President’s Message

Reaching Out and Reaching In

In recent years, POD and its members have been more and more active in efforts to reach out to new constituencies and to initiate new collaborative efforts. POD has incorporated outreach into its strategic plan, and as our members realize the importance of sharing information, resources and expertise with others, they reach out to colleagues worldwide.

Examples of successful national and international collaborations include the recent POD conference in Reno, Nevada, a joint effort with NCSPOD (North American Council for Staff, Program and Organizational Development), and the ICED Conference (International Consortium for Educational Development) in Utah last summer. In January POD offered an organizational development institute, workshop and concurrent session as part of the annual meeting of the AAC&U (American Association of Colleges and Universities). POD, along with the HBCU Development Network (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), POD, along with the HBCU Development Network (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), and the Collaboration for the Advancement of College Teaching, co-sponsored the 2009 summer Institute for New Faculty Developers, which attracted an international audience (see Institute for New Faculty Developers a Success, page 9). Several POD members visited China this summer, and discussed with Chinese colleagues, the creation of a POD-like organization there (see POD Members Present at Inaugural Faculty Development Conference in Beijing, page 4).

Outreach will continue to remain a priority for POD. The Professional Development Committee, under the leadership of Peggy Cohen, is preparing events for the 2010 AAC&U annual meeting in January, and AAC&U has asked about the possibility of our offering a pre-conference workshop on high-impact teaching strategies for their March meeting. POD and the HCBU Faculty Development Network (POD Past President Phyllis Worthy Dawkins is their Director of Faculty Development Programs) are considering ideas for a joint annual meeting in 2011. We continue to collaborate with international faculty development organizations in Canada (see, Between the Tides: A Report on the STLHE Conference, page 3), Australasia (HERSDA), the United Kingdom (SEDA), and many other countries via ICED. In an effort to learn from one another, we continue the international column exchange between the presidents of POD, STLHE and HERSDA (see pages 7 and 8).

Serving the membership is POD’s core mission, and to further our “inreach” efforts, the Membership Committee, Research Committee and Professional Development Committees (chaired by Mike Dabney, Catherine Wehlburg and Peggy Cohen, respectively) have collaborated on developing a survey of the membership. The last survey of the membership was 14 years ago, when the organization had 1000 members. Our membership has grown and continues to diversify, making this work timely and important.

In these difficult economic times, when budgets are cut and resources reduced, we must make every effort to promote the value and importance of teaching centers and related services to the faculty, students and institutions we serve. POD can help with these efforts,

– Continued on page 2
Notes from the POD Office

As you make your plans for the POD Conference in Houston (September 28 – October 1), please note that we may be releasing some guest rooms at the Houston Hyatt in order to reach our contracted block. Make your reservations as soon as possible to ensure you have a room in the Hyatt. To reserve your room, please call 713.654.1234 or 800.233.1234 and ask for the POD rate of $129 per night. The cut-off date for this rate is October 5.

As you may know, we’ve extended the Vendor Exhibit this year from one day to three full days (Thursday, Friday, & Saturday) to give vendors maximum exposure. In order to give vendors maximum flexibility as well, we’ve just added a one-day option. The one-day rate for corporate vendors is $350; the one-day rate for individual or small business vendors is $200. Please also note that additional tables may be reserved for $200 each for individuals/small business and $350 for corporations. To sign up for the one-day Vendor Exhibit option or to reserve an extra table or tables, please send an email to podoffice@podnetwork.org with “One-day Vendor Exhibit” or “Additional Table” as the subject.

Allison Boye has generously agreed to serve as roommate coordinator for anyone attending the conference who would like to share a room to cut down expenses. If interested, please contact her at allison.p.boye@ttu.edu or 806.742.0133. Please let her know your dates of attendance, gender, smoking or non, snoring or non, etc.

The 2009 early-bird registration deadline is October 1. If you haven’t yet registered for the conference, you may do so here: www.podnetwork.org/conferences/2009/index.htm. See you in Houston!

– Hoag Holmgren, Executive Director

2009 POD Conference

Welcoming Change: Generations and Regeneration

Informational Session on To Improve the Academy

Judy Miller (Ed.) and Jim Groccia (Assoc. Ed.) will facilitate an informational session, “Getting your article published in To Improve the Academy” at the POD Conference, on Friday, October 20, 2009, 10:30 to 11:45. Check the final conference program for the location.

Lilly Conferences on University Teaching

Lilly Conferences and Institutes have provided faculty the opportunity to learn more about and to share new findings regarding the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for almost 30 years. Participants come from a wide range of disciplines and from throughout the U.S. and from abroad. To find out more about a Lilly Conference to fit your schedule please see http://lillyconferences.com/. For more information contact Todd Zakrajsek (919-636-8170 or toddz@unc.edu).

Call for Reviewers To Improve the Academy 29

To nominate yourself as a reviewer for To Improve the Academy, email Editor, Judy Miller at j.miller@unf.edu to receive the Self-Nomination Form. Forms must be completed by Friday, November 13, 2009. To qualify, you must have at least three years’ experience as a faculty, TA, instructional or organizational developer (full or part-time) and as a POD member. Reviewers will have about six weeks (from early December 2009 to January 9, 2010) to evaluate 3 to 8 manuscripts.

– President, continued from page 1

by providing resources and information (for example, The Value of a Teaching Center, by Connie Cook and Mary Deane Sorcinelli available at: http://podnetwork.org/faculty_development/values.htm). Look for special sessions at the upcoming POD Conference in Houston for advice on responding to budget issues and threats to centers. Finally, as President, I offer to write a personal letter of support, if it might help you or your center in challenging times.

An active membership is a key to an organization’s vitality. I ask each POD member to reach out to colleagues and to encourage membership and participation in POD – especially the annual meeting. The Conference team (Debra Fowler, Kevin Barry, Suzanne Tapp, Shaun Longstreet, and POD Executive Director Hoag Holmgren) have worked hard to create an interesting and valuable program that will serve a wide range of interests. Let’s promote the annual meeting as a great way to stay active and to reach out to others.

Best wishes. I hope to see you all in Houston.

– Michael Theall, President, POD
Between the Tides: Report on the 2009 STHLE Conference

By Mike Theall, POD President

The theme of the 2009 STHLE (Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education) conference, held in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada at the University of New Brunswick, Between the Tides, is a reference to the competing forces that affect teaching and learning and higher education itself. The theme was integrated into the conference in several unique and meaningful ways. Keynoter Alex Lowy, author and education whose work centers on problem solving and decision making, focused on dealing with dilemmas—the most difficult issues to resolve because they are generally defined to consist of two opposing ideas, agendas or viewpoints. Lowy’s approach to dilemmas is to examine the interactions of the opposing views in terms of outcomes. The conference team took Lowry’s work a step further, operationalizing it by creating four “Dilemma Teams” of conference participants, who examined the following dilemmas: liberal versus disciplinary education, physical versus virtual environment, curricular versus extracurricular learning and institutional/professional autonomy versus public accountability. Teams worked on their dilemmas and attended conference sessions related to their dilemmas, sharing what they learned at subsequent team meetings. Each team prepared and presented a final report at the conference concluding plenary session. My contributions to my team included attending team meetings and three concurrent sessions, drafting the ‘script’ for our final report, and preparing the PowerPoint slide show for our presentation. But the learning does not stop there. The conference team and dilemma coordinators are compiling the team reports and may develop a survey to be administered throughout Canada. I suggested the possibility of extending the research to the U.S. through POD. This suggestion was warmly received and I will remain in conversation with STLHE President Joy Mighty. Joy will be at the POD conference in Houston and we will explore the possibilities for further collaborations.

I found the conference and dilemma exercise to be thought provoking experiences and productive learning opportunities. It would be worthwhile to consider incorporating something like this into the POD annual meeting. This kind of applied research can inform our work in important new ways. I strongly recommend that we continue our reciprocal arrangement with STLHE, and that the POD President should try to attend STLHE every year. The proximity of STLHE and the amount of interaction between US and Canadian scholars present unique opportunities for both organizations.

Member News

Ron Thomas has been named Dean of Online Instruction and Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence for Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

Books by POD Members


Congratulations

The following POD members are the 2009 recipients of the Donald H. Wulff Diversity Travel Fellowships: Brenda Alston-Mills (Michigan State University), Lerone Banks (University of California Davis), Seiki Sumer (University of California Davis), Jaesoon An (University of North Carolina, Charlotte), Valorie McAlpin (University of North Carolina, Charlotte), Mario Gonzales (New Mexico Highlands University), Nisha Gupta (Syracuse University), and Ann Lampkin (Madonna University).

2009 POD Faculty/TA Instructional Development Internship Grant Recommendation: Truman State University, under the administration of Julie Lochbaum.
POD Members Participate in Inaugural Faculty Development Conference in Beijing, China

Virginia S. Lee, Past President

On July 13-15, 2009 seven POD members—Ann Austin, Roger Baldwin, and Deborah Dezure (Michigan State University), Dee Fink, Virginia Lee, Mary Deane Sorcinelli (University of Massachusetts – Amherst) and Lynn Sorenson (Brigham Young University)—participated as keynote speakers, presenters and panelists in Theory, Practice and Implications: Professional and Organizational Development for Chinese Higher Education in the Global Context in Beijing, China. Joining them were international colleagues Shelda Debowski (President, ICED & HERDSA, Australia), Angela Ho (Hong Kong Polytechnic University) and Kirsten Hofgaard Lycke (Former President, ICED & PEDNETT), Norway. The conference was co-sponsored by Beijing Normal University (BNU) and Beijing Institute of Technology with support from the Chinese Ministry of Education. Approximately 150 Chinese delegates attended the conference. Initiated by Kang Li, a Ph.D. student in chairs, respectively. A large delegation of faculty members and administrators from China attended the ICED conference, many of them presenting a strand of sessions together called the Chinese Higher Education Forum. The Forum underscored the dramatic transformation in the 21st century, faculty career stages and leadership development, mentoring and new faculty development, building successful teaching and learning centers, research and current trends on faculty and organizational development, the design of college courses for significant learning, individual consultations, and building a faculty development national organization.

The conference laid the foundation for a faculty development network in China. At an early morning summit, a napkin bearing the acronym CHEDNA (Chinese Higher Education Development Network Alliance), the result of animated discussion at the breakfast table, and signed by those in attendance, marked the official beginning of the Chinese network. At the conclusion of the conference, Professor Zhou Zuoyu (Faculty of Education, BNU) made a formal announcement about the formation of the network with specific steps for its organization in the months ahead.
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.

Mary Dean Sorcinelli

Edited by Dakin Burdick

Mary Deane Sorcinelli is currently Associate Provost for Faculty Development and Professor in the Department of Educational Policy, Research and Administration, University of Massachusetts Amherst. This interview took place on April 9, 2007.

Burdick: When did you join POD?

Sorcinelli: I attended my first conference at Fairfield Glade in Tennessee in 1979. I was just completing my graduate studies and traveled with my wonderful dissertation chair, Sher Riechmann Hruska, who co-developed the Grasha-Riechmann Learning Styles Inventory and was part of the Clinic to Improve University Teaching enterprise at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. We brought sleeping bags and stayed in a condo nearby owned by a relative in her family. We'd walk across a field to the POD conference, which was a 360 degree turn from today's annual conference -- maybe 100 people, a modest plenary room and a few breakout spaces. A simple easel with a topic written in magic marker identified the sessions. Unless I'm merging memories, I recall meeting Bill Bergquist and Jack Lindquist and watching one of my all-time favorite teachers, Peter Frederick, do his magic. Other graduates from UMass Amherst were there -- LuAnn Wilkerson and Glenn and Bette Erickson. Bette and Glen had been hired to open a teaching development center at University of Rhode Island and LuAnn was off to Murray State. All three were a few steps ahead of me as graduate students and I looked up to and learned a lot from them. Since Fairfield Glen I've been to nearly every POD conference, except for a few years when our three (then) infants/toddlers more than filled spare “development” time.

Burdick: With whom did you attend that first conference?

Sorcinelli: I'm sure some POD folks will remember Sher Hruska. She was involved in the early years of POD and was a generous mentor to many of us. She launched the first teaching center at UMass Amherst in the early 70s. The center was linked to the Clinic to Improve University Teaching, which had been an initiative of the then maverick Dean of the School of Education, Dwight Allen. The Center and Clinic offered one of the first models for individual consultation — really a precursor to the SGID and other current models. The idea was to gather information on teaching through teacher self-assessment, student feedback (the TABS questionnaire), and a “peer” consultant analysis of student and course data. (Someone told me the staff named the questionnaire TABS because Dean Allen loved TAB, a diet soda from that time -- can't verify that one). Unfortunately, when the campus went through one of its cyclical, momentous budget crises, the teaching center was closed. It was never about the quality of the people -- they were really talented - - it was about the times and culture of retrenchment.

Burdick: Were there concerns about student evaluation?

Sorcinelli: At that time the Center/Clinic’s “teaching improvement process” was formative and mid-semester. Then the Center was asked to develop and administer a student rating system for personnel decision making. I was a student so I can't provide rich detail, but I know there were concerns about breaching the firewall between improvement and evaluation. Interestingly, when I returned to UMass in 1988 to explore the creation of a teaching and learning center, some folks fondly remembered having their classes videotaped or getting feedback from the Center/Clinic. But others, especially the early career faculty, thought the new Center for Teaching was the first such center at UMass Amherst. I kept reminding faculty that UMass Amherst had one of the earliest and most innovative teaching development programs in the country. One aspect of history that I did avoid repeating was that of housing the end-of-semester student evaluation in the CFT. We have a great office of assessment and the CFT worked with it and faculty to develop a well-regarded student evaluation process. So the ratings sit in that office and we collaborate around the intersection of student evaluations and faculty development.

Burdick: What service responsibilities have you taken on in POD?

Sorcinelli: POD has been a core, important part of my professional development. I served on the POD Executive Committee -- as President elect, President and as a past-President. This was during the time of transition of our central office to Frank and Kay Gillespie, two more POD heroes. I was incredibly fortunate to have Christine Stanley as President before me and
Laura Border right behind me. It was one of the best “mutual mentoring” experiences in my career—tackling challenging issues with a great set of colleagues to try to sort them out. I’ve also served on a number of committees, as associate editor of To Improve the Academy, helped organize POD sessions for AAHE and AAC&U, and volunteer as a conference proposal reviewer. More recently, I was a facilitator at the New Developers Institute in Ottawa, Canada. That was an amazing week, marred only by a run-in that my co-facilitator Alan Kalish from Ohio State and I had with a “Beaver Tail,” which is a tale for another day. I highly recommend engagement in POD. It’s impossible to calculate the benefits of getting to know many POD members, understanding the organization, and how POD has evolved over time.

Burdick: Where did you do your schooling?

Sorcinelli: I started as an English major at a state college in Massachusetts. I was very fortunate to be mentored by a woman faculty member who nominated me for a scholarship program at Mount Holyoke College. This was a transformational moment. I was one of eleven children and neither of my parents had the opportunity to attend college, although they placed a great value on education and sent all eleven of us to college. So I had a liberal arts education in both a public and private college. I received a master’s degree in English, taught English for a few years in a regional high school, and then entered UMass Amherst as a doctoral student. When my husband finished his degree and was offered a faculty position, we moved to Indiana.

Burdick: Did you continue in faculty development?

Sorcinelli: When we arrived in Indiana, I wrote a grant to start a teaching-effectiveness program. I was twenty-five. I actually can hardly believe that now. I mean, what did I have to tell anybody at that age? But I guess I was too young to know how much I didn’t know and that offers its own sort of confidence. At any rate, I started a center and then was asked to take on some statewide responsibilities. I did a career development study for the IU Dental School. I also worked with Bloomington colleagues on some summer teaching development programs and on developing statewide faculty development opportunities. Then my husband and I were both offered an opportunity to join the Bloomington campus and we were there from 1978 to 1988. I had a lot of rich, wonderful opportunities and also visited a lot of IU campuses -- Gary, Indianapolis, New Albany, South Bend, Terre Haute, to name a few.

At Indiana, I started as the Associate Director of a Lilly Teaching Fellows program, working in the Division of Development and Special Projects (DDSP), which had a long history of instructional design expertise. In 1983, the Dean of Faculty, Anya Royce, asked me to lead a study of faculty academic career development, which turned out to be a pivotal career experience as well. Dean Royce was an anthropologist and she was interested in the trajectory of faculty careers and the kind of faculty development support they needed. Our study was one of the first extensive, qualitative and survey-based career development studies of research university faculty. It later evolved into a longitudinal study of new faculty career development. I’ve always had an interest in the history of academic careers (and the history of faculty development) so these research opportunities were memorable. And we created a number of innovative programs from the findings: mentoring, new faculty initiatives, sabbatical supports, multidisciplinary grants. I balanced teaching and faculty development for a while and then became full-time director of faculty development in the Office of the Dean of Faculty.

By complete happenstance, in 1988, I was at Lilly Teaching Fellows Conference and I sat next to the Deputy Provost of the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He said, “We have a group of young faculty and some administrators who are enthused about starting up a teaching and learning center. Would you consider coming out for a year and helping us plant a seed and see if we can get something rolling?” And the rest is history.

Building the CFT was a tremendous learning experience and I’m very proud of what the staff accomplished during those years. My new charge is to build the capacity of a new Office of Faculty Development with my talented colleague, Jung Yun. I will oversee the CFT but am focusing on a broader reach for faculty development, particularly for new and underrepresented faculty. And the CFT has a seasoned leadership team in Matt Ouellett and Mei Shih, both of whom have played important roles in POD and/or NEFDC (New England Faculty Development Consortium).

So I’m enjoying this new position. I feel like I’m back out on-the-edge again, doing a lot of needs assessment and trying to figure things out. After eighteen years of running a teaching center I thought I knew a lot about faculty needs, but there is a new generation of faculty joining us and they face new challenges and are looking for a broader network of support in order to be successful. So our campus is focused on building teaching capacity but also building supports in the areas of scholarly writing, navigating tenure, building mentoring networks, and creating work/life balance.

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1The TABS (Teaching Analysis By Students) questionnaire was developed at the Clinic by 1974.
Guest Column

Continuing our series of international exchanges, are two guest columns. Joy Mighty (Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada) is President of STHLE – the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Geoffrey Crisp (University of Adelaide, Australia) is President of HERSDA – the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia.

Educating for Change: The Potential of Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning for Solving Complex Problems of the 21st Century*

Joy Mighty

The complex problems of the twenty-first century are transforming the practice of postsecondary education throughout the world. These problems require new ways of thinking and of seeing the world so that we bring together all of our available knowledge, methodologies, and resources. What are some of these problems that require such radically new approaches?

Arguably the most critical problem is the current global economic crisis. But, the global recession is only one of a myriad of problems we currently face. To these, we might well add: climate change (more specifically global warming), poverty - especially the worldwide hunger crisis, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, war and armed conflict, the lack of potable water; sustainable energy, and so on.

The enormity and complexity of these social, political, economic, and environmental problems that face the global community demand remedies and solutions that far exceed the capacity of any single discipline or specialization. Traditional academic disciplines, with their discrete and autonomous structures, pedagogies and research methodologies will not suffice in the changing contexts of higher education. Instead, these problems call for collaborative approaches that transcend disciplines and draw on multiple perspectives and integrative techniques. In short, interdisciplinary approaches are needed to help us solve, or at least understand, these problems. What implications does this have for teaching and learning in post-secondary institutions whose graduates will be charged with finding solutions to these problems? Are we preparing graduates who have the interdisciplinary skills necessary for tackling such problems, and what interdisciplinary qualities, skills, and competencies are required?

To be able to tackle these complex problems, we need people with the ability to communicate not only with people who speak other languages, but also with people who have unique disciplinary orientations and backgrounds. We need people who can think critically and innovatively, and people who are willing and able to confront challenges about themselves and the world. We need people who can appreciate others’ perspectives, evaluate information from experts, tolerate ambiguity, and finally, people who can synthesize and integrate all this information.

These attributes transcend the technical knowledge associated with specific disciplines and professions, and represent the total outcome of all the formal and informal learning that students experience during their post-secondary education. We must therefore ask ourselves whether the education we offer provides enough opportunities for students to acquire these competencies and attributes.

The educational developer has a critically important role to play in this context by helping our institutions address pedagogical questions about what to include in our curricula, what learning processes to use, and what kinds of learning environments to foster. In other words, what specific courses, learning experiences, and pedagogical approaches should we offer, and how should we structure our education system if we want to develop the interdisciplinary graduate?

If we want to educate students who will transform the world and contribute to the solutions for some of its most complex problems, we must transform our educational system by being more interdisciplinary. For Klein and Newell (1998), interdisciplinarity is “… a process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or profession.” (p.3)

Interdisciplinarity involves drawing on the specialized knowledge, concepts, tools, and methodologies of several academic disciplines and integrating them to create new knowledge or deeper understanding that is greater than simply the sum of its disciplinary parts. Moreover, it requires us to use active and collaborative learning pedagogies such as problem-based learning, case-based learning, team-based learning, learning communities, inquiry-based learning, community service learning, and internationalization. Together, interdisciplinary curricula and pedagogies have the potential to develop in our students the skills, attitudes, and ways of thinking that are necessary for engaging in responsible citizenship locally, nationally and internationally, and solving the complex problems of our world.

*Adapted from a public lecture presented at the University of Technology in Kingston, Jamaica on March 20, 2009.
Educational development and academic practice - their relationship to the social and economic expectations of governments

Geoffrey Crisp

A nation’s higher education system is an integral part of its social, cultural, economic and political fabric. All governments are keen to assure their communities that they are monitoring the use of public funds, especially in the areas of expenditure for post-compulsory education and fundamental research. Major reviews of higher education and publicly-funded research have been undertaken in Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa in the last seven years. These reports have many features in common, especially around the rhetoric concerning the purposes of higher education and the management of institutional activities. We may have various opinions about such reviews, the impact of their recommendations and the motivation of governments in initiating such reviews, but we would all likely acknowledge that these reviews eventually have a significant impact on individual academic practice and professional development in universities. Because public funding inevitably aligns with the particular recommendations adopted by the government.

Academics are predominantly involved in enriching their educational and research practices and in so doing they work to enhance student outcomes, whether these are learning or employment related. What is the responsibility of the individual academic to align their practices and professional development with national priorities? What impact can the individual have on the complex and interrelated social, cultural and economic aspirations of their governments? What is the role of the educational and research developer in implementing the national education agenda? Individual academics work to improve their educational practice through critical and scholarly reflection, the creation of authentic learning and assessment environments and through professional development and discourse with colleagues. The recent Review of Higher Education in Australia stated “If we are to maintain our high standard of living, underpinned by a robust democracy and a civil and just society, we need an outstanding, internationally competitive higher education system.” How are academic development activities related to the maintenance of a “civil and just society” or contribute to our country’s expectation that our institution will be one of the “key determinants of its economic and social progress”? Professional organisations such as HERDSA, POD, STLHE, SEDA and ICED all have common goals around improving the student experience and student learning outcomes, as well as the quality of educational practice and research in higher education. We can draw inferences about how these goals can be related to the national agendas of our governments, but how explicitly can we demonstrate a causal relationship between the underlying epistemologies of educational and professional development approaches and the expectation that participation in higher education will result in a “civil and just society”?

Most governments in the world are seeking to increase the participation of non-traditional groups or “first in family” students in higher education. We could measure a causal relationship between our development activities or educational practices and improved student completion rates or the relative performance levels for different student cohorts, but we are unlikely to have a significant impact on access issues or the ability of under-represented groups to gain entry to higher education. Will constructive alignment of learning activities and assessment tasks improve participation rates of under-represented groups? Perhaps this is an unfair comparison as we can always posit that higher education institutions are multifaceted and that different people have different roles and responsibilities; the ability of our institution to contribute to the national agenda rests with a synergistic combination of efforts from all staff. Nevertheless, the fundamental question is whether the priorities of our academic development programs and their epistemic foundations translate into demonstrable outcomes that impact national priorities? Academics have a strong allegiance to their discipline; should discipline cultures align with the agenda proposed in many of the recent higher education reviews? Do our professional development programs facilitate discourse between discipline academics and the national agenda? We can reflect on our approaches and whether they assist with a constructive alignment of practices. There is often dissent in academic circles about the need to align discipline practice with the social, economic and political needs of any one particular country.

Some academics posit that their discipline’s way of thinking and acting transcends such perspectives. Recent reviews into higher education in many countries have focussed our attention on these controversial questions about the purpose of higher education, the role of individual academics and the priorities of professional development programs.

Recent reviews also emphasise the need for more formal approaches to benchmarking and the setting of external standards to ensure accountability. Will government standards and benchmarking enhance the participation rates of under-represented groups in higher education or lead to a “civil and just society”? The recent global financial downturn has highlighted the extraordinary impact that external factors, have on the key outcomes.

This short piece is designed to encourage reflection and debate amongst those in higher education and professional organisations concerned with academic development on the complex relationship that exists between academic development priorities, as espoused by educational researchers, educational developers and professional organisations, and the social, economic and political priorities for higher education as recommended or demanded by governments of many countries.

Institute for New Faculty Developers a Success

Lesley K. Cafarelli, President, The Collaboration for the Advancement of College Teaching & Learning

The 2009 Institute for New Faculty Developers, held in St. Paul, Minnesota, drew a diverse group of participants from the U.S., Canada, Japan and the United Arab Emirates. Hosted by the Collaboration for the Advancement of College Teaching, and co-sponsored by POD and the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Faculty Development Network, the Institute offered foundational ideas and practical exercises to help participants think strategically and take action to meet the needs of their home institutions. Participants commented that the program provided tools to accomplish the individual goals they set for themselves at the start of the week. As one participant commented, it met expectations “Beyond my wildest dreams!”

Satisfaction was high among participants, with 82% being very satisfied with the overall quality of the Institute. The Institute modeled backward and integrated design and best practices in teaching and learning, including use of a participant needs assessment, various approaches to active learning, including cooperative base groups and daily opportunities for individual and group reflection. The expertise of the faculty was widely appreciated, with one participant commenting, “The core faculty created an environment that was more than providing information. It was inspiring.”

The Institute was co-directed by Lesley K. Cafarelli, President, and Tim Barrett, Program Director, The Collaboration for the Advancement of College Teaching & Learning, a national alliance of colleges and universities that promotes and supports outstanding college teaching and learning. Other faculty included: Phyllis Worthy Dawkins (HBCU Faculty Development Network and Dillard University), Marion Larson (Bethel University), Deandra Little (University of Virginia), Lynda Milne (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System), Michele Neaton (Century College), Michael Palmer (University of Virginia), Diane Pike (Augsburg College), Marilla Svinicki (University of Texas at Austin), and John Tagg (Palomar College).

Exciting opportunity to share your work with a wider world: Joint POD-NTLF Venture takes new form

POD President Mike Theall and James Rhem, Editor, National Teaching and Learning Forum (NTLF) invite member participation in the expansion of the POD-NTLF Resource Library. Members are asked to nominate links to the best of the materials they have developed on their own websites. After review, we will post the best of these materials to the POD-NTLF online library with the appropriate topic heading and full credit to the originators of the material. The goal: to offer some of the best resources developed by POD members available to the wider world of people involved in faculty development. This joint endeavor furthers the mutual goals of POD and NTLF and provides a gateway to acquaint those new to the field with useful material from experienced practitioners. For more information contact James Rhem, jrhem@chorus.net or (608) 255-4469.
The Useful, Sensible, No-Frills Departmental Assessment Plan

Barbara E. Walvoord, University of Notre Dame

Academic departments from physics to philosophy to physical therapy face new demands for “assessment of student learning.” It’s hard to argue against the basic idea of assessment: when a department invests time and resources trying to nurture student learning, it should ask itself: Are they learning? Yet departments may also fear that assessment will require them to dumb-down their teaching; use standardized tests; teach alike; or compromise academic freedom. Every department wonders how it will find the time and resources for one more thing.

This essay suggests a simple, sustainable, and useful departmental assessment plan that capitalizes on what departments are already doing or should be doing, that can help improve student learning, and that can meet the requirements of accreditors. The basic plan includes three elements that are common to the requirements of virtually all accreditors, both regional and disciplinary:

1. Written learning goals (sometimes called objectives or outcomes) phrased: “When students complete this program of study, we want them to be able to….”

   2. Measures that indicate how well the learning goals are being met (These measures need not dumb-down learning or use standardized tests. They can be based on classroom assignments and exams. They can seek indications about students’ achievement of ineffable goals like creativity, ethical sensibility, or ability to work well in diverse groups.)

   3. Ways of using the information for improvement (“closing the feedback loop”)

   First, the department should construct written learning goals for each of its distinct courses of study, e.g., certificate program, major, master’s, and doctorate. Different tracks (e.g., music history and music performance) may require somewhat different goals. It is important that these goals include the department’s highest aspirations. For example, a swine management department listed a number of very practical learning goals such as identifying and treating common swine diseases, developing a financial plan for a swine operation, and so on. But its ultimate goal was “appreciate the pig!” Departments in a religiously-affiliated institution wanted students to develop sensitivity to injustice.” You can’t “prove” learning in these areas, but you can get indications about whether students are developing in the ways you wish, and if you don’t articulate and share your highest goals, you risk undermining your most important mission.

   Next, the department should institute an annual meeting of at least two hours, in which it reviews one of its programs (for example, the undergraduate major). Hold the meeting even if you think you have no measurements or evidence, and even if you have only a partial or imperfect list of learning goals.

   The purposes of the meeting are (1) to consider whatever evidence you have about how well students are meeting the learning goals; and (2) to generate one action item, for which you assign responsibility and a timeline. You should allow no other concerns on the agenda. This is the time when the department sets aside all the other concerns that crowd its time, and steps back from the daily race to ask, “How well are we doing?” and “Within our limits of time and resources, is there one action we could take that might improve student learning?”

   Once the meeting is established, what are the minimum types of evidence that might be most helpful in defining an action item? The basic no-frills plan might have two types of evidence:

   1. An evaluation of the quality of student work as students complete the program. This can be a sample of student classroom work in course(s) taken by students at their end of their course of study; an evaluation of an ultimate clinical or internship experience; a standardized exam if relevant; a licensure exam; or a qualifying exam and theses for graduate degrees.

   In programs with many students, a sample of student work can be used.

   2. Response from students about what they thought they learned and about their perception of the program’s effectiveness for their learning.

   Additional types of evidence might include alumni surveys, employer/industry feed-back, students’ job or graduate school placement rates, or, especially in graduate programs, awards and/or publications by students. But in most cases, it is better to have the first two types of evidence working well than to proliferate assessment measures beyond what the department can fund, sustain, or effectively use.

   The most basic assessment plan can be illustrated by a political science department that was highly successful: it was rapidly increasing its number of majors; it was known throughout the university for the high quality of its teaching; and it maintained a high rate of publication and professional activity. The smart, effective faculty members of this department hated “assessment.” They viewed it as an attempt to diminish the high goals they held for their students, as an
attack upon their autonomy, and as a foolish waste of time. They did agree, however, that despite demanding schedules, it would be helpful to sit down for two hours once a year and examine evidence of student learning in one of their programs.

For the first year, they chose the undergraduate major. During the meeting, they brought no rubric scores (most of them hated rubrics) and no written preparation. Instead, each faculty member who taught a senior capstone course briefly spoke about two strengths and two weaknesses that she or he had observed in senior student research projects. These were listed on the board. One weakness that a number of faculty mentioned was that as students began their senior research projects, they did not know well enough how to frame a question for inquiry in the discipline. The department decided to work on that item. They discussed where in the curriculum students were taught to frame research questions and given practice and feedback in doing so. A committee was designated to suggest where and how this aspect could be strengthened in the curriculum. Changes to the earlier courses then provided more instruction and practice in constructing research questions. Now the department waits to see whether future cohorts of students seem to be better prepared.

At the end of the annual meeting, the department should ask itself what additional or better information it might want to collect in future years. The political science faculty noted the lack of student input for their data, and they wanted to know whether students experienced disjuncture between their earlier training and their senior research and if so, what students might suggest as remedies. It was proposed that each teacher of a capstone course, during the first week in May, would administer a 3-question survey to seniors enrolled in the course. The survey would ask students: (1) what aspects of the senior research project they had found most difficult; (2) what earlier training in the department had best prepared them for these difficult areas; and (3) what their suggestions were about how earlier work might better have prepared them. Several faculty were concerned that the survey would take more time and effort than it was worth, so it was decided to administer the survey only in the classes of a few volunteer faculty, as a pilot, to determine whether reliable and useful information could be gathered. The department assigned responsibility for constructing, administering, and analyzing results of this pilot survey.

As this story suggests, an action item chosen in one year may take more than a year to fully implement. In that case, the annual meeting is devoted to tracking progress and planning further steps on a continuing action item. As it feels ready, the department may also begin work on another program. For example, the political science department might gather its graduate faculty for a review of its Ph.D. program. Some departments may prefer to do part of their review of learning through a committee structure and bring reports and recommendations to the department as a whole.

At the assessment meetings, the department should take written minutes, which can serve as a reference for their own future actions, and which, as needed, can be the basis of reports to the university’s assessment committee and accrediting bodies. The minutes provide the data to demonstrate that effective assessment is taking place.

The key is to institute the annual assessment meeting immediately, no matter how incomplete or inadequate the assessment data are. Use the data available to generate an action item, and also discuss how you want to improve the quality of the data. The annual meeting provides an ongoing structure that most departments can manage, and that helps the department step back, consider the big picture, bring in evidence of student learning, and make good decisions about how to help their students learn more effectively. Assessment Clear and Simple (Walvoord, 2004) gives more detail and shows how to write up such plans for accreditation.

Resources


Walvoord, B. E., and Anderson, V. J. (1998). Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Shows how the classroom grading process can be enhanced and how it can be used for assessment. Helps classroom teachers make the grading process fair, time-efficient, and conducive to learning. Contains a case study of how a community college used the grading process for general-education assessment.

Barbara Walvoord (Ph.D., University of Iowa) is Emerita Professor of English, University of Notre Dame.
Connecting 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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Editor: Niki Young, Director
Center for Teaching and Learning
Western Oregon University
345 N. Monmouth Avenue
Monmouth, OR 97361 U.S.A.
(503) 838-8895
(503) 838-8474 - Fax
youngn@wou.edu

Graphic Designer: Sue Payton
Center for Teaching and Learning
Western Oregon University
345 N. Monmouth Avenue
Monmouth, OR 97361 U.S.A.
(503) 838-8967
(503) 838-8474 - Fax
paytons@wou.edu

Publisher: Hoag Holmgren, Executive Director
POD Network
P.O. Box 3318
Nederland, Colorado 80466 U.S.A.
Phone - (303) 258-9521
Fax - (303) 258-7377
e-mail - podoffice@podnetwork.org

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Get the most out of your POD membership:

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Attend the 34th annual POD conference. It will take place in Huston, Texas, U.S.A., October 28-November 1, 2009. The most current information about the annual conference can be found on the POD website at www.podnetwork.org under Conferences.

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Contact the POD Office at:

POD Network
P.O. Box 3318
Nederland, Colorado 80466
Phone - (303) 258-9521
Fax - (303) 258-7377
e-mail - podoffice@podnetwork.org

Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education
P.O. Box 3318
Nederland, CO 80466 U.S.A.
CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

TO IMPROVE THE ACADEMY, Vol. 29
* Deadline for Submission: Tuesday, December 1, 2009 *

The Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network in Higher Education invites submissions for the 2010 edition (Volume 29) of To Improve the Academy. Since its inception in 1982, this annual publication has showcased articles demonstrating scholarly excellence in research, innovation, and integration in faculty, instructional, and organizational development.

The audience for To Improve the Academy includes faculty and organizational development administrators and consultants, all of whom work to improve the climate for teaching and learning in higher education. Manuscripts should focus on informing and helping these professionals with their work. They may be research-based, programmatic, or reflective pieces, but those describing new approaches and programs must include evaluative information.

Manuscripts must be well written. To enhance the chances of acceptance, they should be professionally edited before being submitted.

Submission Requirements
- Maximum length of articles is 20 double-spaced pages in 12-point type, standard margins (1.25” on each side, 1” top and bottom).
- Manuscripts must be prepared according to the guidelines in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Fifth Edition (e.g., include running head and page headers; headings not numbered; correct reference format).
- Compose a title (up to 12 words) that clearly informs the reader about the content.
- Include an abstract of 100 words or less.
- Do not use footnotes.
- Electronic submissions only.

Submission Process
Please submit two (2) copies of the manuscript as email attachments in MS Word or rich text format:
- one complete copy with a title page that includes the names (in the order in which they should appear), mailing addresses, telephones, faxes, and emails of all authors; and
- one “masked” copy without author name(s), institution(s), or contact information. Identifying information in the text of the article should also be “masked”.

Name the two files starting with the last name of the lead author, e.g.: Smith CompleteMS, Smith MaskedMS.

Email submissions by December 1, 2009 to:
Judith E. Miller Editor, To Improve the Academy 29
Executive Director of Assessment, University of North Florida
j.miller@unf.edu
Call for Self-Nominations – POD Core Committee

If you have been a POD member for at least three years, you are invited to consider submitting your name as a candidate to the POD Core Committee.

Past Core members have reported that serving on the Core has been an invaluable way to learn more about POD and a wonderful opportunity to work closely with other very talented people. It also allows people to make a contribution to the organization in return for the benefits they have experienced professionally and personally from POD.

The Core Committee is the primary governing body of POD and functions as its board of directors. It has primary responsibility for the finances, policies, and strategic direction of the organization, among other things. The Core Committee consists of 15 elected members (5 new members each year) plus the officers. It meets twice each year, once for 1 ½ days just before the annual conference and once in the spring for one day.

Role of members: Each member serves for a period of three years, beginning in the fall after the Core Committee election has occurred. Members are expected to attend all of the six meetings that occur during their term plus the spring Core meeting in 2010, for a grand total of seven Core meetings. For 2010, the Core spring meeting will be held on March 19 and 20 in Chicago (a Friday night dinner-meeting and from 8AM to 4PM on Saturday). Many Core members also take the lead in at least one POD committee. Members receive the agenda, committee reports, action items for discussion, and pertinent reading materials prior to Core meetings. Between meetings, official POD discussion and business are conducted through electronic mail and occasionally through conference calls.

Financial support: Core members receive $150 per day toward expenses for the day(s) on which the Core Committee meets.

Election procedures: Interested members are asked to submit their names for candidacy no later than November 9, 2009 using the instructions for self-nomination found below. The POD office will then post the candidates’ information on the POD website, and ballots will be sent to all members by mid-November. Election results will be reported by the end of December.

POD Core Committee Self-Nomination Instructions

We welcome nominations for the 2010-2013 POD Core Committee. Candidates’ statements are to be submitted electronically and will be posted on the POD website. Please send your self-nomination in the body of your email and not as an attachment. The election itself will be conducted online via Zoomerang. If for some reason you are not able to send your statement electronically, you can mail it to the POD office. It must arrive no later than November 9, 2009.

To nominate yourself, please write a personal statement (no more than 750 words total) based on the guidelines below. Send your statement to the POD office at podnetwork@podweb.org. Statements must be received by November 9, 2009.

Please note that statements received after November 9, 2009 will not be included, and statements longer 750 words will be returned to the candidate for editing. Your statement will be reproduced exactly as submitted. Do not include any graphics. To be eligible you must have been a POD member for at least three years. If you have any questions about this process contact the POD office or the chair of the POD Nominations and Elections Committee, Virginia S. Lee at vslee@virginiaslee.com.

In addition to your name, title, and institution, your statement should include:

1) background in professional and organizational development,
2) specific involvement in/contributions to POD, and
3) what you would like to see POD accomplish over the next three years and how your leadership might contribute to those goals