

Teaching Matters

Center for Teaching Excellence

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Community

When I describe CTE's work to colleagues at other universities, they are often surprised and impressed with KU faculty members' deep engagement and high quality work in teaching. They are even more astounded to learn that the Center has only three full-time employees (including the director)—a fraction of the size of teaching centers at many peer institutions. These enquiring colleagues all want to know: What is the Bernstein mojo? Would we please share the secret?

There actually is no "secret," and that is the beauty of the model that Dan Bernstein has perfected for KU's Center. CTE's primary role is to create and support communities of colleagues in which teaching is visible and the subject of intellectual exchange and collaboration. This is a model that we should all know quite well. After all, the research enterprise depends on networks of scholars who share, review one another's ideas, and contribute to the broader knowledge base in the discipline. The early vision and leadership of CTE astutely recognized the value of scholarly dialogue about teaching (see Sandra Gautt's article on pages 4–5), and this type of activity has thrived under Dan's leadership over the last 12 years.

Andrea Greenhoot, Psychology/CTE

Dan's signature has been his superb proficiency in building community and promoting conversations that advance teaching on campus. The cornerstone of his approach has been the Faculty Fellows system, which along with his own regular teaching ensures that CTE is led by peers who are in the classroom, managing the same sorts of teaching, research, and service responsibilities as their colleagues. Peer Triads grew out of Dan's nationally-recognized work on the peer review of teaching, transforming the peer review process into sustained, shared inquiry into learning. The Course Portfolio Gallery is the showpiece of all of this work. Course portfolios make teaching and learning visible at KU and beyond (and to an international audience) and create a virtual network for the development and expansion of innovative and evidence-based practices.

This is just a sampling of what Dan has accomplished as director of CTE, and we are grateful for all of it. To celebrate his work, we are hosting a reception in his honor on Tuesday, May 13 from 4 to 5:30 pm at the Adams Alumni Center. If you would like to attend, please RSVP to cte@ku.edu.

Reflections on the journey

Dan Bernstein, CTE

My time at the KU Center for Teaching Excellence has been a fascinating journey of inquiry. Since my arrival in 2002, I have enjoyed learning about many examples of extraordinarily high quality teaching and learning that can be found on our campus. I continue to find colleagues who are bringing their intellectual skills and focus to asking questions about their teaching and examining how well their students are learning.

In my first year at CTE I mostly tried to learn from my colleagues about teaching at KU. I listened to our advisory board (TEAM), and I met with many colleagues through an ongoing Faculty Seminar and the spring workshop we call the Best Practices Institute (BPI). In addition I visited with about 60 department chairs, and I read a lot of past CTE publications. I discovered that in general KU faculty members have a strong identity as good teachers who care about that portion of our professional portfolio, a quality later found very remarkable by former Provost Richard Lariviere.

Once my feet were on solid ground, TEAM supported inviting colleagues to undertake small-scale inquiry into the effects of their teaching. We organized Faculty Seminar and BPI around asking questions about challenges in learning and possible solutions. With help from our graduate students, faculty colleagues began trying incremental innovations in teaching and tracking student performance to see if the changes were useful. We also had two service learning seminars that prepared faculty members to have students engage local service resources, and they reported how students connected course work with first hand

lessons learned in the community. It was a simple step to make this work visible, first to each other and then to the KU campus. Our portfolio gallery of faculty projects shared excellent innovations, aligning CTE work with the spirit of the Hall Center for the Humanities and not as the woodshed behind which bad teachers are sent for re-training. In this work we discovered that there are faculty members ready to bring their intellectual skills to advanced development in a new domain.

About that time faculty governance wanted to examine how teaching is evaluated at KU, and I was asked to chair a task force on that topic. Working with a dozen or so excellent colleagues, we engaged as many people as we could in a conversation about what an optimal system would

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look like. After two years of dialogue, governance and the Chancellor approved a report that recognized three voices in the evaluation process: students' ratings, peers' reviews of teaching and learning, and the faculty members' own reflections on the evidence of student understanding. All in all, the process urged KU to move beyond perceptions of presentation skill and ask whether informed teaching practices were helping students gain a rich and useful understanding of the course material. Criteria for top campus teaching awards now focus on such reflective inquiry into learning, not merely testimonials. The task force discovered that in principle a conversation about excellence in teaching can move forward without changing the relative weighting of research and teaching in professional life at KU.

Lariviere greatly admired the online portfolios of individual faculty members' work on improv-

ing teaching and learning, and he invited entire programs and departments to join CTE in a similar inquiry into students' progress. About a dozen units successfully asked good questions about their curricula and found useful answers by looking at students' performance, often in a capstone course or experience. The resulting portfolios represented excellent intellectual analysis, and they stood as a model of how an ideal learning community would function. After the provost left KU, TEAM asked us to stop the unit level project for fear that CTE had been turned into the Assessment Police. With the emergence of new leadership directions, we re-entered the field last spring with Ying Xiong as our new colleague for development of useful ways to document student learning. She works with individuals and departments on designing assignments to track the goals of their programs, as well as the KU Core. With Ying onboard for nearly a year, we have discovered that KU faculty members want very much that students become proficient in the fields they study, so there is real engagement when the evidence used makes sense to faculty members.

The most recent major teaching initiative with a CTE component is redesigning courses to include more time during class engaged in active learning and addressing key questions and problems in a field. In addition to our close collaboration with the Center for Online and Distance Learning, we are also working with the new program to place Teaching Fellows in select departments. These colleagues are recent PhDs who have three-year appointments to work with instructors of conventional lecture courses to introduce active learning in class time and shift

information transfer out of class. Andrea Greenhoo has been working with the Teaching Fellows both in their host departments and in a larger community of more than 50 faculty members who are tracking that work and including similar innovations in their own teaching. We have discovered that this larger community (called C21) has a sustained interest in collaboration and shared inquiry into new forms of reaching our highest goals for students' learning.

We have now entered a time when collaboration on teaching with colleagues outside KU is a common occurrence, just as in our research work.

Just as in research, we need to be aware that teaching can be done as serious intellectual work. And we have discovered that our colleagues have an interest in how others solve the challenges in effective teaching, so we can enhance our own practices and effectiveness.

The colleagues who designed the KU Core and the First-year Experience and Seminars drew heavily on what they learned from experience at similar universities. KU is part of a consortium of research universities dedicated to expanding the adoption of 21st century methods of

instruction, and we have had collaborative grants to support teaching initiatives with a dozen different institutions. CTE offers support for travel to teaching conferences, even for faculty members who are not giving a paper; we want to bring to campus all the good ideas about teaching that our colleagues can find. Just as in research, we need to be aware that teaching can be done as serious intellectual work. And we have discovered that our colleagues have an interest in how others solve the challenges in effective teaching, so we can enhance our own practices and effectiveness. This is a terrific time to be around CTE.

Zeitgeist

Sandra Gautt, Professor Emerita
Former Vice Provost for Faculty Development

The University of Kansas has a strong tradition and commitment to quality teaching. There were efforts such as teaching awards, central administration continuing to teach in their disciplines, and establishment of the Teaching Commons Committee. Yet teaching remained largely invisible within the context of KU as a research institution. While quality teaching was expected, the message was clear that the research mission had priority. During the early 1990s, a national dialogue emerged around teaching as a scholarly activity and the synergy between teaching and research, particularly in research institutions. KU was not a part of this national dialogue, yet these initiatives would become instrumental in establishing the vision and direction for the Center for Teaching Excellence.

When a position devoted exclusively to faculty development was established in Academic Affairs and I was lured away from another institution, one of my responsibilities was to interface with the Teaching Commons Committee. This committee, established by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, was comprised of faculty members who had won campus-wide teaching awards and charged with identifying ways the teaching environment at KU could be enhanced. The initial focus was largely on the physical environment and faculty recognition for high quality teaching. The committee discussions provided me insight into the campus teaching culture. I was intrigued with the breadth of the discussions around teach-

ing and learning. This group became the nucleus for conversations around establishing a campus teaching center.

Based on my experiences with teaching centers at other research institutions and an understanding of the culture that was unique to KU, I had a very clear vision for what a center should be here. Nationally, centers vary in their focus, with the majority having an emphasis on skill development and consultation for faculty improvement of

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teaching. While important, it was clear that this would not be an effective model at KU. A more appropriate fit for KU would be building on the institution's deep commitment to quality teaching and its identity as a research institution. Teaching needed to become

visible with faculty conversations reflecting the national dialogue of viewing teaching from a perspective similar to how we think and talk about our research. The conversations in the Teaching Commons Committee provided an excellent base. The Hall Center for the Humanities provided a model for the Center's vision within KU's faculty culture.

Fulfilling the vision for the Center would be a challenge, but one I readily accepted. To achieve the vision, a strong foundation was essential—Center leadership, consistently strong fiscal and campus administrative commitment, physical environment, and structures that would engage the broad faculty constituency. Renovation of Hoch, renamed Budig Hall, provided a unique opportunity for the Center to be located in the heart of

campus. Fiscal commitments by the Provost supported the core of the Center and its work.

We have been fortunate to have had Center leadership who were the right individuals for the Center's stage of development. Following an internal search, Fred Rodriguez was appointed the first Director. During his four-year tenure, he laid the strong foundation for the Center's programming and engagement of faculty, including the departmental Ambassadors and the campus-wide Teaching Summit. When he moved to the position of Associate Dean in the School of Education, we decided to broaden this search to include both internal and external candidates. An external search for the relatively new Center was challenging, given the varying emphases of other centers and clarity of what would be needed to move the Center from its embryonic stage forward. We were extremely fortunate to identify and recruit Dan Bernstein, a faculty member at the University of Nebraska. Dan was both a scholar and award-winning teacher as well as engaged in the broader national initiatives around the scholarship of teaching. His visibility in these initiatives and work with a colleague at Nebraska on peer evaluation and teaching were precisely the kind of leadership to move KU faculty into the broader dialogues on teaching that were envisioned.

Reflections on the Center today

Reflecting on the changes that have occurred around teaching at KU, the Center has been instrumental in supporting and/or increasing the visibility of teaching. Teaching is now a campus conversation. The growth, enthusiasm, and engagement of such a range of faculty across disciplines, the work in CTE's Gallery, and faculty and graduate student participation in the annual Teaching Summit tell me that we have achieved the goal of making KU's teaching culture visible. The Center is viewed as a key participant and often leader in national and campus discussions

and initiatives around teaching and learning including assessment, representation of teaching for evaluation, and dialogues on blended or flipped classes, for example. Faculty and graduate students see the Center as a place for engaging in discussions that make teaching visible within a research-oriented environment; it's a place where there is a strong synergy between teaching and research, where the intellectual inquiry and critique that characterizes research is applied to one's teaching and student learning. This perspective encourages faculty to think deeply about teaching in much the same way we want all students to think deeply about learning. The Center has become a place where faculty engage in discussions and think about their teaching in the way they would normally do about their research.

The future

Over the last 10 years, the Center has achieved my initial vision as a place where faculty can engage intellectually with each other and discuss teaching and learning across disciplines. In the future, I see the Center's direction as a continuation of its current trajectory. However, the following hallmarks of the Center are critical for the future: faculty-driven and learning-centered reflecting shared inquiry into learning, synergy between teaching and research, leadership in campus teaching and learning initiatives and conversations, engagement in national initiatives on teaching and learning, and alignment of its strategic directions with institutional priorities around student learning.

Quality teaching is clearly a strong component of the KU academic culture. The Center has made the scholarship of teaching—how faculty think about their teaching and about their students' learning—a visible part of that culture.

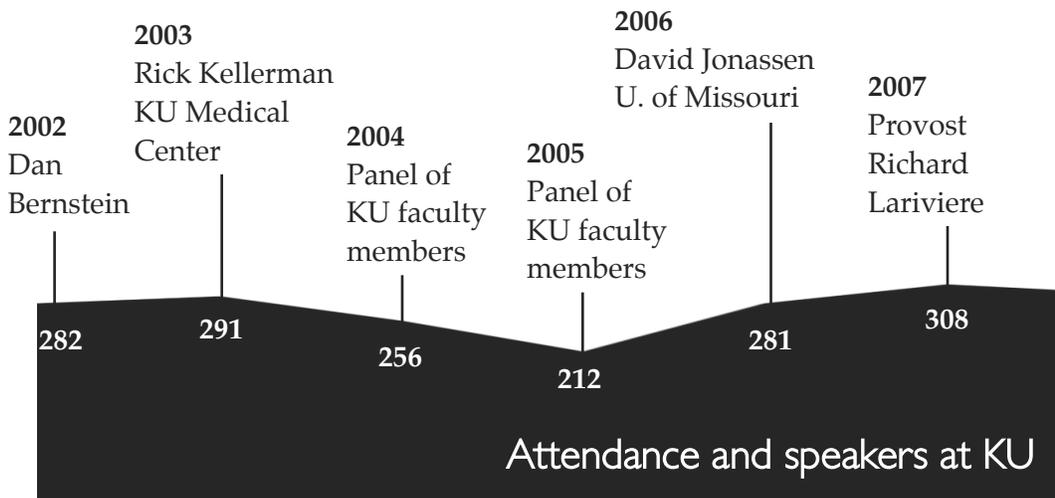
Bernstein



During his 12 years as leader of the Center for Teaching Excellence, Dan Bernstein has played a central role in strengthening the culture of teaching and learning across the University. His work has involved everything from overseeing the annual Teaching Summit and representing the University at international conferences, to promoting effective teaching and learning through workshops, teaching portfolios, individual conversations, and carefully crafted responses to unsolicited email.

Dan has been an advocate for proving the effectiveness of teaching and has been a leader in the scholarship of teaching and learning. Dan likes to see proof, preferably in numbers, so here's a look at the Bernstein years in Dan's favorite format: data.

96
Teaching portfolios created since 2004



Moves to KU from Univ. of Nebraska. Begins as director of CTE and professor of psychology.

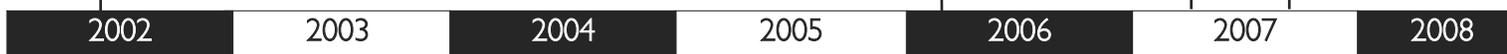
Publication of *Making Teaching and Learning Visible*



J.M. Young Academic Adviser Award, KU

← Project director, \$750,000 Pew grant for external review of teaching (1999–2004)

Co-principal investigator, \$300,000 NSF grant on ethics education in science and engineering



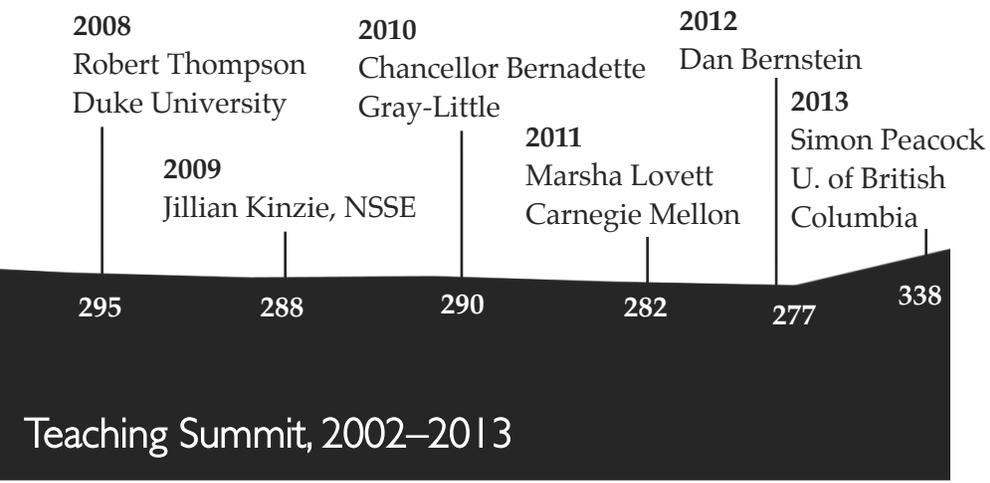
in Data

Doug Ward, Journalism
Dan Spencer, Business



Notable guests at CTE workshops

- Barbara Walvoord
- Pat Hutchings, Carnegie Found.
- Michael Palmer, U. of Virginia
- José Bowen, SMU
- Steve Chew, Samford
- Jay Phelan, UCLA
- Steve Pollock, U. of Colorado
- John Bean, Seattle University
- Randy Bass, Georgetown
- David Pace, Indiana Univ.
- Heidi Elmendorf, Georgetown
- Sherry Linkon, Youngstown St.
- David Whetten, BYU
- David Schoem, Michigan
- Lendol Calder, Augustana
- Dennis Jacobs, Notre Dame



165

Faculty members have participated in CTE's annual Best Practices Institute since 2002. BPI generally leads to course redesign.

15

Faculty members have worked as Faculty Fellows at CTE since the program began

\$1,536,800

Amount of teaching-related grants Bernstein has helped oversee in his career

Fred Keller Award for Contributions to Education, American Psychological Association

President-elect, International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Phased retirement

Principal investigator; \$128,000 Spencer Foundation grant for educational improvement



END NOTE

Where we were, are, and need to be: Interpreting the three Bernstein Conditionals

Ann Cudd, Vice Provost & Dean of Undergraduate Studies

A decade ago, KU prided itself on its traditional approach to high quality teaching. This consisted in lectures by deep thinkers at the front of the classroom who distilled the fundamentals of their disciplines into hour-long lectures and motivated students to repeat those lessons on exams. Tradition is overrated; our students and world have changed. Innovation and problem solving are the skills in high demand, and our teaching methods must evolve with the needs of today's world.

In the past decade, an insidious revolution in teaching has been fomented here and has brought a new regime to power. This is the revolution of teaching as intellectual work, engineered through backward design to achieve clear, intentional student learning outcomes. It began with Dan Bernstein's patient but insistent logic that can be summarized in three conditionals:

1. If teaching is as important to the university's mission as research, both teaching and research should be evaluated and rewarded with similar rigor;
2. If intellectual work requires serious peer review and teaching is intellectual work, then teaching requires serious peer review;
3. If standards for excellence in research are to be set by the discipline, then standards for excellence in teaching are to be set by the discipline.

His practice has been to present us with provocative conditionals and let us draw our own conclusions.

Under Dan's leadership, the Center for Teaching Excellence has provided opportunities for faculty to follow this logic. Best Practice Institutes, the CTE gallery of portfolios of intellectually engaged teaching and learning, and a departmental teaching award that asks departments to think of their degree programs as a connected path to culminating learning objectives have created teachers (and administrators) across KU who understand backward design and speak the language of learning outcomes. Rubrics for assessing those outcomes have become common for grading and for assessing skills within the major. The KU Core is the signal achievement of this revolution, bringing the logic of student learning outcomes to general education, and clearly communicating its rationale to our students, faculty, and staff.

A tipping point has been reached, and teaching at KU will not go back to its sage-on-the-stage model of the past. But we must not rest on the laurels of successful change. As we go forward, faculty and administrators must keep repeating the Bernstein conditionals and continue to evolve our teaching to meet the learning outcomes that our disciplines, students, and the needs of a changing world demand.

Teaching Matters is published by the Center for Teaching Excellence. We welcome your comments and suggestions. Editor: Judy Eddy

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