

Center for the Advancement of Teaching Strategic Plan (July 2013)

Overview and History

Beginning in Fall 2003, the Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT) engaged in an 18-month strategic planning process, the members of the Strategic Planning and Implementation Group identified five areas that they believe constitute the whole of CAT. These goal areas were: *communication, facilities and resources, funding, programs, and staff*. In June 2005, the strategic plan was distributed to department chairs and CAT's Faculty Advisory Group for review and comment. When the University re-opened in January 2006 following Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent flooding, CAT staff immediately began revising the strategic plan in light of the post-Katrina conditions. The revised plan was made public again in March 2006. Subsequently, a few changes were made based on feedback we received from Xavier's Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. In 2007, the University hired a new, full-time CAT Director. In August 2010, we revised the plan again, focusing mainly on the timeline of objectives.

In Spring 2013, we administered a university-wide faculty needs assessment survey. On July 23, 2013, the entire CAT staff participated in a strategic planning retreat. We used our SWOT analysis and needs assessment survey results to substantially revise the plan to better address the current needs of the University and build on the strengths and expertise of staff members. Presented below is a set of goals designed to direct the work of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT) for the next three years. It is our intention to engage a faculty committee in our next strategic planning process (in Fall 2016).

I. Communication Goals

Goal 1: Work collaboratively with other relevant University programs and centers (e.g., Center for Undergraduate Research, Information Technology Center, Center for International and Intercultural Programs)

Comments

CAT's success at advancing the art and science of teaching and learning is dependent, in part, on its ability to maintain and promote dialogue among the various University programs and centers that support faculty work in teaching, scholarship, and service.

Timeline

Ongoing:

- Maintain collaborations with other University programs and centers that support faculty work in teaching, scholarship, and service.

Goal 2: Develop means for effective reporting of CAT activities to stakeholders

Comments

CAT's success at advancing the art and science of teaching and learning is dependent, in part, on its ability to share information with the entire Xavier community. An annual report, board reports, periodic presentations at University Academic Assembly, and a current and easily navigable website are means of sharing this information with the Xavier community.

Timeline

AY 13-14

- Develop a collaborative authoring solution to address CAT reporting needs.

Ongoing:

- Submit an annual report.
- Submit board reports.

II. Facilities and Resources Goals**Goal 3: Maintain and improve CAT facilities****Comments**

Since its inception in 1994, CAT has been fortunate to provide most of its staff members offices that are safe, comfortable, and secure. As equally important, CAT provides its staff with state-of-the-art technology and all Xavier faculty members access to facilities that allow them to be creative, productive, and effective in their work, both within and outside of the classroom. CAT is committed to providing all of its staff members a safe, comfortable, and secure work environment, while also continuing to provide state-of-the-art facilities for faculty.

Objective 1: Analyze survey data from faculty and students regarding CAT's electronic classrooms (Library, rooms 501, 502, 532A)

Timeline**AY 14-15**

- Survey Faculty and Students in the Fall 2014

Objective 2: Provide state-of-the-art technology in CAT staff offices, Camtasia studio, production room, and conference room.

Timeline**AY 13-14**

- Repurpose production room to allow for Faculty-in-Residence offices.

Goal 4: Provide more pedagogical resources in CAT and on the CAT website**Comments**

CAT is committed to advancing the art and science of teaching and learning. The resources we provide include but are not limited to: books, journals, newspapers, videos, staff expertise, and website.

Timeline**AY 13-14**

- Develop a website offering resources to those teaching online/hybrid courses.
- Draft a new host for the Teaching and Learning Podcast and produce a new season of Podcast content (on an annual basis).
- CAT staff will post to the CAT Food blog every other week and will ask the Faculty-in-Residence to post once per month.
- Build our collection of STEM pedagogical resources.

AY 13-14

- Assess blog progress and promote more aggressively.

Ongoing

- Assess and revise each of the above on an annual basis.
- Monthly review of a portion of CAT website.
- New Podcast host annually

III. Funding Goals

Goal 5: Provide release time, financial incentives, travel funding, materials for faculty

Comments

Historically, CAT initiatives, such as the Technology Infusion Projects, Rich Media Projects, and the Faculty Communities of Teaching Scholars (FaCTS), benefit from the faculty having a reduction in their teaching load. This reduced teaching load permits the faculty to devote the requisite time and attention to plan, develop, implement, and assess the work they do in these initiatives. We have found that even providing the minimum release time leads to higher quality products, greater positive effects on teaching and learning, and broader exposure to the academic community. In addition, travel opportunities are necessary for faculty to either develop quality projects or disseminate results.

Given the fiscal obligations and limitations of the University, it is unrealistic at this point in time to expect that the University will underwrite release time. Thus, the funding must come from outside the University. We note, incidentally, that grant proposals, which CAT prepares or participates in writing, could be used to achieve this goal as well as Goals 6 and 7. In addition, in this time of tight budgets, external funding can defray travel and material expenses.

Timeline

Ongoing:

- We will continue to seek external funding for release time, financial incentives, travel and materials for our faculty.

Goal 6: Maintain a full CAT staff

Comments

We have accomplished the goal of building back up to our pre-Katrina staff numbers.

Timeline

AY14-15:

- Revisit our staff positions to see if we are meeting current needs.

Goal 7: Seek funding for current and future programs and initiatives

Comments

The University continues to provide a great deal of support – both financial and other – to CAT. As with other academic support units, however, our budget has decreased over the past few years. Historically, much of CAT's programmatic costs have been provided by grants from foundations. Thus, CAT must work continuously and aggressively to obtain the funding it needs to support the initiatives and programs that advance the art and science of teaching and learning.

Again, it is worth noting that grant proposals that CAT prepares or participates in writing could be used to achieve this goal as well as Goals 5 and 6.

Timeline

AY 13-14

- Seek funding for faculty travel grant.
- Look into renewing FaCTS Mellon grant.
- Explore re-branding course portfolio work to seek funding.

AY 14-15

- Seek funding for Faculty-in-Residence for E-Learning.

- Seek funding for an Assessment of Teaching and Learning Specialist.

Ongoing

- Assess and revise above annually.
- In grant writing, include professional development (i.e., travel) for CAT staff.

IV. Program Goals

Goal 8: Offer programming and services for faculty for teaching, learning, assessment and other aspects of their personal and professional development

Comments

CAT has a long and rich history of working with individual faculty and groups of faculty through its workshops, initiatives, and projects. The services that we offer include but are not limited to:

- One-to-One services
- Regular scheduled workshops
- Course portfolio working groups
- Blackboard training
- Fall Faculty Book Club
- Mid-course reviews
- New Faculty Orientation/Mentoring
- Grant-funded initiatives (FaCTS, I-Cubed)
- Faculty in residence
- Service learning support
- Social hour

Timeline

AY 13-14

- Include workshop offerings topics related to STEM, E-Learning, QEP, Blackboard, contemplative/integrative pedagogy, social media/webtools, and other pedagogically relevant topics each semester.
- Bring in one guest speaker per year as budget allows.
- Attempt to increase the number of mid-course reviews by promoting this service earlier in the semester.

Ongoing

- Assess and revise each of the above on an annual basis.

Goal 9: Communicate and encourage practical application of research and new knowledge in teaching and learning from diverse disciplines

We strive to base our offerings on up-to-date scholarship of teaching and learning, but we recognize that faculty want practical applications. They would like to have clear take-away points from the research that we provide to them.

Timeline

AY 13-14

- Ensure that we have practical applications for each program offering. Work with outside presenters to do that as well. This will be accomplished by including a “Practical Applications for Teaching and Learning” slide at the end of each presentation and/or in handouts.
- Discuss revising our evaluation form to get feedback about application points.

Ongoing

Assess and revise above

Goal 10a: Support faculty in the use of technology through a focus on best practices and emerging trends**Comments**

Technology continues to occupy a significant place in teaching and learning. It, therefore, behooves us to promote and support uses of technology that are based on well-reasoned theory and practice. Meanwhile, CAT desires to continue serving the Xavier community by encouraging and supporting creative and experimental uses of technology.

Timeline**Ongoing**

- Appropriate CAT staff members will attend at least one technology-related conference per year and participate in appropriate related conferences.
- See also Goal 8.

Goal 10b: Support faculty in the use of E-Learning through a focus on best practices and emerging trends**Comments**

E-Learning has recently become a priority for the University. In summer 2013, we hired a Distance Education Coordinator to serve the Xavier community by supporting the development and implementation of online/hybrid courses.

Timeline**AY 13-14**

- Establish E-Learning advisory board.
- Add One-to-One services for Online/Hybrid faculty
- Start an Online Faculty Handbook

AY 14-15

- Refine and Publish Faculty Handbook
- Develop a Faculty-in-Residence position for E-Learning

AY 15-16

- Develop an external office for Distance Learning

Ongoing

- Annually assess and revise above
- Continuously work on Strategic Plan from E-Learning Committee

Goal 11: Assist academic administrators in understanding how to assist faculty in documenting and describing the value of participation in CAT activities**Comments**

We believe it is useful for faculty members to describe and document their commitment to improving in the area of teaching and learning. However, it is our philosophy that this should be done through academic administrators (e.g., department heads, division chairs, deans).

Timeline**AY 13-14**

- Promote to academic administrators ways faculty can document their commitment to improving in the area of teaching and learning.

Ongoing

- Assess and revise task above.

Goal 12: Continue to review, assess, and improve existing programs, initiatives, and resources

Comments

The future success of CAT to advance the art and science of teaching and learning is dependent, in part, on rigorous, thoughtful, and continuous assessment of all aspects of its programs.

Timeline

Summer 2013

- Develop TracDat goals that align with this strategic plan.

Ongoing:

- Evaluate all CAT offerings.
- Establish a team of University faculty and staff to conduct a review of a different CAT program, initiative, or resource each year.
- Annually submit TracDat information.

Goal 13: Systematically examine the link between CAT activities and student learning, and integrate what is learned from this into improving the work of CAT

Comments

It is imperative that CAT staff know the extent to which CAT's programs succeed in fulfilling its mission to advance the art and science of teaching and learning. As one means to know this, CAT staff work with faculty involved in projects to examine their effects on teaching and student learning using scientific methodology and rigorous assessment. To track the effects of the projects on teaching and student learning beyond the time period of the projects themselves, we need staff expertise.

Timeline

- See Goal 14.

V. Staff Goals

Goal 14: Develop or acquire expertise in area of assessment of CAT programs.

Comments

CAT recognizes the importance of assessment as the means for measuring the extent to which it advances the art and science of teaching and learning. Our recognition of the central role of assessment is based, in part, on our experience implementing various initiatives and projects. In addition, members of the University's administration have stressed the importance of assessment. Finally, and not to be overlooked, are the questions that members of the Academy and the general public have asked about the effectiveness of higher education. Clearly assessment has become an integral part of the entire educational process.

For these reasons, it would be beneficial to add to our staff an Assessment of Teaching and Learning Specialist

Timeline

AY 14-15

- Seek funding for an Assessment of Teaching and Learning Specialist (see Goal 7)

Goal 15: Hire or appoint an Assistant or Associate Director.

Comments

With our Faculty-in-Residence model and full-time Director, we currently do not see a need for an Associate Director. Therefore, this goal is on hold indefinitely.