discussions of meaning and purpose.

Students are keen to hear faculty’s reflections on questions such as: Why do I do what I do? What difference
do I think my profession makes in the world? What meaning or purpose does my scholarly field have for me? Carnegie Mellon University recently launched a well-attended seminar program called Big Questions. This program brings faculty into campus dormitories for small group discussions that “explore compelling, provocative and inspiring questions related to finding purpose and meaning in our complex world,” and thus help students “identify and develop their personal values.” Even if the main learning objectives of a course don’t center on inner development, faculty periodically can situate their subject matter within these larger frameworks, thereby deepening everyone’s engagement.

Cultivate student-focused pedagogies that make room for multiple forms of exploration.

Encourage a variety of collaborative and active learning formats, such as journals, visual images, role plays, film or music clips, or concept mapping; all are possible entry points for students to both access and express insights that operate in a register other than the purely cognitive, rational or verbal. The mere use of such practices, of course, is no guarantee that classroom environments will be fruitful sites for explorations of meaning and purpose; however, by not incorporating student perspectives into the pedagogical mix, such discussions are less likely to happen, or less productive if they do. For faculty interested in pursuing or refining strategies for student interaction and inclusion, centers for teaching and learning, as well as the wealth of books, articles and web resources on these issues, can offer ideas and support.

Engage knowledge that is experienced and applied in the world beyond the academy.

Extend the classroom walls. Experiential learning opportunities, such as service learning, internships, and study abroad can provide learning environments that are dramatically more effective than campus classrooms for exploring issues of meaning and purpose.

Campus Compact (2007), a national coalition of over 1000 college and university presidents, offers an impressive set of initiatives and resources to faculty interested in developing community service, civic engagement, and service-learning into their scholarly work.

Create a framework for assessing development.

While it may seem impossible or inappropriate to assess and evaluate students’ spiritual or inner development, developing a framework for articulating the kinds of growth that faculty are trying to support can be useful. Grant Wiggins & Jay McTighe’s Understanding by Design (2005) describes six facets of understanding and development, including perspective, empathy, and self-knowledge, with accompanying rubrics that map learning trajectories within these domains.

Safeguard time for reflection.

The academy abounds with frenetic attempts to be the quickest, the biggest, the best. Such pressures certainly contribute to the strong desires, expressed in the student and faculty data from HERI and elsewhere, for time and space to reflect, ponder, and make meaning. Some faculty make a point of taking a brief walk before giving a lecture, or making sure to take long slow breaths or sips of a beverage during their teaching, all in an effort to slow down and be present. Similarly, beginning class with a moment or two of quiet can allow both instructors and their students to settle in, focus, and thus engage more deeply and creatively with the people and issues present there. In a similar vein, taking a few minutes after class (before rushing off to the next meeting or project) to quietly reflect on what occurred there, can sustain and replenish faculty. Finally, consider establishing a ritual for the last day of your course, allowing both you and your students to share ways in which the course has intersected with broader issues of meaning and purpose.

The terrains of spirit, meaning, purpose, and value are indeed difficult to traverse, particularly within the complex, multicultural environment of today’s universities. Nonetheless, national research is showing that both faculty and students yearn for the opportunity to bring those elements of their lives into conversation in the academic setting. The strategies above offer a starting point for what will be, inevitably, an individual journey for each person--but one which can benefit from being shared, over time, in community.

References


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Reconnecting with Our Past
The Oral History Project works to record the voices of POD leaders and establish a professional history that can inform our future leaders.

Kay Herr Gillespie

Edited by Dakin Burdick

Kay Gillespie is Associate Editor of the journal of Innovative Higher Education and professor emerita of German language and literature at Colorado State University. She began faculty development through the Great Plains faculty development consortium around 1984, and attended her first POD conference in 1986 at Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. She has served as President of POD, and she and her husband Frank Gillespie were the Executive Directors of POD from January 1, 2002-June 30, 2006.

Burdick: Could please describe your career path?
Gillespie: Just a slippin’ and a slidin’! I drifted by accident into faculty development in 1977. I was a full-time tenured faculty member in the department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. So, I’m one of those that came out of the regular faculty positions. It began as a part-time activity. I was invited to provide some workshops for the faculty at my institution, whereby I would be paid for time in the summer, but I would do that all year. I think one’s approach to life can be that of the golden retriever who says, “Oh goody, there’s a tree I haven’t smelled yet!” I just plunged in with both feet and started doing it and have enjoyed it all very much since then. Then the part-time role expanded. I went into full-time faculty development in 1981 when I moved out of my department. At the same time I continued all regular faculty activity. I continued teaching at both the graduate and undergraduate level. I continued advising. I continued working in the service arena, way too much of that, on committees from all levels, i.e., departmental, college, and institutional; and I continued my own discipline specific research program, which meant, of course, I was working about one hundred and fifty percent all those years. But, I felt it important to continue those regular faculty activities as a point of credibility in working with the faculty and important for me to maintain the currency of understanding of what faculty and administrators are involved in. I had been acting chairperson in my own department, so I kept my fingers in a lot of pies. However, my focus became faculty development, and so I was one of those that just kind of slid into it. I didn’t plan it, but I am delighted my career path took that direction.

Burdick: How has POD governance changed over the years?
Gillespie: I remember when Frank and I were first on the Core Committee together. We did not know each other at that time. The organization had no written approach to budgeting. We didn’t write anything down, we didn’t plan a budget; and there were several of us on that Core Committee who questioned that and said, “My goodness, this isn’t a good way to do things.” So we promoted a budgeting process for the organization. Also, while we were on the Core Committee in 1990-1991, we moved to hiring someone to act professionally as what was called manager of administrative services at that time. The organization had grown to the point where we were certainly over-taxing people volunteering to serve as President of the organization. POD was getting too big, and there was too much work; and that’s when we made the decision to hire David Graf as a part-time manager of administrative services. That was a significant move in the evolution of the organization because now we had someone whom we could consider a paid professional and therefore could be held accountable for the orderly conduct of POD business.

Burdick: When were the responsibilities of the long range planning committee turned over to the Executive Committee?
Gillespie: That’s when I was President, I think, so probably about 1998. It became evident that we couldn’t just leave this up to volunteers who may or may not have a commitment for that activity and who may or may not have an appropriate level of knowledge about this activity. It became the Executive Director doing all of the information gathering and the work and then presenting the information to the Executive Committee, with consultation with the Core Committee for final decisions as to selection of conference sites.

In various ways we have sought to encourage and preserve the initial manner of the conduct of business for POD, which was by consensus rather than by voting. I think that method was and remains very powerful. It is what came to be called a feminist model of managing, running things by consensus rather than by Robert’s Rules of Order. However, I think that term is really a gender deprecation. Running one’s organization and conducting one’s business by consensus is a much more cooperative manner of doing things, a more positive approach to the conduct of business. The moment you vote, as we well know, you have winners, and you have losers. It’s easy to resort to voting. It’s perceived as quicker. At times in the Core meetings, all of a sudden, someone who is officiating may say, “Alright, are we ready for a vote?” Then I think it’s incumbent upon the Executive Director or Directors to say, “Umm, according to our constitutions and our bylaws that’s not the way that we conduct our business.”

We conduct our business by consensus. We do not need to record a vote other than in matters of a legal
nature, which covers the bylaws of the organization. Our corporate bylaws are a legal doctrine, and on such matters we must enforce those bylaws. However, there are also times where a conflict cannot be resolved. I remember well, as does Frank, that there was one Core meeting when there was an issue upon which we could not reach consensus, so everyone lined up against the wall to record approximately where they stood on this particular issue and thereby determine where the majority opinion was. However, we had not voted. The conduct of the business of an organization by consensus rather than by Robert’s Rules of Order is seemingly one of those little things, but I don’t think it is a little thing. I think it is a big thing.

Burdick: Very well put. What other elements do you think are important to POD’s governance?

Gillespie: To preserve the sense of community within a conference event that has become quite large requires work, requires thought, requires knowledge, requires vision and that, I think, is something that as an organization we need to constantly keep before us. But, above all, I would say, organizationally, we need to have as an absolutely prime principle the concept of good stewardship, infusing not only what we do as an organization but also infusing what each of us does beyond in our other professional communities—to have a sense of good stewardship of the resources and talents that are available to us.

Dakin Burdick, Instructional Consultant, is POD’s Historian.
Contacting the POD Office

It is our goal at the POD office to respond to members’ questions, concerns, needs, and interests as courteously and promptly as possible. Please contact us at the address below if we can assist you.

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