

1996

"Demonstrating the Quality and Impact of Faculty Development Workshops" and "Transforming Today's Teaching Assistants into Tomorrow's Faculty: A Workshop for TA Supervisors, Executive Summary"

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/podconference>



Part of the [Higher Education Administration Commons](#)

---

"Demonstrating the Quality and Impact of Faculty Development Workshops" and "Transforming Today's Teaching Assistants into Tomorrow's Faculty: A Workshop for TA Supervisors, Executive Summary" (1996). *POD Network Conference Materials*. 120. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/podconference/120>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in POD Network Conference Materials by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

# Demonstrating the Quality & Impact of Faculty Development Workshops

**James Eison**

Center for Teaching Enhancement  
University of South Florida  
4202 East Fowler Ave., SVC 1088  
Tampa, FL 33620-6912  
(813) 974-2576  
eison@acomps.usf.edu

Presented at the Twenty First Annual Meeting of the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education, Snowbird, UT  
October 17-20, 1996

**Session Abstract:** Workshops have been described as “the main staple in the instructional improver’s cupboard” (Weimer & Lenze, 1991). Unfortunately, faculty development professionals have done relatively little to address Menges’ (1980) observation that “Workshops are . . . the least carefully evaluated instructional development activity.” This interactive session will examine strategies to demonstrate and document workshop impact.

**Session Objectives:** Participants in this interactive session will

Explore why it is useful to demonstrate the quality and impact of faculty development workshops.

Examine critically assumptions that underlie common beliefs about demonstrating workshop quality and impact.

Identify a variety of practical approaches to collecting evidence demonstrating workshop quality and impact.

Share stories, thoughts, and advice regarding ways participants have demonstrated workshop quality and impact.

Work collaboratively on the design of participant survey items that can be used to demonstrate workshop quality and impact.

Address specific questions raised by members of the group

Receive a handout to stimulate post-session reflection and reading.

## **Discussion Questions: Some Personal Observations**

Why is it useful for faculty developers to demonstrate the quality and impact of the faculty development workshops they sponsor or conduct?

- To help create a campus climate that recognizes, publicizes, and rewards faculty efforts to enhance their teaching
- To establish and enhance the credibility of faculty development programs, initiatives, committees, and units on campus
- To gather feedback that can help workshop sponsors and facilitators plan future programs
- To provide follow-up information to the workshop facilitator(s)
- To model to participants the value of using evaluation data to inform and improve future performance
- To provide clear evidence of exemplary faculty motivation and teaching excellence to senior academic administrators
- To support requests for continued or future funding for faculty development activities or programs
- To advance current understandings of effective faculty development practices through publication of our findings in the research literature of higher education

What assumptions underlie common beliefs about demonstrating workshop quality and impact?

- Workshops are a relatively “easy” type of faculty development activity to plan, implement and evaluate.
- Faculty who choose to attend teaching workshops are typically “the choir” who least need to “hear the preacher’s sermon.”
- Relatively little can be accomplished in a brief one-shot workshop.
- Workshop sponsors and facilitators cannot document that participation in a faculty workshop will give rise to either enhanced teaching or improved student learning.
- Because evidence documenting workshop quality and impact has not been collected, the program’s themselves are without basis or merit.
- It is extremely difficult to demonstrate workshop quality and impact.

How many different types of evidence might a faculty developer use to demonstrate workshop quality and impact?

- Number of participants attending (e.g., an individual workshop, a semester or year-long series of individual workshops, a particular program over a period of several years)
- Diversity of participants attending (e.g., broken down by department or college, academic rank, gender)
- Information provided by participants in a required letter of application to attend the workshop
- Measures of participants' reactions to the workshop collected at the workshop's conclusion (e.g., written surveys, verbal comments shared during a closing activity, individual or focus group interviews)
- Participant requests for, or participation in, follow-up activities (e.g., reading materials, individual consultations)
- Measures of participants' reactions to the workshop collected after an interval of time following the workshop's conclusion (e.g., written surveys, participant letters of appreciation, individual participant interviews, focus group interviews)
- Compilation and/or assessment of facilitator-produced workshop products (e.g., resource books, instructional activities, bibliographies, executive summaries)
- Compilation and/or assessment of participant-produced workshop products (e.g., new/revised syllabi, instructional resource materials, course tests, videotapes of microteaching, multimedia presentations, development of training program plans, grant proposals, publications)
- Comparisons made between participants' effectiveness pre- and post-workshop participation (e.g., changes in course syllabi, teaching methods, student test performance, student ratings of their instructor)
- Compilation of participants' workshop-stimulated achievements (e.g., sharing new teaching approaches with colleagues on campus, presenting papers at professional conferences, publishing scholarly articles)
- Documentation prepared by a participant-observer in or an external evaluator for the workshop
- Analysis of participants' post-workshop teaching performance (e.g., based upon classroom observations or videotaped teaching)

What strategies for designing "workshop evaluation forms" provide powerful evaluation data?

- When constructing rating scales, sentence completion items, or interview questions, evaluation items should:

Address directly important and specific workshop goals.

Focus and address your specific evaluative interests and concerns.

Be easily understood by participants.

Provide participants with equal opportunity to express appreciation or criticism.

Help synthesize participants' reactions and/or lessons learned.

Provide information that can be easily summarized and understood by readers.

Offer workshop sponsors and/or facilitators feedback on their effectiveness as well as suggestions for future improvement.

Be consistent with evaluation items used previously (i.e., allowing meaningful summarization across workshops and/or across time).

- On rating scales, decide whether to assess participants' agreement or disagreement with various attitude statements or participants' qualitative judgements about similar statements.

Please use the following five-point rating scale -- strongly agree, agree, undecided/unsure, disagree, strongly disagree -- to respond to the following items in a candid manner:

The workshop presented useful information and ideas.

The workshop modeled effective teaching.

The workshop helped me to improve my own teaching.

If a friend or colleague asked me to describe my overall reaction to the program, I would rate the session as excellent.

Please use the following five-point rating scale -- excellent, very good, good, fair, poor -- to respond to the following items in a candid manner:

The workshop did a(an) \_\_\_\_ job of presenting useful information and ideas.

The workshop did a(an) \_\_\_\_ job of modeling effective teaching.

The workshop did a(an) \_\_\_\_ job of helping me to improve my own teaching.

If a friend or colleague asked me to describe my overall reaction to the program, I would rate the session as \_\_\_\_ .

*good use of time  
met objectives*

*JS*

- When fixed-response questions are used primarily, also provide opportunity and space for participants to also offer open-ended feedback.

Please describe what you liked best and least about this workshop. Please write legibly; use the reverse side if you desire more space.

Please note any additional comments on any aspect of today's program (e.g., content, facilitation) and offer any suggestions for future programs.

- Sentence completion items provide a useful structure and format for obtaining participants' open-ended evaluative comments.

My expectations for this workshop . . . . .

As a facilitator in this workshop, Jim . . . . . *(use for TV letter)*

Of the topics addressed in this workshop, the one that will have the greatest impact upon my teaching will be . . . . .

One significant concern I had about this workshop was . . . . .

When colleagues in my department ask me about this program, I will tell them that . . . . .

In addition to my above comments, I'd also like to add . . . . .

*One question not answered by this workshop was . . . . .*

What issues might a faculty developer want to address when initially planning a workshop that could later help demonstrate the workshop's effectiveness?

- Be as thoughtful about the design of the workshop evaluation procedures as you are about all other important matters of workshop planning and delivery.
- Where appropriate, create a workshop application procedure that collects demographic information about applicants and/or narrative information about applicants' teaching experiences, workshop goals, etc. that will later help demonstrate program quality and impact.
- Design appropriate workshop activities (e.g., microteaching, short writing activities) and participant assignments (e.g., constructing a course syllabus, class assignment, exam, plan for a training program) that produce tangible workshop products.
- Create the workshop evaluation instrument prior to the start of the program.
- Ensure that the facilitator(s) see the evaluation instrument in advance.
- Ensure that participants truly have adequate time to thoughtfully complete the evaluation instrument at the workshop's conclusion.
- Where possible, employ several different types of evaluative procedures ranging from the relatively simple to the more complex (e.g., a simple written survey, a report by a participant/observer, post-workshop interviews or focus groups).
- Plan on preparing an "Executive Summary" of the workshop to share with participants, Department Chairs, Deans, and the Academic Vice-President (One sample "Executive Summary" is attached)

*I liked . . .  
I learned . . .  
I suggest . . .*

What reading materials might prove helpful to faculty developers interested in learning more about designing, conducting, and assessing faculty development workshops?

- Eison, J. (1989). Mandatory teaching effectiveness workshops for new faculty: What a difference three years make. *Journal of Staff, Program and Organization Development*, 7(2), 59-66.
- Eison, J. & Hill, H. H. (1990, Winter). Creating workshops for new faculty. *Journal of Staff, Program and Organization Development*, 8(4), 223-234..
- Eison, J. A., Janzow, F., & Bonwell, C. C. (1990). Active learning in faculty development workshops: Or, practicing what we teach. *Journal of Staff, Program and Organization Development*, 8(2), 81-99.
- Eison, J., & Stevens, E. (1995). Faculty development workshops and institutes. In W. A. Wright and Associates, *Teaching improvement practices: Successful strategies for higher education* (pp. 206-236). Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.
- Renegar, S., Summary, R., Bonwell, C., & Eison, J. (1987). Mandatory teaching effectiveness workshops for new faculty: Lessons learned the hard way. *Journal of Staff, Program and Organization Development*, 5(3), 114-118.
- Sork, T. J. (1984, June). *Designing and implementing effective workshops*. New Directions for Continuing Education, No. 22. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

# **Transforming Today's Teaching Assistants into Tomorrow's Faculty: A Workshop for TA Supervisors**

## **Executive Summary**

**Introduction:** The quality of undergraduate instruction provided at USF and the quality of preparation USF graduate students receive to become members of the professorate of the 21<sup>st</sup> century depend largely upon the quality of training graduate teaching assistants (TAs) receive within their departments. To assist faculty efforts to provide TAs with comprehensive and systematic training on the art, science and craft of college and university teaching, USF's Center for Teaching Enhancement invited faculty supervisors of TAs and departmental coordinators of graduate studies to participate in a new summer workshop. The workshop was held May 6-10, 1996, and met daily from 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. TA Supervisors received a \$750 stipend for their participation.

**Workshop Facilitators:** Drs. Jim Eison (Center for Teaching Enhancement), Marsha Vanderford (Department of Communication), and Diane Williams (Center for Teaching Enhancement) were the facilitators of this program. Collectively, the team had over 27 years of experience in TA training. The facilitators had also made over 30 conference presentations and authored 8 publications in this area.

**Workshop Application Procedure:** Letters of application were invited from all faculty. Applicants addressed each of the following in their cover letters: (1) background information, (2) a description of why they wanted to attend and how they hoped to benefit from this program, (3) the name and undergraduate course number(s) in which they supervise TAs, and (4) the number of TAs they supervise annually. Participants were also required to attach a letter of recommendation from their Department Chairperson.

**Workshop Participants:** Included among the 21 workshop participants were faculty representatives from 6 colleges (Arts and Sciences, Business, Education, Engineering, Fine Arts, and Nursing). Appendix 1 contains the participant roster.

**Workshop Goals:** The facilitators shared with participants the following seven workshop goals: (1) To assist participants' efforts to design and implement effective course- or departmentally-based TA training programs, (2) To assist participants' efforts to enhance their efficiency as course directors and/or TA Supervisors, (3) To familiarize participants with important policies regarding TA employment, training, supervision, and evaluation (e.g., SACS, SUS Collective Bargaining) and to explore ways to ensure University compliance, (4) To model different pedagogic strategies and instructional approaches that can be used productively both in TA training activities and in undergraduate classrooms, (5) To assist participants' efforts to conduct constructive formative and evaluative assessments of their TAs' teaching activities, (6) To help participants' integrate lessons learned from TA training research and exemplary programs nationally into their own training activities, and (7) To encourage and assist participants' efforts to network and exchange current information and training program materials with other TA supervisors.

**Workshop Assumptions:** The facilitators also shared with participants the following six program assumptions: (1) TAs progress through developmental stages as they journey from neophyte instructors to more knowledgeable and experienced professionals; well designed and implemented training programs facilitate this process, (2) Faculty play varied roles as they supervise TAs at different stages and in different teaching assignments, (3) We share a common interest in and commitment to helping transform today's teaching assistants into the next generation of college and university faculty, (4) Genuine learning requires personal engagement and active involvement, (5) We can all learn from the experiences, insights, and concerns of colleagues in other disciplines as well as from the research literature, and (6) Participants will attend all sessions and be constructive contributors to the workshop.

**Workshop Topics and Calendar:**

Monday, May 6:

8:30 - 10:15	Introduction to the Workshop and Participants
10:30 - 12:00	Introduction to the Workshop and Participants: Continued
1:30 - 2:45	Developmental Issues in TA Training
3:00- 4:30	Developmental Issues in TA Training: Continued

Tuesday, May 7:

8:30 - 10:15	Designing and Assessing Departmentally-Based TA Training Programs
10:30 - 12:00	Communicating with TAs
1:30 - 2:45	Teaching TAs How to Actively Involve Students
3:00- 4:30	Teaching TAs How to Actively Involve Students: Continued

Wednesday, May 8:

8:30 - 10:15	Observing TAs and Providing Them Feedback
10:30 - 12:00	Helping TAs Grade Students
1:30 - 2:45	Helping International TAs Teach Undergraduates
3:00- 4:30	Individual reading, planning and writing time

Thursday, May 9:

8:30 - 10:15	Maximizing Your Effectiveness and Efficiency as a Course Supervisor
10:30 - 12:00	Helping All TAs Respond to Student Diversity
1:30 - 2:45	Designing and Assessing Departmentally-Based TA Training Programs: Continued
3:00- 4:30	Individual reading, planning and writing time

Friday, May 10:

8:30 - 10:15	Helping TAs Use and Interpret Their Student Feedback
10:30 - 1:30	Individual reading, planning and writing time
1:30 - 2:45	Sharing of Departmentally-Based TA Training Plans
3:00- 4:30	Workshop Closing and Evaluation

**Workshop Activities:** During the workshop, faculty participated in a diverse collection of activities designed to help them in their role as TA Supervisors and to model instructional strategies and techniques that TA Supervisors might teach their TAs. For example, participants (1) completed short “get-acquainted activities” that create a supportive classroom climate, (2) engaged in personal reflection followed by story sharing, (3) worked in problem-solving groups followed by group reports, (4) experienced several cooperative learning strategies (including think-pair-share, jigsaw), (5) engaged in a detailed case analysis and discussion, (6) viewed a videotape of a TA teaching and participated in a classroom observation feedback session with that TA, (7) analyzed and interpreted student rating data obtained by three TAs, and (8) observed video vignettes highlighting ways to respond constructively to “sensitive” classroom issues. In addition, participants used workshop time to review TA supervision resource materials.

**Participants’ Assignment:** One important workshop expectation was that during the program each participant would synthesize and apply their understandings and insights by formulating a plan for (1) conducting a course-specific or departmentally-based TA training program to precede the CTE’s annual Teaching Effectiveness Workshop on August 22-23, 1996, and (2) encouraging TA participation in the two days of CTE-sponsored workshops on August 22-23.

Participants were instructed that their plans could describe either a new or a revised/improved training program for TAs assigned to their courses or in their departments. Further, the plans were to be as clear and comprehensive as possible. For example, they might include: (1) a brief summary of the specific instructional goals, activities, and timetable of their TA training program, (2) a brief description of the types of training materials they would provide their TAs, (3) a list of potential faculty colleagues and/or experienced TAs who might be willing to assist them in conducting identified training activities, and (4) a brief description of the specific CTE-sponsored training activities that will be recommended or required of their TAs.

Friday afternoon, each participant had an opportunity to briefly describe his or her TA training program plan and submit a copy of their complete plan developed either individually or in collaboration with colleagues in their college. The resulting collection of 15 new or revised TA training plans produced by workshop participants follows in this compendium.

**Post-workshop Activities:** Plans are currently being developed by the Center for Teaching Enhancement to (1) offer periodic follow-up sessions throughout the year based upon participants’ feedback, (2) provide individual consultations and/or TA workshops to further assist participants’ efforts to more effectively train future faculty, (3) create an e-mail discussion list for TA supervisors, and (4) create a new teaching awards program to provide university-wide recognition for exemplary teaching by TAs.

**Workshop Evaluation Data:** Each participant completed a workshop evaluation form consisting of eleven sentence completion items. An unedited compilation of the responses is available. A sampling of responses to four items appears below:

My expectations for this workshop have ...

- been met or exceeded. A superb experience in every way.

- I did not know what to expect, but came prepared to be bored, because I sometimes am in classroom sessions. I was inspired to find a lot of information intelligently and interestingly presented.
- been achieved. I had high expectations coming in, and those expectations were met. I anticipated getting a lot of practical advice and materials and in almost all topics covered, that's what I received.
- overall, been surpassed. I had not anticipated the breadth and depth of coverage. Although I knew that we would cover approaches to TA supervision that transcend disciplines, I was very pleased to see that there was a great deal of useful information for my discipline. I believe that the facilitators correctly balanced general needs with specific disciplinary requirements.

I was most impressed by the way my fellow workshop participants...

- demonstrated their heartfelt concern for excellence in teaching and learning.
- they reinforced some of my methods and provided me with tested ways of doing some things better. A great help.
- provided insights, contributed to discussions, were thoughtfully and intellectually involved.

The Workshop Resource Book...

- I consider this a most valuable resource. I feel interested in most of its content and expect to use it often as a resource.
- excellent variety and quality of materials.
- contains materials to which I shall refer often in the months and years ahead.
- will be a resource for the department.

When colleagues in my department ask me about this program, I will tell them that...

- it can revitalize, stimulate and broaden one's perspectives concerning traditional canons.
- should take it, as it will have a good effect not only on the training of TAs, but on the personal teaching of participants.
- well worth the time. Includes lots of practical and useful materials.
- it should be mandatory for anyone responsible for supervising TAs.
- it was an unqualified success. I strongly recommend all of the CTE workshops to my colleagues.