

Overview

In October 1997, Xavier University was awarded a three-year, \$450,000 grant from The Bush and William and Flora Hewlett foundations to support a faculty development program. The original proposal submitted stated:

From discussions among faculty during the planning process, a broad consensus emerged that learning is most effective when undertaken in a collaborative context involving dialogue, investigation, debate, and analytical thinking.... For these reasons, the focus groups recommended, as the foundation for this proposal, small groups of faculty and students devoted to clearly defined teaching and learning projects.

These communities of faculty (and students, where appropriate) will operate within individual departments and across disciplines, and will be dedicated to active inquiry of teaching and learning for the improvement of both. Through specific collaborative endeavors, community members will develop new teaching skills and pedagogies, computer-based courses and courseware, and knowledge via research endeavors. A culture of lifelong collaborative learners at Xavier University will emerge consisting of faculty and students prepared for the challenges of the future. This in turn will lead faculty to improve their own teaching through a consistent dialogue with each other and with students.

This program had four specific aims, including:

1. Promote the scholarship of teaching by creating a campus culture where teaching is made public, discussed, examined, improved, and rewarded
2. Implement a faculty development program that encourages and supports the use of technology in the classroom
3. Establish communities of faculty and students whose conversations are focused on specific teaching and learning problems and opportunities
4. Establish communities of faculty and students engaged in research using information technology and other resources.

(This) ... faculty development program at Xavier University will comprise the following:

1. Workshops
2. Teaching communities
3. Technology communities
4. Summer institutes
5. Travel grants.

And finally, the ultimate purpose of this faculty development program, as stated in the original proposal, was “to create and sustain a campus culture where the common ground of faculty scholarship in teaching and research leads to improved student learning.”

The Center for the Advancement of Teaching has examined the data collected throughout the three-year course of this initiative, with equal attention to what worked and to what did not work. The complete presentation of these data and their analyses are found in Appendices I, II, and III. Here, we present a summary of the findings.

There are three particularly significant themes that emerge from these data:

1. As a result of this initiative, faculty members have critically examined their own teaching and its impact on student learning.
2. Faculty members’ conscientious, reflective, and research-based approaches to their teaching have resulted in improved student learning.
3. One of the most successful aspects of this initiative was the establishment and support of communities of faculty and students focused on teaching and research. This collaborative or community-based approach to faculty development has resulted in improved teaching, student learning, and faculty and student scholarship.
4. Finally, one aim of the current faculty development program was to “promote the scholarship of teaching by creating a campus culture where teaching is...rewarded.” Although not addressed specifically in the data and analysis section of this proposal, that this aim was successfully achieved is perhaps best illustrated by Xavier’s new promotion and tenure guidelines that were approved by the faculty in spring 2000. The following excerpt is from the section titled “Scholarship.”

Scholarship is here defined as a process which generally includes, in various modes according to disciplines, the definition of a problem, the formulation of a hypothesis, and the choice of a methodology, its end the creation of a product which advances knowledge. This progression from discovery through peer evaluation and review to "publication," or making one's scholarship public, takes many forms, including: traditional research (where articles and conference papers "make public" the results of inquiry); the creative output of the fine arts (where performance, art work, and text "make public" outcomes of different forms of investigation); and the scholarship of teaching, here defined as making public, in conference presentation or pedagogical journal, for example, results from studying a problem about an issue of teaching or learning through methods consistent with disciplinary epistemologies, with the end of enhancing student learning.

Through the efforts of Xavier's faculty and administration, with input and support from the Center for the Advancement of Teaching, the scholarship of teaching is clearly recognized and rewarded at Xavier University.

The evidence also provides several important lessons that inform and shape the implementation of the proposed grant initiatives (see page 6). The lessons include:

1. During the past three years, several faculty members and students were funded to pursue traditional research projects. These projects, though productive venues for faculty and student investigation and discussion, rarely produced measurable results or tangible "products." Given that the goal of the proposed grant initiative is to "foster a campus culture where teaching and research are improved and made public," we will implement a means to assist and ensure that the work of research communities will in fact be made public.
2. The teaching communities, in contrast, yielded preliminary classroom assessment results, and even conference presentations, grant proposals, and other scholarly works. These projects, however, could benefit from greater assistance and support from university faculty and staff with expertise in assessment and evaluation.
3. As concerns the impact of faculty development workshops, the data point to two important avenues for improvement, including:
 - a. The need to contextualize workshop content in ways that are appropriate, relevant, and applicable to Xavier University and its faculty and students. Although nearly 70% of the workshop participants indicated that the workshop topics were of "high importance,"

more than a third of the participants found the workshop information to be of little or no usefulness.

- b. The need to link individual workshops with other Center initiatives and projects in order to sustain the goals of the workshops.
4. Faculty and students in some of the teaching and research communities indicated that the work of the communities did not fully achieve their goals due to a lack of faculty and student leadership. By placing the focus of the proposed grant initiatives squarely on improving teaching and research (hence, the requirement for assessment data or evidence of impact) and making the work of the communities public, we expect a greater degree of faculty and student ownership and commitment to the projects. In addition, the Center will develop a mechanism to work more closely with the communities.
5. Finally, projects that focused intensively on technology proved to be more successful on an individual basis, rather than through the community approach. Consequently, for purposes of the proposed grant initiatives, we have defined technology as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. For example, one of the most exciting teaching communities involved the use of technology to link students from two universities, and is illustrative of the general principle that technology is not an end to itself but a means to an end. That is, information technology is simply one more tool that is available to educators, but it is a tool that requires special consideration because of its complexity, expense, and -- for lack of a better word -- newness. Since this technology represents special challenges to would-be users, the Center will provide a certain level of support through its staff, facilities, and programs.

As a result of the evidence, we have revised the original proposal. These revisions, while significant, do not constitute a major change of direction for the Center. Rather, the revised proposal serves to clarify, focus, and refine our program of faculty development for the next three years.

Revised Aim, Goals, and Activities

The aim of the proposed faculty development initiative is to improve student learning by fostering a campus culture where teaching and research are improved and made public. The Center will promote this aim through a continuous program of faculty development which:

1. Encourages faculty and student conversations that are focused on specific teaching and learning problems and opportunities
2. Encourages faculty and student research, including the scholarship of teaching.

The Center will achieve these goals through the following activities:

1. Teaching and research communities initiative
2. Workshops
3. Travel grants
4. Support of experimentation with information technology.

We believe the new proposal is more coherent and logical, more accurately expressing the intent of the original. Some changes are mere formalities. For example, rather than four aims, we have formulated a single aim supported by two goals. This is simply a matter of clarifying the language of the original proposal.

Other changes are substantive. For example, we have defined technology as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. Thus, technology is not mentioned in the context of aims and goals. Experience dictates that the various teaching and research communities may (or may not) use information technology in their activities. Since this technology represents special challenges to would-be users, the Center will provide a certain level of support through its staff, facilities, and programs.

Furthermore, we have eliminated two of the less successful aspects of the original proposal: summer institutes and technology communities. Summer institutes proved to be impractical within the scope of the grant funding, as indicated in the Center's interim reports. Projects which focus intensively on technology have proved to be more successful on an individual basis, rather than through the community approach, and the Center is pursuing other avenues for funding these projects.

This revised renewal proposal capitalizes on the most successful aspects of the first three years of this faculty development initiative (*e.g.*, communities of faculty and students focused on teaching and research questions) and the lessons learned during the three-year course of the initiative described above.

Implementation and Assessment of Proposed Faculty Development Program

As noted previously, the aim of the proposed faculty development initiative is to improve student learning by fostering a campus culture where teaching and research are improved and made public.

The Center will achieve these goals through the following activities:

1. Teaching and research communities initiative
2. Workshops
3. Travel grants
4. Support of experimentation with information technology.

We present here a description of the detailed implementation and assessment plan for these activities, particularly the *Teaching and Research Communities Initiative*, which serve as the foundation of this faculty development program.

Teaching and Research Communities Initiative

Introduction

Faculty members have, as the data indicate, shown an extraordinary commitment to establishing communities of learners comprised of colleagues and students within their departments and across disciplinary boundaries. These communities afford faculty members and students an opportunity to focus on specific teaching and learning problems or opportunities, or specific research questions.

As the past three years have indicated, what faculty members' consider teaching and learning problems or opportunities varies considerably depending upon, for example:

- Academic discipline (*e.g.*, practitioner training, students' understanding of literary genera)
- Course level (*e.g.*, introductory biological concepts, research skills)
- Pedagogy (*e.g.*, case studies, technology).

Thus, the faculty and student projects associated with the proposed *Teaching and Research Communities Initiative* will generate a broad range of products or measurable outcomes. These include:

1. Course portfolios
2. New and refined approaches to teaching and learning, with appropriate and meaningful assessment strategies and instruments
3. New research findings and scholarly works
4. Improved teaching, research, and student learning, as documented through self-reporting, peer review, and classroom research.

Requested funding for this initiative will support:

1. Faculty release time (maximum is 25% course reduction for one semester)
2. Faculty and student stipends
 - a. Summer support [\$2000 (faculty) and \$1000 (student)]
 - b. Academic year [\$600 (faculty) and \$250 (student) per semester]
3. Faculty and student travel
4. Modest underwriting of the salaries of the Center's Director, Instructional Design Specialist, and Multimedia Specialist during years I and II of this three-year grant initiative. Xavier University will assume responsibility for 100% of their salaries in year III.

To implement this initiative, four steps will be followed. We plan to sponsor six “cycles” during the grant period; the cycles will overlap one another and each cycle involves two semesters or a summer and one semester. This long cycle will allow faculty members and students to develop, implement, assess, and, if necessary, redesign their projects. We anticipate supporting a total of 126 faculty members and 83 students during the grant period.

The initiative will be administered by the Center, with the Center's Instructional Design Specialist, Ms. Gayna Credle, as the primary coordinator. Xavier's Faculty Development Committee will serve in an advisory capacity.

Step 1: Request for Proposals

The strategy used during the current grant period—namely, a request for proposals (RFP)—has proven successful in identifying faculty members and students interested in teaching and research communities. The same strategy will be used during the proposed funding period. Specifically, the Center will issue requests for proposals to all university faculty members. Interested faculty members will, in collaboration with students with whom they will work in teaching or research communities, submit proposals describing their plans to develop, implement, and assess a specific teaching and learning problem or opportunity, or a specific research question. Projects could address, for example, improving student skills in critical thinking or writing in the discipline, or could target specific learning objectives and assessment strategies.

Associated with the RFP will be an invitation to all faculty members to attend a pre-proposal workshop. This meeting will serve two purposes:

1. The Center's Instructional Design Specialist, along with staff from Xavier's Office of Institutional Research, will assist faculty members in designing appropriate and useful assessment instruments, relative to the goals of their teaching or research projects.
2. The Center's Director and Multimedia Specialist will assist faculty members in identifying relevant and useful means for making the work of the teaching and research communities public. Support will be provided, for example, to utilize the World Wide Web and identify scholarly journals, conferences, symposia, and other appropriate public venues.

This pre-proposal workshop is a first step in providing greater assistance and support to faculty who will be designing and conducting assessment and evaluation projects as part of the work of the teaching and research communities. In addition, the workshop will be an important step in ensuring that the work of the communities is made public.

Step 2: Evaluation of Proposals

Xavier's Faculty Development Committee will review the proposals and rank them, with comments. In brief, the following components of each proposal will be evaluated:

1. *Project description and goals*: Objectives, scope, design, and overview
2. *Implementation plan*: A detailed plan of how the project, and its goals and outcomes will be achieved. Include a schedule.
3. *Assessment plan*: A detailed plan for evaluating the project and its outcomes according to the standards articulated in the project description and goals. Include a narrative and schedule.
4. *Dissemination plan*: A detailed plan for making the work of the community public. Include a narrative, schedule, and budget, if appropriate.

The evaluation and rank of each proposal will be passed to the Center, which will make the final determination on funding. Proposals deemed inappropriate by the Faculty Development Committee will not be funded.

Step 3: Faculty Collaboration

The Center's Instructional Design Specialist, Ms. Gayna Credle, will convene monthly meetings throughout the funding period with faculty, and students if appropriate, who are involved in similar teaching or research projects. These meetings will facilitate shared learning and collaboration by providing a venue for faculty and Center staff to explore pedagogical and technical issues, seek

solutions to problems, and inspire faculty productivity and innovation. By creating this venue for collaboration, we hope to reduce problems that occurred during the past three years associated with a lack of faculty and student leadership.

Step 4: Evaluation of Projects

After faculty complete the first semester (or summer) phase of the cycle, each project will be evaluated by the Faculty Development Committee in order to ensure that projects have progressed sufficiently before moving into the last phase, which we envision will, for most projects, involve implementation and assessment. The Committee's evaluation will provide faculty involved in the projects an opportunity to "hear" the voice of an outside reviewer before moving into the project's last phase.

At the conclusion of the funding period, the Faculty Development Committee will conduct a similar review of the projects, with greater emphasis on the degree to which they reached or exceeded their goals. The results of these evaluations will be made available to the Foundation and the Xavier University community.

Workshops

As stated in the original proposal submitted in October 1997, "Workshops will develop faculty skills and knowledge, and promote conversation and focused inquiries about teaching and student learning challenges at Xavier." Similarly, workshops during the proposed grant period will be designed to achieve these same ends.

Requested grant funds will support at least two workshops per academic year. Expert consultants and workshop facilitators will lead these workshops. Hence, we request support for consultants' honoraria and travel expenses.

As noted beginning on page 3, our data point to two important avenues for improving the impact of workshops on teaching, professional development, and, ultimately, student learning:

1. The need to contextualize workshop content in ways that are appropriate, relevant, and applicable to Xavier University and its faculty and students. Although nearly 70% of the workshop participants indicated that the workshop topics were of "high importance," more than a third of the participants found the workshop information to be of little or no usefulness.

2. The need to link individual workshops with other Center initiatives and projects in order to sustain the goals of the workshops.

The first need, admittedly, is difficult to address. Like in a classroom, a unique dynamic is created at each workshop that is dependent in large part on the interaction between the workshop leader and the workshop participants. We will, nevertheless, strengthen our efforts at communicating with workshop leaders about the need to:

1. Have clearly articulated workshop goals and expectations for workshop participants
2. Establish an environment of inquiry that engages participants in discussion centered around the workshop topic
3. Use teaching strategies that have potential appeal to a diverse population of faculty members with varying learning styles.

In order to sustain the goals of the workshops, the Center will use two means to link individual workshops with other initiatives and projects:

1. We will invite workshop participants to extend the dialogue of the workshop by participating in face-to-face and on-line workshop focus groups.
2. When possible, we will issue requests for proposals to workshop participants to develop teaching and research communities that will further examine and implement the issues or principles addressed in the workshop.

As we have done these past three years, we will measure the impact of workshops through two surveys—one conducted immediately following the workshop and one several months later. The latter survey, in particular, will allow the Center to measure the long-term impact of workshops of teaching, professional development, and student learning.

Travel grants

The Center has successfully used the current grant funds to support faculty members' and students' presentations of their grant-funded work at national conferences, workshops, and symposia. Given that the aim of the proposed faculty development initiative is to improve student learning by fostering a campus culture where teaching and research are improved and *made public*, the Center will continue to assist and encourage faculty members and students to present the work of their communities at national conferences, workshops, and symposia.

Requested travel funds are anticipated to, during the three-year grant period, a total of nine faculty members and six students.

Support of experimentation with information technology

Technology does not appear in this proposal as an aim unto itself. We will not be including explicitly technological components in any of the major initiatives funded by this grant. Nevertheless technology is a significant part of our new implementation plan, and we expect technology to play a role in many of these activities.

In fact, there are a number of ways that information technology will factor into implementation. As research communities consider ways of making their research public, some will undoubtedly consider using the World Wide Web or other electronic platforms. Teaching communities may want to look critically at the use of technology in education as it affects student learning. Both sorts of communities may wish to use electronic communications to facilitate and document their conversations. And there are other potential uses that we can't even anticipate.

But if technology presents opportunities, it also presents challenges. Information technology can be expensive and confusing. Without support, faculty attempts to use technology would often be frustrated, and students would graduate without the basic skills needed to participate fully in our changing society.

The Center has historically provided support for faculty use of technology, through facilities such as our electronic classrooms and computer labs, as well as through our staff of technology experts. Continuing to provide this support is essential to creating the optimal environment for the advancement of teaching and research at Xavier.

This activity will be evaluated in two ways:

1. We anticipate that information technology, if used at all, will be a part of the teaching and research communities. Therefore, the assessment plan developed by each community in which IT is used, will include an assessment of the technology and its role in teaching, research, or student learning.
2. During the past three years, the Center and the University Faculty Development Committee have conducted surveys that have measured, to varying degrees, the role that information technology

has on teaching, professional development, and student learning. These surveys will be used again during the next three years.

Requested funding for support of faculty and student experimentation with information technology will underwrite the salaries of the Center's Instructional Design and Multimedia specialists during years I and II of the three-year grant initiative. Xavier University will assume responsibility for 100% of their salaries in year III.

Overall Assessment and Evaluation

Throughout the three-year course of the current grant initiative, the Center has developed an assessment and evaluation system that examines the impact of the Center in general and its grant initiatives in particular on teaching, professional development, and student learning. The data we have obtained represent the perspectives of:

1. The entire Xavier faculty
2. All faculty members who have participated in one or more Center activities
3. Faculty members and students whose proposals were approved for funding from the Bush-Hewlett grant.

As we look ahead to the next three years, we will capitalize on the “best practices” of the past three years, and identify new and better ways to examine the Center's impact on teaching, professional development, and student learning.

Assessment and Evaluation: “Best Practices” and New Approaches

Of all the activities funded by the grant, faculty members' projects and assessment results best illustrate the effects on teaching, faculty development, and most importantly, student learning. As indicated previously, faculty members who submit proposals to the Center during the next funding period must include a detailed plan for evaluating the project and its outcomes. The Center, with the assistance of staff in the Office of Institutional Research, will work closely with faculty members in developing this plan, and appropriate and useful assessment and evaluation tools. As we have done in preparing this renewal proposal, the Center will examine the data collected throughout the three-year course of this initiative, with equal attention to what worked and to what did not work.

During the past three years, the Center and the University Faculty Development Committee administered two surveys—a faculty development survey and a technology survey (the latter was

administered in 1998 and 2001)—that has provided us with benchmark data and evidence of our impact on faculty development, teaching, and learning. In addition, the survey results have shaped our work. We will conduct the faculty development survey in August 2002; both the faculty development and technology surveys will be conducted again in January 2005.

Finally, and perhaps of most importance at this point in our evaluation of the Center's faculty development efforts, we will utilize the proposed grant funds to hire a consultant team to review our means for evaluating this faculty development initiative, whose aim it is to improve student learning by fostering a campus culture where teaching and research are improved and made public. We will begin this work in August 2002.

We will identify, ideally, a two-member consulting team comprised of a faculty developer with expertise in assessment and evaluation, and a faculty member with experience in university or college faculty development programs.

The faculty developer will bring to the review a broad understanding of faculty development and expertise in developing a strategy for measuring the impact of faculty development initiatives. To reiterate, this person will be asked to review the evaluation efforts of our faculty development program, and not our faculty development program *per se*.

The faculty member we will seek will be one with profound understanding of faculty culture and the issues that impact it (*e.g.*, promotion and tenure, competing demands on faculty time and energy, effective teaching, assessment of student learning). In addition, this faculty member will have had considerable experience in university faculty development efforts.

The combined experience, expertise, and perspectives of the members of this consulting team will ensure that, in their review of our evaluation practices, consideration will be given to a broad range of issues, problems, and solutions that affect the Center's success at evaluating its faculty development program.

Budget

Please contact the Center for the Advancement of Teaching at cat@xula.edu for information about the budget.

Summary

Xavier's most focused and substantive experiences with professional development began in 1987, as a result of a generous faculty development grant from The Bush and The William and Flora Hewlett foundations. What started as a faculty-led, grass-roots commitment to faculty development has matured into a broad range of initiatives aimed at improving teaching and student learning, and supporting faculty and student scholarship.

Xavier's faculty members, through the Center for the Advancement of Teaching, its University Faculty Development Committee, and their profound commitment to improved teaching, research, and student learning, have maintained a clear and strong voice in directing the future of faculty development at the institution. A grant from The Bush and The William and Flora Hewlett foundations will provide the University and its faculty an invaluable set of resources to support and extend this commitment.