

### ***Executive Summary***

The 2007 – 2008 academic year was a successful one for the VCU Center for Teaching Excellence. The CTE was able to meet all of its targeted goals, develop and deliver several meaningful and innovative faculty development programs, and continue its important mission of building collaborations and community among the VCU faculty.

Central to the CTE's work over the last year has been its focus on promoting and supporting key aspects of the University's strategic plan, *VCU 2020: Vision of Excellence*. During the last year, the Center's programs and resources were shaped by a strong commitment to model, support and promote learning-centered teaching practices. Our pursuit of this goal is evidenced by the development of two (2) weeklong summer Institutes for faculty focusing on teaching and learning, the delivery of over 150 faculty development workshops on a range of teaching and learning topics, consultations with schools and departments about learning-centered practice, the targeted award of funding for faculty projects focused learning-centered practices through our Small Grant Program, and the support of a faculty learning community which focused on the question: *What is a Learning-centered Research University?* The past academic year also witnessed the CTE provide direct program development and support for the *Focused Inquiry* program, whose underlying philosophy is grounded in learning-centered pedagogy. In short, the CTE has provided university-wide leadership in shaping the dialogue about what a learning-centered research university might look like. In addition to these programmatic activities, the CTE regularly consulted with its Advisory Board to identify needs and develop priorities for continued support of learning-centered practice at VCU. These planning efforts have shaped the CTE's strategic goals for the 2008 – 2009 academic year.

In addition to anchoring its work in the philosophy of learning-centered teaching, the CTE also focused considerable effort in three key areas during the past year. These included community building, the development of instructional technology programming and promoting the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Each of these key areas is briefly described in greater detail below.

*Community Building* - The CTE sees community building among VCU faculty members as one of its most important activities. VCU's diverse faculty population and academic programs provide for many opportunities for interdisciplinary exchange, and the CTE designs programs for faculty members to take advantage of these opportunities. In fact, VCU faculty members often comment on the CTE being *the* place at VCU where they can network with colleagues and experience a broader sense of community at VCU. The expanded development of our Faculty Learning Communities Program, the continued facilitation of the Junior Faculty Mentorship Program and outreach to adjunct faculty were among the most significant outcomes of our community building efforts.

*Instructional Technology Programming* - Since the reorganization of the former Academic Technology (AT) and Administrative Information Technology (AIT) into Technology Services, the CTE has taken on an increasingly more significant role in providing faculty development in the area of instructional technology across the entire university. The CTE has developed several faculty development programs and a wide range of workshop opportunities to assist faculty in the meaningful use of technology to support teaching and learning. The 2007 – 2008 academic year witnessed the CTE solidifying its role in providing unparalleled instructional technology leadership at VCU. Key outcomes in this area included two technology related FLCs, a week-long Teaching and Learning with Technology Institute, a year-long program supporting faculty exploration of tablet PCs, and the delivery of over 120 technology related workshop opportunities for faculty.

*Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)* – The CTE views both the promotion of and engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning as central to its mission. During the past year CTE staff members have engaged in several collaborative research projects, and supported VCU faculty members in conducting their own research about teaching and learning through a range of its programs. While the CTE is not a traditional academic department, we do follow an approach to scholarship that places value on service, teaching and research. Our opportunities to engage in research often grow from our collaborations with faculty, and this past year we were fortunate to be able to offer several presentations at national conferences as well as have articles published in professional journals. A detailed listing of the CTE’s presentations and publications can be found in the *Scholarly Activities* section of our annual report.

*Community Engagement* – The CTE has engaged in several community engagement initiatives over the last academic year. The most significant of these has been an emerging partnership between the CTE and the Office of Community Engagement (OCE). Early in the academic year we worked with the OCE on developing a series of workshops designed to (1) introduce VCU faculty to the concept of community engagement, (2) introduce faculty to existing community partnerships and how they have evolved over the years at VCU, (3) an introduction to some of the key issues associated with developing and sustaining effective community partnerships and (4) how to develop teaching, learning and research opportunities with community partnerships. In addition to this workshop series, the OCE and the CTE sent a team of four people to a charrette at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The purpose of the charrette was help institutions develop a comprehensive faculty development plan that would grow and sustain successful community engagement program. The OCE has since developed a plan and the CTE will help with its implementation this upcoming academic year.

Heading into the 2008 – 2009 academic year the CTE is poised to continue making significant contributions to support the teaching and learning mission of the University. Having evaluated key programs, sought feedback from key stakeholders, and engaged in design and development to continue improving our services, we are looking forward to another successful year that will be guided by our primary goal of supporting VCU’s strategic vision for becoming a learning-centered research university.

## ***Contributions to the Institution***

Review of 2007 – 2008 Strategic Goals: Each of these three goals is in direct support of Theme II in VCU's Strategic Plan: *"Achieve national recognition as a learning-centered research university that embraces a world-class student experience."*

### Goal I

*The CTE will support the university's strategic plan, VCU 2020: Vision of Excellence. To sustain the evolving implementation of this vision, the CTE will continue to focus many of its programs and resources on promoting learning-centered teaching practices and enhancing student engagement.*

The CTE was able to successfully address this goal in the following ways:

- The CTE offered more than 150 workshops throughout the 2007-8 academic year. The Center staff is very deliberate about modeling the use of learning-centered practices in every workshop they conduct.
- The CTE has also consulted with other VCU units for the purpose of integrating engagement and learning-centered practice into the design of faculty and staff development opportunities.
- Created and delivered two, week-long summer institutes that were designed to help faculty improve their teaching based on research on how people learn.
- Delivered a two-part workshop series on learning-centered teaching.
- Continued a faculty learning community (FLC) for a second year charged with exploring the question, *What is a learning-centered research university?* This FLC is producing a rubric that can be used by department heads / directors to assess the extent to which their organization is engaged in learning-centered practices.
- Consulted with individual schools, departments and administrators on developing more effective workshops and faculty / staff development opportunities.
- Continued support of instructional / learning technologies that promote learning-centered principles, e.g. the classroom performance system (aka, clickers), tablet PCs, and podcasting.
- We developed and delivered a new Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) orientation in August of 2007, the purpose of which was to provide an overview of what learning centered teaching means at VCU and to provide an orientation to the resources and service available at VCU to in support of GTAs.
- The Center, based on input from our advisory board made up of representatives from twelve of VCU's schools and college, has developed a plan for promoting learning-centered teaching at VCU. Several of the key strategies will include the creation of multimedia vignette's of VCU faculty engaged in various learning-centered teaching practices, the creation of a Faculty Fellow's program, and an annual VCU Faculty Academy—a regional conference showcasing the work of our faculty.

- The CTE staff has also been engaged in promoting learning-centered teaching at VCU through our own scholarship and research. Please refer to the Research and Scholarship section of this document for further details.

## Goal II

*The CTE will provide tailored professional development to meet the identified instructional needs of faculty in the University College. Through institutes, workshops and individual consultations, the CTE will work with Focused Inquiry (FI) faculty members to support program goals.*

The CTE was able to successfully address this goal in the following ways:

- Co-developed and co-delivered a Focused Inquiry Faculty development Institute in August of 2007. The entire Focused Inquiry faculty body (48) was in attendance during the weeklong orientation and training event.
- Delivered a number of tailored workshops to FI faculty on a variety of topics including critical thinking, teaching with tablet PCs, and using web-based tools.
- Developed an assessment process using software called rGrade. This required a great deal of customization, support and training for both FI faculty and a considerable number of the 3,000+ students in the first year program.
- Provided support to FI faculty who developed online courses in the FI program.
- Provided individual technical support and training for FI faculty using the table PC.
- Co-developed a 3-part workshop series on writing across the curriculum. Although the workshop series was open to all faculty, the need for the workshops emerged from the FI program where faculty are just as focused on helping students *write to learn* as opposed to learn to write.
- Co-presented at a national conference on Teaching and Learning showcasing the development and implementation of the Focused Inquiry program at VCU. In addition, we showcased the development and implementation of a comprehensive faculty development process for Focused Inquiry faculty.
- Provided training and support for discussion group leaders in the Summer Reading Program.
- We are currently in the process of developing seven FLCs in which FI faculty will participate during the 2008-9 academic year.
- Worked closely with the University College to share many of the administrative tasks associated with launching one of the largest departments at VCU—45+ faculty (search committee, travel arrangements, temporary housing arrangements, ordering of books, supplies and computer equipment, and so on.)

## Goal III

*The CTE will work to generate interest in and support the development of research that promotes the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Through programmatic offerings and*

*development of model research studies, the CTE will engage VCU faculty members in discussion and practices that seek to contribute to the field of teaching and learning.*

This goal, given the nature of the research process, requires a considerable amount of time, attention, and groundwork for success to be realized. Therefore, most of the outcomes below reflect the early stages of developing a culture of SoTL in a research institution that has traditionally valued discipline-based research.

- First and foremost, the CTE staff has significantly increased the degree to which they have engaged in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Throughout the 2007-8 academic year, the center staff collectively delivered ten presentations at professional conferences and had four articles accepted for publication.
- The Center has also witnessed a significant increase in the number of faculty who have come to us this past year seeking support and guidance for their own scholarship of teaching and learning
- We have developed a faculty learning community around the topic of SoTL and it will be offered in the 2008-9 academic year. We created a SoTL support group in the summer of 2007 that was designed to help faculty who participated in our Summer Institutes elevate their teaching projects to a level of scholarship that could warrant publication. For example, one participant in the support group presented, “Use of reflection for course feedback in an Introduction to Pharmacy Course integrating active learning” at the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy meeting.
- We have one research project that emerged from our Tablet PC Program. The project is called, "A study of student use of instructional materials captured by a tablet PC in a computer science classroom."
- Our Faculty Learning Community on *Using Technology to Enhance Teaching and Learning* conducted a VCU focused research project entitled, “A Comparative Study of Faculty and Student Expectations for the Use of Technology to Support Teaching and Learning.” This was a first of its kind study to be conducted at VCU.
- We also have a research project and publication from one of the participants in the *Using Technology to Enhance Teaching and Learning* FLC entitled, “Doing What I Don’t Know How to Do.”  
<http://connect.educause.edu/Library/EDUCAUSE+Quarterly/DoingWhatIDontKnowHowToDo/46021>

### **Highlights**

The CTE engaged in a wide range of activities in support of its core mission of faculty development during the 2007 – 2008 academic year. Key highlights are outlined below in priority order.

1) Community Building – The CTE sees community building among VCU faculty members as one of its most important activities. VCU’s diverse faculty population and academic programs provide for many opportunities for interdisciplinary exchange, and the CTE designs programs

for faculty members to take advantage of these opportunities. In fact, VCU faculty members often comment on the CTE being *the* place at VCU where they can network with colleagues and experience a broader sense of community at VCU. The following represent key programmatic efforts the CTE has made toward community building this past year:

- Development of Faculty Learning Community (FLC) Program ([http://www.vcu.edu/cte/programs/faculty\\_learning\\_communities.htm](http://www.vcu.edu/cte/programs/faculty_learning_communities.htm))
  - The CTE facilitated five (5) FLCs during 2007 – 2008
  - The FLC program is slated to continue for the 2008 – 2009 academic year with five (5) new FLC topics (Active Learning: Problems and Possibilities, Redefining Literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Using Technology to Enhance Teaching and Learning, Engaging in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning)
- Junior Faculty Mentorship Program ([http://www.vcu.edu/cte/programs/junior\\_faculty\\_mentorship.htm](http://www.vcu.edu/cte/programs/junior_faculty_mentorship.htm))
  - Eleven schools and colleges are represented by this last year's cohort including eleven faculty members from the Health Sciences
  - This program focused on key community building and support for over 40 new VCU faculty members
  - Participants meet monthly to build community and explore topics of significant importance to junior faculty
- Targeted professional development and support for VCU faculty teaching *Focused Inquiry*
- The CTE staff continues to serve as educational consultants for the faculty learning community (FLC) sponsored by the Center for the Study of Biological Complexity through a grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. This year, the efforts of the FLC have expanded to other members of the VCU community. Due directly to the efforts of the FLC and CTE, members of the VCU community have:
  - Explored redesigning at least two other biology courses
  - Involved staff and students from Communication Arts in creating multimedia simulations for these courses
  - Redesigned a core course in the Life Science tract
  - Inspired biology faculty members to become Fellows in the National Academy of Sciences program for undergraduate education in biology.
  - Partnered with the Director of Assessment and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to create a rigorous assessment of the FLC's efforts
- Support for Adjunct Faculty
  - Adjunct FLC
  - FLC laptop program
- Support for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)
  - Coordinated workshop participation

2) Instructional Technology Programming—Since the reorganization of the former Academic Technology (AT) and Administrative Information Technology (AIT) into Technology Services, the CTE has taken on an increasingly more significant role in providing faculty development in the

area of instructional technology across the entire university. The CTE has developed several faculty development programs and a wide range of workshop opportunities to assist faculty in the meaningful use of technology to support teaching and learning. The 2007 – 2008 academic year witnessed the CTE solidifying its role in providing unparalleled instructional technology leadership at VCU. Key contributions in this area included the following:

- Two (2) technology focused faculty learning communities
  - Using Technology to Enhance Teaching and Learning (<http://www.vcu.edu/cte/programs/FLC/UTETL/index.htm>)
  - Creating Engaged Online Learners (<http://www.vcu.edu/cte/programs/FLC/DEOL/index.htm>)
- Delivery of all faculty development training related to the use of Blackboard
- Design and delivery of over 120 workshop opportunities on a wide range of topics related to teaching and learning with technology
- Development and facilitation of a program supporting faculty exploration of Tablet PC's ([http://www.vcu.edu/cte/programs/instructional\\_technology/tablet\\_PC\\_prog/index.htm](http://www.vcu.edu/cte/programs/instructional_technology/tablet_PC_prog/index.htm))
- Development and facilitation of a program supporting faculty exploration of podcasting ([http://www.vcu.edu/cte/programs/instructional\\_technology/podcasting/index.htm](http://www.vcu.edu/cte/programs/instructional_technology/podcasting/index.htm))
- The design and delivery of a week-long *Teaching and Learning with Technology Institute* ([http://www.vcu.edu/cte/workshops/teaching\\_w\\_tech/index.htm](http://www.vcu.edu/cte/workshops/teaching_w_tech/index.htm))
- The development of a successful Brown bag Lunch series focusing on the educational use of emerging technologies

3) Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)—The CTE views both the promotion of and engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning as central to its mission. During the past year CTE staff members have engaged in several collaborative research projects and supported VCU faculty members in conducting their own research about teaching and learning through a range of its programs. The following represent key efforts to engage in and support SoTL activities at VCU:

- CTE Small Grant Program
  - Funding of over 20 unique faculty projects targeting improved teaching and learning
  - Several project implementations have resulted presentation and publication opportunities for VCU faculty members
- CTE Staff Scholarship (See “Scholarly Activities” below for complete listing)
- Development of collaborative research projects with VCU faculty members
- Design and development of a new FLC (Engaging in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning) for the 2008 – 2009 academic year

4) CTE Website - Over the course of the last academic year the CTE took on the monumental task of redesigning its own website. At a time when many units at VCU contract for expensive web development services, the CTE staff collectively worked on the design elements, web page

development and the authoring of content. This resulted in the launch of an amazing resource for VCU faculty in the Fall of 2007. Key features of the site include:

- Detailed descriptions of all CTE programs
- Integrated workshop descriptions and registration
- A growing web-based collection of teaching resources, including a “New Faculty Resource Guide”
- A CTE blog

### ***Scholarly Activities***

**(CTE staff include: Bud Deihl, Zachary Goodell, Jeff Nugent, Susan Polich & Britt Watwood).**

#### Publications

Lynch, E., & Polich, S. (2008). *I came to college to be taught*. PBL Clearinghouse: The University of Delaware. Available online at: <https://chico.nss.udel.edu/Pbl/>

Nugent, J., Reardon, R.M., Smith, F.G., Rhodes, J.A., Zander, M.J., & Carter, T. (In Press). Exploring faculty learning communities: Building connections among teaching, learning, and technology. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 20 (1).

Polich, S. (2007). Assessment of a faculty learning community program: Do faculty members really change? *To Improve the Academy*, 26, 106-120.

Watwood, W. B. (2007). Instructional uses of social bookmarking: Reflections and Questions. *Journal of Social Informatics*, (8), December 2007, retrieved from <http://www.ris.uvt.ro/Publications/Decembrie%202007/Watwood.pdf>

#### Presentations

Canfield, E., Goodell, Z. G., & Rankin, D. (2008). *Focused Inquiry: General education reform or revolution?* Presentation at Lilly South Conference on College and University Teaching, Greensboro, NC.

Canfield, E., Orzolek, B., & Nugent, J. (2008). *Opening Pandora's Box: The classroom challenges of inviting [open] digital communication*. Presentation at the annual meeting of Computers and Writing, Athens, GA.

Chandler, S., & Watwood, W. B. (2007). *Building user capital through communication*. Presentation at the annual Blackboard World 2007 Conference, Boston, MA.

- Lynch, E., & Polich, S. (Accepted). *On the Journey to SoTL: Moving from passive-learning to scholarly teaching and how to know if you've arrived!* The annual meeting of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.
- Nugent, J., & Dolson, T. (2007). *Social bookmarking, wikis and podcasts: New opportunities for faculty development?* Presentation at the annual meeting of the Professional and Organizational Development Network, Pittsburgh, PA.
- Nugent, J., & Watwood, W.B. (2007). *Exploring instructional uses of social bookmarking.* Presentation at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Teaching and Learning with Technology Conference, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA.
- Nugent, J., Reardon, R.M., & Rhodes, J. (2008). Teachers as learners, learners as teachers: Reflecting on the digital disconnect. Presentation at the annual meeting of the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (ELI), San Antonio, TX.
- Polich, S. (2007). *Mental models of education: The role of past experiences in student and faculty change.* Presentation at the annual meeting of the Professional Organizational Developers Network in Higher Education, Pittsburgh, PA.
- Polich, S. (2008). *Do faculty members who express learning-centered epistemological beliefs have learning-centered teaching practices?* Presentation at the annual meeting of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, Windsor, Ontario.
- Watwood, W. B. (2008). *Tastes delicious: Instructional uses of social bookmarking.* Presentation at eLearning 2008, St. Petersburg, FL.

### **Community Engagement**

The CTE has engaged in several community engagement initiatives over the last academic year. The most significant of these has been an emerging partnership between the CTE and the Office of Community Engagement (OCE). This partnership has resulted in a number of key outcomes that have the potential of significantly enhancing VCU's community engagement programs. A key development in this partnership was the co-development of an institution-wide faculty development plan that was the direct result of our participation in a *Community Engaged Scholarship Faculty Development charrette* in Chapel Hill, North Carolina in May of 2008. The charrette, sponsored by the Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, sought applications from institutions all over the country. Only twenty institutions were accepted and VCU was one of them. Each institution put together a team of four individuals from their campus to attend the charrette. VCU's team was the only team that included a faculty development specialist. Other community engagement outcomes from the 2007-8 academic year are below.

- A 3-part workshop series for VCU faculty members who are interested in developing teaching, learning, or research opportunities with community partnerships. This workshop series emerged from a partnership with the OCE.

- A second community partnership was forged from a CTE small grant in the fall of 2007. Dr. Seth Liebewitz from the University College teaches a version of a health careers exploration course in the Cosby High School Health Sciences Specialty Center. This partnership includes over a dozen entities including the University College, the Center on Health Disparities, MCV Campus, and Admissions Offices from nine of the health sciences at MCV, the Office of Community Engagement, the Virginia Mentoring Partnership, the Chesterfield Board of Education and Cosby High School. The CTE provided support and training for Dr. Liebewitz on using an Audience Response System (ARS) for promoting student engagement and active learning.
- A third partnership developed between the CTE and the Army Logistics Management College at Fort Lee Virginia. The CTE staff provided consultations to members of the ALMC on best practices in faculty development and integrating learning-centered teaching into faculty and staff training, as well as student teaching.

### **Challenges**

The CTE faces some unique challenges heading into the 2008 – 2009 academic year. These challenges are briefly describe below:

- 1) The CTE remains relatively small unit that has university-wide responsibilities for faculty development. Our challenge in an organization as large and diverse as VCU is to be able to address a broad range of teaching needs and interests, while continuing to build a vibrant academic community that bridges schools and departments.
- 2) The start of the 2008 – 2009 academic year will see the CTE in a new physical location; its third home in four years. Promoting the CTE in a post-move environment and raising faculty awareness of our new office space will be an important challenge for us. The CTE location in the Cabell Library was a *common ground* for students and faculty alike, and visits to the library were often opportunities for casual visits to the CTE. Again, we face the challenge of creating both the formal and casual opportunities for VCU faculty to connect with and engage in the many activities and services provided by the CTE.

### **2008 – 2009 Goals**

In reflecting on strategic university initiatives and considering the unique mission of the CTE, the following goals have been identified for the 2008 – 2009 academic year:

- 1) Support VCU's strategic vision for becoming a learning-centered research university.
  - The CTE will model learning-centered practice through delivery of its faculty development activities (workshops, institutes and programs).
  - The CTE will showcase VCU faculty engaged in learning-centered practices through a variety of web-based and print media.

- The CTE will support faculty efforts to engage in learning-centered practices through its activities and programs.

2) Promote, support and engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL).

- The CTE will promote awareness and understanding of the value of SoTL among schools, departments and individual faculty members at VCU.
- The CTE will support faculty efforts to engage SoTL through a variety of programs and activities.
- The CTE will engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning through publication efforts and presentations at professional conferences.