Colleagues in Community:

Faculty Building Collaborative Environments

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Abstract

Colleagues in Community describes faculty building collaborative environments. It emphasizes faculty collaborative interaction for sharing teaching and learning experiences as a community. The framework for this sharing encompasses our lives as faculty -- the work, students, and organizational systems in which we find ourselves. This framework is slowly shifting from an instruction-based relationship to a new paradigm of faculty and students as members of a learning community. Many faculty within the Embry-Riddle Extended Campus (EC) community have begun to make this shift. Some excellent examples are presented of EC faculty efforts toward community development.

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Community Paradigm

What Pat Hutchings (1996) called "Making Teaching Community Property" and Parker Palmer (1998) has referred to as "Learning in Community: The Conversation of Colleagues," I call *Colleagues in Community*. My assumption is that such communities are different from the way college faculty currently operate. In theory, these cooperative communities are part of a migration in which faculty view themselves, their teaching, and their organizations as moving from the old "Instruction Paradigm" to the new "Learning Paradigm" (Barr & Tagg, 1995).

In the old paradigm, "educational institutions are full of divisive structures" (Palmer, 1998, p. 36). Faculty members teach classes, conduct research, advise students, sit on university committees, and perform community service. In the institutional world of teaching, research, and

service, "the three are rarely assigned equal merit. Research and publication dominate" (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991, p. 1:4). In the world of promotion, tenure, and long-term recognition, there is little motivation for professors to increase teaching skills and performance. "We believe that the academic community will have to reconsider some of its priorities if faculty are going to be willing to commit time and energy to instructional improvement programs. That said, we are heartened to find there are ways to enhance the likelihood of faculty participation in such programs" (Keig & Waggoner, 1994, p. 133).

Faculty do participate and interact with one another by sharing research experiences with colleagues in the department or research center, by presenting at conferences and workshops, and by publishing findings for others to share and emulate. For the most part, faculty enjoy their work; 68% of full-time instructional faculty and staff were satisfied with their workload (Kirshstein, Matheson, Jing, & Pelavin, 1997). Within the collegiate environment, the rewards of faculty work go to the individual, although the institution and unit also benefit from the success.

The current organizational system emphasizes the individual, and this is especially true for classroom teaching. Instruction given in isolation is reinforced by the teaching/learning and department/program structures in which most universities operate and "that rarely communicate with one another" (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p. 19). Isolation helps to keep

faculty sheltered in their own classrooms, not venturing into the domain of others. This system is referred to as the Instruction Paradigm, with one teacher per classroom and defined class times/sessions. "In the Instruction Paradigm, a college aims to transfer or deliver knowledge from faculty to students; it offers courses and degree programs and seeks to maintain a high quality of instruction within them, mostly by assuring that faculty stay current in their fields..." (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p. 15).

Further, the focus on the individual fosters the behavior that "in the classroom, we close the door on our colleagues... we claim it as a virtue called *academic freedom*" (Palmer, 1998, p. 142). Individualism under the guise of academic freedom serves to isolate learning. Individual faculty members may not be comfortable consulting their peers for ways to improve teaching because it suggests inability as well as vulnerability. It may be difficult for faculty who view themselves as experts to admit the need for and actually to ask for help with teaching.

"The view that those who know can teach is part of a paradigm of teaching that is labeled as the 'old' paradigm" (Johnson et al., 1991, p. 1:4). College faculty often begin their teaching careers with little formal knowledge of how to operate in the classroom. Much of their education may have focused on learning content knowledge and developing research skills. Any techniques on how to teach likely developed from prior experience and an appointment as a graduate teaching assistant. Formal instruction in teaching at the college-level

may or may not have been provided. This has resulted in a cadre of faculty who teach the same way they have been taught -- by lecture, preparing research assignments, and evaluation through end-of-course objective testing.

Seldom do faculty share classroom concerns beyond the exchange of anecdotes or concerns with problem students. What is needed is a sharing of teaching and learning experiences to make classrooms true learning laboratories (Cross, 1990). Sharing opens up the learning opportunities and emphasizes the shift from classroom-centered to student-centered learning that "requires a constant search for new structures and methods that work better for student learning and success..." (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p. 20). The goal is more than to place new methods into old structures, but also to define new structures based upon desired student outcomes, standards, and assessments.

These new structures develop learning organizations for students and faculty. The goal is to build community that makes a broader range of learning available to all. The faculty workload of teaching, community service, and advancing knowledge through research implies gathering and disseminating of knowledge -- a broad sharing of learning in community. Already, through cooperative structures and collaborative leadership, community building is becoming part of the current organizational mix.

Students in Community

There is a growing literature on cooperative/collaborative learning efforts.

These strategies are based on the activities of students and faculty incorporating group or team exercises in their classrooms (Millis & Cottell, 1998; Foyle, 1995; Johnson et al., 1991). The students are the ones doing the cooperating/collaborating, rather than the faculty. For faculty to encourage and structure student collaboration is one beginning step toward the community emphasis of the new paradigm. The new paradigm of teaching is to help students construct their knowledge in an active way while working cooperatively with classmates so that students' talents and competencies are developed" (Johnson et al., 1991, p. 1:12). Students have opportunities to become active participants engaged in their learning as compared to passive listeners of a lecture.

This trend in teaching using collaborative techniques helps to incorporate a larger variety of active learning methods so that students have opportunities to apply those skills needed both in their careers and for good citizenship. In the classroom, teamwork is being encouraged and practiced as a means for students to learn cooperative skills they will use on-the-job in committees, task teams, project teams, TQM groups, and general problem-solving activities.

Additional skill development activities involve the use of practical, hands-on, and critical thinking exercises such as case analysis, critical thinking and analytical exercises, writing, and presentations. There have been many efforts at across-the-curriculum development of skill sets by establishing overarching objectives for student learning and outcomes. Research

over the past twenty years has demonstrated the relationships between effective problem-solving and a variety of academic domains (Dougherty & Fantaske, 1996).

A specific example of enhanced skills that faculty are teaching to students can be seen in the movement toward the increased use of technology in the classroom in all forms. The fear has been that technology will replace faculty. Faculty using more technology find that it furnishes additional teaching techniques (PowerPoint, CD-ROM, etc.), provides avenues for reaching students who have different learning styles, develops new skill sets, and allows for practice and application in many areas in addition to computer usage. The technology is contributing to a wider range of options in how students receive and process information. What faculty are noticing is that they are changing from the role of information provider to the role of information facilitator. The Learning Paradigm suggests that a "faculty member is an inter-actor -- a coach interacting with a team... that of designing and then playing a team game... faculty create new and better 'games,' ones that generate more and better learning" (Barr & Tagg, 1994, p. 24).

Faculty in Community

In their classrooms, faculty are now incorporating active learning, applied skills, and an emphasis on collaborative projects. It is ironic, however, that faculty more often teach the team concept than practice it. The current nature and structure of teaching make it a one-to-many activity, and few venture outside that model. Indeed, there

are few structured opportunities for sharing pedagogical and classroom resources in a viable manner that allow faculty to utilize these options on an ongoing basis. If collaboration is viewed as a good technique for students, should not faculty serve as role models for that technique? If a desired outcome is increasing student participation and learning, does it follow that increased learning and satisfaction could also be derived for faculty if faculty were to collaborate in their teaching?

There are many efforts in which faculty collaboration takes place: research and scholarly activities, curriculum and program design, and academic committees. In these instances, faculty expect participation as part of their personal and professional contributions and satisfaction. Hutchings believes that "like scholarly research, our courses are acts of intellectual invention, and our teaching of those courses enacts the ways we think about and pursue our fields of study" (Hutchings, 1996, p. 1). Thus teaching is seen as part of the essence of all faculty work, that teaching and research are part of the same continuum. This continuum -- stretching toward a new paradigm, holds that teaching is scholarly work with "the need for collegial exchange and publicness... [and] that faculty take professional responsibility for the quality of their work as teachers" (Hutchings, 1996, p. 2).

Palmer believes that faculty collaboration on teaching does not occur because "we rarely talk with each other about teaching at any depth -- and why

should we when we have nothing more than 'tips, tricks, and techniques' to discuss" (Palmer, 1998, p. 11). Palmer discusses the need for faculty to be personally involved with their teaching and establishing "connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students" (Palmer, 1998, p. 11). As part of a responsible learning community, Palmer believes that "involvement in a community of pedagogical discourse is more than a voluntary option for individuals who seek support and opportunities for growth. It is a professional obligation that educational institutions should expect of those who teach..." (Palmer, 1998, p. 144). In setting that expectation, faculty and academic institutions move toward a new paradigm of colleagues in collaborative communities.

It is probably not possible to change or revamp overnight the current "old" paradigm into the learning paradigm of *Colleagues in Community*. The one-instructor-to-a-classroom structure remains the norm in most college and university settings. However, if "teaching is a scholarly activity, with all that implies, then faculty must play a central role in ensuring and improving its quality" (Hutchings, 1996, p. 3).

Faculty are taking on this important role of improving teaching through the use of collaborative student and faculty approaches, and making their efforts part of community and scholarly knowledge. Davis (1995) explores many options and presents illustrations for interdisciplinary courses and team teaching. Hutchings (1996) documents

the AAHE Teaching Initiative that encompasses twelve university projects and provides model programs for peer collaboration and peer review. Masterson discusses learning communities of linking two or more courses around a theme, but most importantly, of linking faculty and students in a new way to run a university (Masterson, 1998, pp. 8-9). These activities encourage the transformation to a community-centered environment.

Acting in community encompasses inclusiveness of people as well as collaboration on processes. It extrapolates restructuring and reengineering the collegiate environment into a community of learning and cooperation, where people and processes develop around the sharing of experiences. Partnerships develop without structures, and structures support communities of scholars. Through sharing, all have a larger stake in the outcomes of the whole as well as those of the individual. The whole is larger than the sum of its parts. Community learning enhances the learning of each -- and of all.

Learning in Community

Within the Embry-Riddle Extended Campus (EC) community, excellent examples of faculty collaboration already exist. The goal is to make these efforts community knowledge, to share them and thereby learn from them, to add to them, and to come together to improve teaching and the quality of student learning. Many of these examples may be similar to experiences of faculty at other universities. But the

nature of the Extended Campus, with over 100 teaching sites, poses a unique challenge to bringing faculty into the community fold.

Embry-Riddle=s Extended Campus stretches across the United States and into Europe. There are faculty in each region and center who are on full-time contract, but most faculty serve in an adjunct role. This geographically diverse, part-time nature of the faculty is not unique in higher education, and it poses some difficulties in developing a community environment for those adjuncts in the various centers. (The two residential campuses of Embry-Riddle, one in the southeast and the other in the southwest, pose additional challenges to faculty collaboration.) The development of common Course Outlines, the Faculty Academic Orientation Manual (Wheeler, 1996), and other cross-campus and center teaching aids have provided assurances that faculty follow the same guidelines in their classrooms.

The bigger challenge is building a sense of community. Currently, students often sit in classrooms isolated far from their peers. Likewise, faculty have few opportunities to share their triumphs and tragedies. Promoting the community vision and taking steps to make it a reality build the organization into a collaborative environment that can better provide learning opportunities for faculty and students. This vision incorporates, but also goes beyond, the concept of a multi-modal seamless university. It goes beyond the extension of Distance Learning (DLX) and listserv communications. It offers the benefit of being included in a community of learning

for students and faculty that is the ultimate goal and outcome. There is often the necessity for faculty and administrators to concern themselves with the bureaucratic "how to" of implementing new learning techniques and structures. However, if faculty take the lead and begin the journey to collaborative and community ways of operating, the administrators and structures then must accommodate these actions, and thus the community grows.

To have this community of Embry-Riddle colleagues enhances the opportunities for Extended Campus students and faculty. Faculty and students benefit from the active, participatory learning of others including cooperative/collaborative methods. There are many ways to enhance teaching, from sharing instructional resources to collaborative performance with other faculty. Such efforts can be between two instructors, merely sharing or cooperating on a small project, even if the emphasis in each class is different; this could set up a cooperative and/or competitive environment for the students, making the outcome dependent on additional factors.

In a simple instance, team teaching could occur with two similar classes, where faculty share one lesson plan during the same term. When it comes to developing a computer-based lesson plan, the preparation time can often be greater than for that of lecture. If a software simulation package is being used, the entire package must be tested in order to know the options and learning that will take place. Lessons need to be developed and taught: surfing/searching the

net, finding relevant information and downloading it, developing presentations, using e-mail and web pages, creating spreadsheets and charts, etc. In a case where one faculty member is already familiar with a program or exercise, sharing it with another faculty member and another class enhances the learning of all.

The Airline simulation (Smith & Golden, 1994), as recently used, presents a case in point. This simulation is appropriate for several undergraduate or graduate level courses, as it looks at many aspects of running an airline with different areas that can be emphasized. In the graduate business policy class, there was a focus on developing a corresponding strategic plan to guide the financial decisions of the game; the simulation was also used simultaneously in the undergraduate airline management class with more emphasis on the game decisions. It could easily work for classes with planning, management, or financial agendas, to suggest a few.

The sharing of the Airline simulation between the two classes took place in the following manner. One of the two professors had used this simulation before, and attended a session of the other class to provide explanatory background material on operating the simulation. Teams were developed in each of the two classes and these competed within that class. In addition, just past the mid-point of the term, each class had its own all-class briefing session at which time the students re-developed the scenario and financial statements beginning with the first period.

These two class-developed airline scenarios were then compared in a friendly competition! The students gained valuable knowledge and insights from the briefing sessions, information which they then re-used to complete their own team's operation. Both classes gained expertise from the briefings, and further developed their competitiveness and their spirit of camaraderie.

A shared experience using technology is also the case with ShareVision (and the new SIDE version), whereby one instructor can teach at two or more sites simultaneously. This technology allows for both audio and visual two-way communication. It is an excellent example of putting students into a larger learning community, but faculty need to broaden the faculty outreach use of this method. In this and other ways, technology opens doors and sends previously unavailable experts directly into the classroom, developing shared lesson plans across sites for the same class.

For two instructors to share an assignment does not require them to be teaching similar courses; often the emphasis is skill development based upon prior knowledge. The sequencing of classes from one term to another term promotes subject and application building and can be included into patterns of class exercises. Faculty could better coordinate the shared "requirements" for level of skill development -- computing, critical thinking, writing -- and express that growth in these areas will be expected across the curriculum. The EC Faculty Senate adoption of common skill

objectives for students promotes this concept (Clark, 1997), as does the Computing Across The Curriculum initiative (Clark, 1993).

A good example of sharing an assignment occurred recently between an undergraduate calculus class and a graduate meteorology class. The meteorology class researched an on-line source graphic that depicted the temperature changes that served as the thermal generator for El Niño weather patterns. The calculus students, divided into four groups, used various methods to compute area, accuracy of scale, and latitude/longitude to provide potential energy computations. The benefits were a perceived collaboration among students in both classes, use of real-world material across subjects and levels of study, and the spirited and informative groups efforts that occurred. (M. Warner, personal communication, May 2, 1998). Two classes were able to share resources which added to the knowledge and expertise of both.

Since many instructional and learning aids are borrowed or developed, the sharing of these resources can provide benefits to a greater number of faculty and students. A wide range of exercises, case studies, videos, and articles that are used by instructors present valuable opportunities for cooperative activities. Collaboration might be between two faculty, or involve a group of faculty in a department or college-wide collaboration across disciplines and regional EC centers. Such efforts could be for an entire course or several courses, a sequence of courses, or an interdisciplinary approach

to a core of courses required of many programs. Indeed, "in the Learning Paradigm... interdisciplinary (or nondisciplinary) task groups and design teams become a major operating mode" (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p. 24).

Students benefit from collaborative learning in the classroom, so why not also use students as resources to be shared among classes? A planned cooperative effort could take place between classes whereby other students become an audience for presentations. Students could also serve as references, complete surveys, or provide classroom/project information to other students.

Another source of classroom expertise is to bring in a guest speaker to broaden everyone's knowledge and put the theory into a real-world focus. Excellent sources of guest speakers are (1) to use other faculty as experts, and (2) to call upon other faculty for a reference of a speaker on a specific topic. Indeed, it should also be possible to have more than one class of students share in a guest presentation; a small amount of coordination on the part of two or more faculty members can develop such a combined presentation. Speakers who present talks on-campus could also be seen live at EC center classrooms through the use of distance technologies. The sharing of experts and expertise is as expandable as our minds can envision.

Journey to Community

We can begin this journey to learning communities by using the expertise of all of us who are faculty to expand from an instruction paradigm to a learning community. In this transformation, each of us must seek ways to be inclusive of faculty and students. We can connect the themes of teaching and technique because "as we learn more about who we are, we can learn techniques that reveal rather than conceal the personhood from which good teaching comes" (Palmer, 1998, p. 24).

When we open our teaching to the community, it makes the possibilities greater for us all. Faculty meetings can be shared time in which we discuss new ideas for involving ourselves in active learning cooperative arrangements. At the last faculty meeting for our local EC centers, we began the task of developing a list of individual expertise, interests, and e-mails to be shared among the group. Colleagues need to know each other and what they are about in order to begin the collaborative process. Sharing knowledge and personhood begins the dialogue.

The cooperative movement among faculty has begun, at Embry-Riddle and elsewhere. We discuss the positive outcomes of faculty who have learned to connect intellect, research, learning methods, and the "heart" to learning in community with students and other faculty. We see the actions of colleagues who are already taking steps and working in community with each other. For every small community that develops, individuals stretch the system to a new dimension. Stretching the ways we think and act about teaching, learning, and being a community hastens the journey to the paradigm of *Colleagues in Community.*

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