

# *Reflections from the Classroom*

2016-17

Volume 19

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A publication of the Center for Teaching Excellence

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# Overview

This volume of *Reflections from the Classroom* chronicles the first 20 years of the Center for Teaching Excellence. Our contributors are some of the key people who guided the Center during our creation and development. Sandra Gautt, former vice provost for faculty development, describes her vision for CTE and how it became a reality. Chris Hauffer—who served on CTE’s predecessor, the Teaching Commons Committee—sketches out the history of the campus group that laid the groundwork for the Center. Fred Rodriguez, CTE’s first director, provides an overview of the Center’s early foundational work. Dan Bernstein highlights shifts that took place during his tenure as director, which resulted in strategic growth for the Center. One of CTE’s Faculty Fellows, Dan Hirmas, outlines ways that CTE has influenced his teaching. Dea Greenhoot, our current director, describes some of the impact CTE has had, both within and outside the University.

A few of our contributors mentioned a group that has been an important part of CTE: our undergraduate and graduate student employees. Without them, we simply could not have done all that we have over the years. Our graduate assistants have been instrumental in the new GTA preparation program, both with its design and implementation, and their work as writing partners with faculty on portfolio and poster development has been a crucial part of that program’s success.

Finally, as some of you know, I’ve been a part of CTE since we first opened our doors in 1997. I’ve been fortunate to work with great leaders, who have patiently answered my questions, like these:

*Fred, are you sure we can pull off two major conferences in the same week?*

*Dan, I love the idea of an e-portfolio gallery—how is that going to look?*

*Dea, I’m stunned that you got the NSF grant; what do we do now?*

It will be wonderful to see what the next ten years brings.

Judy Eddy  
Editor





# Zeitgeist: The beginning of the 20-year journey *(and still counting)*

Sandra Gault

Professor Emerita, Former Vice Provost for Faculty Development

Over 20 years ago, the University of Kansas possessed a strong tradition and commitment to quality teaching as evidenced by numerous campus teaching awards, campus administrators engaged in teaching in their disciplines, establishment of a Teaching Commons Committee, and a general expectation for quality teaching. Yet as a major research university, the priority of the research mission was evident in its articulated identity, policies, and practices, with teaching remaining largely invisible. During the early 1990s, a national dialog emerged around teaching as a scholarly activity emphasizing the synergy between teaching and research, particularly in research institutions. KU was not a part of this national dialog, yet these initiatives would become instrumental in creating the zeitgeist for establishment of the Center for Teaching Excellence, particularly its vision, direction, and institutionalization into the KU culture.

When a position devoted to faculty development was estab-

lished in the Office of Academic Affairs in 1989 and I was lured away from another institution, my portfolio included liaison and later chair of the Teaching Commons Committee (TCC). Formed by the vice chancellor for academic affairs and composed of faculty recognized campus-wide for their excellent teaching, the committee was charged to develop strategies for enhancing the KU teaching environment.

[Our] approach would be to build on the synergy between the institution's deep commitment to high quality teaching and its identity as a research institution.

The initial focus was largely on upgrading physical classroom environments and increasing faculty recognition for high quality teaching. However, the committee's work provided me insight into the campus culture. I was intrigued with the breadth and depth of the discussions around teaching and learning. This group became the nucleus for conversations exploring establishment of a teaching center.

Based on my experiences with teaching centers at other research institutions and an understanding of the unique KU culture, I had a clear vision for what a KU center should be. Nationally, centers varied in their focus, with the majority having an emphasis on skill development and consultation to faculty to improve their teaching. That was important, but it was clear that this would not be an effective model for KU.

A more appropriate approach would be to build on the synergy between the institution's deep commitment to high quality teaching and its identity as a research institution. For example, the Hall Center for the Humanities provided a successful model within KU's faculty culture. Teaching needed to become visible with faculty conversations reflecting the national dialog of viewing teaching from a perspec-

tive similar to how they thought and talked about their research. The conversations in the TCC provided an excellent foundation in defining the vision. The following vision emerged: create communities of colleagues in which teaching is visible and the subject of intellectual exchange, and the communities reflect collaborative systems of support.

Moving from vision to reality within a complex institution would be a challenge, particularly when the outcomes would be a shift in the faculty culture around teaching and sustainability in an ever-changing university environment. Several factors were critical to implementing a vision that focused on making teaching community property and grounded in the scholarship of teaching. Engaging stakeholders (i.e., faculty and administrators) and emphasizing faculty ownership were initial conversations to ensure understanding of the synergy between teaching and research and the value of making teaching visible.

Strong ongoing fiscal and administrative commitment by the Office of Academic Affairs, later the Office of the Provost, were required for sustainability. Strategic placement of the Center reporting directly to the vice provost for faculty development reflected and sent a message to faculty of this commitment. This structure further reinforces the continuing commitment of base resources supporting the

Center's infrastructure. It was critical for the Center to have these funds to leverage endowment and grant funding to support growth that reflects changing needs. The Center's leadership, engagement of broad constituencies, faculty collaboration, alignment with important strategic priorities and support of outcomes, and national engagement and recognition have been instrumental in receiving this continuing commitment through three leadership changes in the Provost's office. Another strategic decision was identifying a place for the Center. Renovation of Hoch Auditorium, renamed Budig Hall, provided an opportunity for the Center to be located in the heart of campus.

Its strong leadership, administrative staff, and faculty and graduate students have influenced the Center's continuing evolution. While remaining true to the underlying principles and vision, the contributions of each of the directors have reflected a synergy between the growth of the center's programming, faculty engagement, and overall campus and national visibility. Fred Rodriguez, the first director, laid the framework for programming and faculty engagement. Jeff Aube, interim director from 2001–02, provided the foundation for the faculty's embrace of the intellectual pursuit of their teaching and students' learning. Over the course of his 12-year tenure as director, Dan Bernstein created

broader dialogues on reflective inquiry into teaching and student learning and participated in national initiatives around the scholarship of teaching. This led to CTE's national recognition for its work.

While the directors and staff have provided strong leadership, the achievements and impact of the Center are the result of the engagement and commitment of our faculty colleagues, including the Ambassadors, advisory board, and Faculty Fellows. These colleagues made and continue to make the vision a reality. They are the culture shift that has made teaching and student learning visible in their own disciplines and institutional policies and practices. They have embodied the synergy between teaching and research, and they transmit this institutional norm to new colleagues every year. Teaching and learning are now campus conversations, and reflective/intellectual inquiry into teaching and student learning are a part of the KU culture.

It is not often during a professional career in higher education that one has the opportunity to envision and see the change such as the culture shift that has occurred since the establishment of the Center for Teaching Excellence. While such change was a product of the zeitgeist 20 years ago, the Center today embodies that original vision in ways that were not imagined and remains poised for the future.



# The Teaching Commons Committee: Setting the stage for CTE

Christopher Haufler

Professor and Chair, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

Before the Center for Teaching Excellence was conceived, the Teaching Commons Committee (TCC) was sharpening the focus of the KU community on student learning. In 1990, then vice chancellor for academic affairs Del Brinkman established the committee and charged it to “examine and consider the wide range of issues affecting teaching, and recommend strategies to enhance the quality of teaching at the University of Kansas.” Brinkman himself served on the original committee, which was chaired by Don Green (School of Engineering), and included the recently hired (1989) assistant vice chancellor Sandra Gautt, Michael Young (Department of Philosophy, and director of the University Honors Program), David Shulenburger (School of Business, and associate vice chancellor for academic affairs), Jacob Gordon (founding chair of the Department of African Studies), Adrienne Rivers (School of Journalism), Elizabeth Schultz (Department of English), and myself. During our early meet-

ings, we devoted considerable discussion to identifying the most effective ways to dialog with our colleagues about teaching, and discover what issues were most on the minds of our fellow KU faculty members. But we didn’t just listen; we also shared “open letters” with the campus and made recommendations for renovating classrooms and considering better ways to obtain thoughtful evaluation of teaching practice.

## **Elevating teaching and learning**

The quest to do things better never gets old. Indeed, questions and concerns about teaching that were discussed by KU faculty members 27 years ago remain relevant today, despite all of the progress we have made and the tsunami of technological change that has altered the teaching landscape.

In the realm of teaching evaluation, the TCC pondered the construction of student course evaluations, considering the questions that students might most helpfully address in their comments

about courses they took, and providing recommendations for improving the process during peer review of teaching. In our communications with faculty colleagues, we challenged them to take the review of teaching as seriously as they did the peer evaluation of research.

Specifically, we asked those conducting peer review to do more than sit in on a single classroom session and base their comments on that one experience. We suggested topics to consider during classroom visitations such as whether instructors expected students to analyze material and how instructors invited active class participation. More than a quarter century later, we are still seeking ways to obtain the most informative and constructive commentary from both students and peers.

Empowered by the administration to take action on emerging faculty concerns, the TCC also turned its attention to issues of infrastructure. We surveyed classroom conditions and identified problems ranging from miss-

ing blackout shades to acoustical and lighting deficiencies. Some of our colleagues appreciated this initiative as overdue recognition that many of our classrooms were substandard. Others were skeptical, however, as the initial budget allocation (\$100,000) could only scratch the surface of classroom needs and was committed to projects deemed high priority, such as the renovation of larger classrooms that would impact the greatest number of students. Skeptics were not appeased by the construction of portable wooden lecterns that could be placed in small classrooms across campus. Nonetheless, the TCC persisted in obtaining lists of problematic classroom spaces across campus, and committee members worked with space analyst Marci Francisco to prioritize building-by-building needs from new ceilings and chalkboards to variable intensity lighting, computer network connections, and projection screens.

A report issued by TCC chair Don Green in January 1993 discussed the reconstruction of Hoch Auditorium (which had been gutted by fire resulting from a lightning strike in 1991) and detailed the use of the classroom improvement fund. It was gratifying to see tangible evidence of our work and to be able to report on visible changes to campus classrooms. The same report also noted our efforts to “formulate a Program for Excellence in

Teaching” that would include mentoring activities, colloquia on teaching, advice on the evaluation of teaching, and enhancement of classroom technologies. Thus, momentum was building for a more visible emphasis on teaching and learning.

In a meeting with members of the TCC in the spring of 1995, Chancellor Robert Hemenway announced the Regents’ approval of an increase in instructional technology funding of over half a

million dollars annually. This fund has pumped essential dollars into new teaching equipment and necessary instructional technology upgrades across campus ever since. Midsize classrooms benefited, for example, by receiving data projectors and cabinets for computers and audio-visual equipment. Although recent budget cuts have significantly reduced IT funding, the timely establishment of the fund in the mid-90s helped boost KU’s technological parity with its peers.

#### **Adjusting the focus: From renovation to conversation**

The membership of the TCC changed during the 1994-1995 academic year. Del Brinkman,

Jake Gordon, Dave Shulenburg, and Mike Young left the committee, while Marilyn Amey (educational policy and leadership), Kathleen McCluskey-Fawcett (newly appointed as associate vice chancellor for academic affairs), Val Smith (environmental studies), and Norman Yetman (American studies) became committee members.

After the establishment of the instructional technology fund to cover equipment, the priorities of

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the TCC shifted from “bricks and mortar” to personnel. A strong push was made to generate more awards for teaching excellence and to involve the campus in dialogues about teaching through such initiatives as the Colleague-to-Colleague Teaching Enhancement Program, a Teaching in a Diverse Classroom initiative co-sponsored with the Hall Center, and the annual Kemper Fellows Symposium on Teaching and Learning. The Colleague-to-Colleague program in particular provided opportunities for faculty members to visit each other’s classes and observe different styles of teaching, innovative activities, and novel approaches to diverse subjects. These pro-

grams increased community awareness of the value KU places on teaching as a significant component of the professional profile of faculty. Schools and departments were encouraged to form satellite teaching commons committees that could raise the collective consciousness about teaching and provide a more local, discipline-specific venue for talking about student learning. The awareness generated by these undertakings resulted in more creative and effective instruction across KU. It was the committee's hope that it would also result in a deeper consideration of teaching quality in promotion and tenure reviews.

#### Laying the foundation for CTE

In an open letter to the faculty in 1996, the TCC announced its intention to form focus groups composed of faculty from all units across campus to discuss the establishment of a center for teaching and learning. The committee used faculty input to refine the configuration of the center, identify its initial activities, and ensure that it reflected "KU's unique qualities and values." Also announced was the intention to search for a director. Focus groups were formed in Spring 1997, and the search for the first director was carried out the same year.

The transition from committee to "center" followed the TCC philosophy that pursuit of excellence in teaching at KU should be

a faculty-led enterprise. Any center intended to promote and celebrate educational practices at KU should be guided primarily by faculty members and should serve faculty interests and needs.

With the establishment of the Center for Teaching Excellence in 1997, the work of TCC was complete and its role was assumed by CTE under the leadership of its first director, Fred Rodriguez.

#### Coda

As far as I can determine, among those who served on the TCC, I am the only remaining active KU faculty member, and since its origin I have served continuously as a member of the CTE advisory committee. Most of the TCC members are either retired (Del Brinkman, Sandra Gautt, Jake Gordon, Don Green, Kathleen McCluskey-Fawcett, Beth Schultz, Dave Shulenburger, and Norm Yetman) or have passed on (Val Smith and Mike Young). Adrienne Rivers works at the White Plains Youth Bureau and Westchester Community College in New York; Marilyn Amey is a program coordinator in a lifelong education program at Michigan State University. But the foundation provided by the work of the TCC over its seven-year run certainly resulted in an important and substantial institution at KU. That the CTE has operated for 20 years and continues to provide leadership in the constantly evolving field of teaching and learning is the lasting legacy of

the effective and hardworking group of dedicated individuals who served on the TCC.



# Good beginnings: Establishing CTE's foundation

Fred Rodriguez

Professor Emeritus, Former Vice Provost for Diversity and Equity

I served as the first director of the Center for Teaching Excellence. However, the genesis of CTE evolved out of the work of the Teaching Commons Committee, which was composed of a group of distinguished faculty who articulated the role and importance of teaching at KU. In 1997, the university made a commitment to establish a designated office/center at KU.

When I assumed the director's role, one of my first decisions was to fill the administrative staff position. I was fortunate to lure Judy Eddy from the School of Education, where I was at that time a professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

At our beginning, Judy and I were assigned a temporary space in the basement of Anschutz Library. There were four walls, no windows, and certainly little physical visibility or foot traffic. In hindsight, this was probably a fortunate circumstance; from this we were able to establish in many respects the infrastructure of CTE.

One of my first strategies was to visit with each of the deans, as well as all department chairs in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences—I recall there were 56 departments at that time. My approach for these one-on-one meetings was to share the vision and scope for CTE, but equally important, I wanted to learn deans' and chairs' perspectives on what a Center could do to serve their academic unit(s), as well as the KU campus community.

My vision was that CTE would not be a remedial center. Quite the contrary, I was steadfast in making sure that the Center would be a place on campus where all teaching faculty (faculty members, graduate assistants, and staff) would gather to discuss, share, and learn about the craft of teaching and continue to refine and advance their work in classrooms, labs, and studios across campus. Judy and I worked diligently to create an environment that was welcoming and supportive.

## The Ambassador model

With a two-person team, it became apparent to me that there had to be a mechanism to enlist a broader community that could serve as a conduit for communication across campus. Thus, I established the Ambassador model.

In my meetings with each of the deans and chairs, I asked them to identify one faculty member who met the following criteria:

1. was recognized as a good teacher,
2. was respected by their colleagues, and
3. understood the importance and role of teaching across the campus community.

To their credit, names came forward from the deans and directors. In our first year, we had 45 Ambassadors.

Initially, I met with the Ambassadors in groups of four or five in the Kansas Union to get to know them and to learn their perspectives on teaching at KU. Additionally, it provided me the opportunity to share my ideas

about the initiatives and programs I was thinking about for CTE. Ambassadors shared that information with their colleagues in formal and informal meetings. In year two we began meeting with groups of about 15 Ambassadors. An unexpected outcome was that through these meetings the Ambassadors became true colleagues who otherwise would have never met.

Another unexpected outcome was that the Ambassador model at KU received national attention. I was invited to present the model at national teaching conferences and institutes, along with information about other CTE programs and initiatives.

### Initiatives

During my four years at CTE, I was able to begin several programs and initiatives. Below is a snapshot at some of that work.

#### Professional development:

- Established the Teaching Summit at the beginning of each academic year.
- Began Best Practices Institute, which supported new faculty members with a focus on instructional strategies. Target was new faculty in their first three years at KU.
- Met with all new faculty members on a regular basis their first year at KU.
- Held teaching conferences for all new graduate teaching assistants (fall and spring).
- Began a Lunch and Conversation series; offered

Dinner and Dialogue series once a month.

- Established the initial library of resources for CTE.

#### Communication:

- Actual naming of the Center for Teaching Excellence.
- Publications and scholarship:
  - Began *Teaching Matters* newsletter.
  - Established *Reflections from the Classroom*.
  - Began research initiatives for CTE. Published a research-based, peer-reviewed article on teaching large classes at KU with teacher and student perspectives, co-authored with Ambassador.
  - Designed the original website for CTE. We also maintained a directory of teaching centers across the United States and abroad.

#### Governance:

- Teaching Excellence Advisory Committee, or TEAM, met on a regular basis. Members were campus leaders recognized as outstanding teachers and served in an advisory capacity to CTE. Several members of the original Teaching Commons Committee served on TEAM.

### Summary

It is hard to imagine that CTE has been a fixture at KU for 20 years. As I reflected upon my time as director, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the wonderful support I received from

Sandra Gautt, vice provost for faculty development. In addition, during my tenure Chancellor Robert Hemenway and Provost David Shulenburg were equally supportive.

My four years as director were professionally gratifying. The director role afforded me the opportunity to meet and interact with numerous colleagues across the campus community. Without this opportunity, I would have never truly realized and understood the inspiring and dynamic community of KU. As faculty members, we tend to stay somewhat confined to our own academic units and seldom get to meet and work collaboratively across units.

After four years, I was asked to return to the School of Education to serve as associate dean for undergraduate and graduate programs. I am hopeful that my work at CTE played a small role in establishing an infrastructure and foundation that continues today to advance our collective efforts in teaching matters at KU.



# Shifts and levers: Cultivating the scholarship of teaching and learning

Daniel Bernstein  
Professor Emeritus, Former Director of CTE

In the Fall of 2001 I was working with colleagues at several universities on representing and sharing teaching innovations and creative ways of observing student understanding. The work was supported by grants, and it was progressing well, when the KU search committee for CTE's director position contacted me to see if I had any interest in applying for the job. Although I had never worked in a teaching center, I had been engaging faculty colleagues in work on teaching, and since I had personal reasons for moving closer to Kansas City, I expressed an interest. There's an old academic maxim: Don't turn down a job you haven't been offered.

In Spring 2002 I was offered and accepted the position at CTE. The original director, Fred Rodriguez, had organized a very fine space for faculty members to share their interests and experiences in teaching. The physical space was well planned and versatile, there were good advisory

groups in place (TEAM and the Ambassadors), and the only colleague in the Center (Judy Eddy) was well-prepared, very knowledgeable, and marvelously collaborative. In addition, the academic leadership, vice provost Sandra Gautt, was very flexible on the mission and the nature of the Center's activities. This was important, as my own experience and inclination did not match the typical teaching center pattern, and the way I wanted to interact with faculty colleagues would take the Center in some new directions.

After I started in July 2002, I spent the first year just watching what was in place and meeting people. CTE was two people, and Judy and I had a part-time work-study undergraduate helper. I listened to Ambassadors talk about their departments' teaching culture, and I learned from the advisory board (TEAM) about the traditions around teaching at KU. I also met one-on-one with about 60 department chairs; in each

conversation I asked about teaching in their department and about what they might want from the Center. With few exceptions, the chairs assured me that their department was one of the best teaching departments on campus.

It was a distinct advantage that CTE was funded by state money through the Provost's office, meaning that I did not have to continuously write grants just to stay in operation. It also meant that there was not much money to work with, so in the second year Judy and I had to reallocate funds to generate any new activities. Working with TEAM, we identified some areas in which money was going out to faculty participants but very little was coming back to the teaching community in the way of demonstrated change in students' success in understanding. Our programs began to ask faculty participants to design a manageable near-term project that could enhance student performance.

We moved away from supporting a semester of reading just to update course content and moved toward changing learning experiences in and out of class. We also encouraged the development of more integrative and complex assignments that would capture student interest and engage more advanced (and long-lasting) understanding.

We also shifted the emphasis on the kind of information that CTE shared with the community. Our outside speakers were faculty members who had initiated innovative methods of teaching and reported the impact of those changes on their students' academic performance. At the Teaching Summit and the new GTA conference, we asked that all sessions include a faculty member who had engaged a KU colleague in changing a course, with reports of how well that change had worked. One terrific example was a project in which Library Instruction and the Writing Center worked with faculty members from five departments in designing preparation for research papers. Together those teams made major progress in student skills, eventually resulting in a three-year grant funding the expansion of the program and clear documentation of the results.

By the fourth year we had several faculty colleagues whose work had produced noticeable improvements in students' understanding, and those col-

leagues were ready to share what they had done. We started our web-based gallery of course portfolios that make the intellectual work in teaching visible to the community. These reports include the challenging task of continuous inquiry into optimal instruction, always guided by how well students come to understand and perform the things we care about. These projects were never intended to be educational research in the formal sense, but instead faculty members used their existing expertise to recognize quality in student performance as a guide to what innovations might be useful to continue. KU faculty

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members do not have space in their lives to develop a second research career, but they can be more efficient in learning from the artifacts of the teaching they will do as an essential component of their work as a professor.

After about five years we had found a few ways to raise additional funding to support faculty members who undertook some inquiry into their students' understanding. We provided partial support to a few graduate

students in the Center, and they became valuable writing partners for faculty members making their work visible through portfolios. We participated in an NSF grant to explore better ways to teach ethics to STEM graduate students, and we participated in multi-university grants to study program-level learning in undergraduate majors. A large breakthrough on the financial front came when outgoing vice provost Gautt arranged for modest funding of our first four Faculty Fellows. In a plan modeled after the Honors program, these colleagues shared leadership in the Center and greatly expanded both the experience

base and the disciplinary reach of our teaching community. As a team we were able to convene more groups of KU faculty members to work together and share their ideas and their experiences with innovations in teaching. In 2013, vice provost Mary Lee Hummert secured funding for us to expand our leadership team to include an associate director, which was aptly filled by Andrea Greenhoot.

Over the years CTE has shift-

ed from being a pleasant and secure place for faculty conversations about teaching to being a true Center of intellectual work on the teaching mission of the campus. Through connections with other scholars at the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and through continued membership in a consortium of research universities focused on improving teaching (the Bay View Alliance), CTE has given interested faculty members access to communities of reflective practice around higher education. We have supported an existing KU culture that values high quality teaching while demonstrating that excellence in teaching involves continuous inquiry into successful learning, not just well-crafted delivery of pre-digested knowledge. I have stepped aside and many others have stepped up and are keeping CTE moving forward. It remains a central place that convenes progressive conversations on how teaching can enhance the success of students in mastering KU's high expectations for learning.



# The four most important things I learned from CTE

Dan Hirmas

Associate Professor of Geography and Atmospheric Science

Beginning my tenure-track faculty position as a soil scientist in the Department of Geography with a two-course per semester teaching load was easily the most daunting task I had ever undertaken. I had just completed my Ph.D. several months earlier, and the only teaching experience I had was as a teaching assistant for several introductory soil science laboratory sections. There were, of course, the pressures of research productivity, but for me, they paled in comparison to the pressures associated with teaching. I had always wanted to teach, and I hoped that one day I could reach the level of those instructors in my education that engendered curiosity and gave me the skills and knowledge to be a life-long learner. Although my graduate training had equipped me as a researcher, I was not prepared to approach teaching and learning in a scholarly manner. However, through the encouragement of faculty in my department, I headed over to CTE during my first semester to get both practical and intellectual

help with my teaching. What I discovered was a wealth of resources and a community of engaged faculty at different stages in their career who helped me learn how to think about my teaching.

Over the past nine years, I have actively participated in CTE's Teaching Summit, Best Practices Institute, Faculty Seminar, Peer Triad Program, C21, and various topical seminars held throughout the semester, and I have served as both a CTE Ambassador and Faculty Fellow. As I reflect on these interactions, here are four of the most important things I have learned:

**Excellent teachers are made, not born.** A well-meaning colleague told me during my first year at KU that he didn't spend any time preparing for lecture; he knew the material so well and was so comfortable in front of students that he could simply walk in and start lecturing on a topic. That comment really stuck with me, because at the time I was spending six to eight hours preparing for every hour of lec-

ture. Moreover, I was not at ease in front of the 200-student introductory class that I taught my first year. In fact, it was probably the most unpleasant aspect of my job at the time. The combination of the amount of effort I was giving to class preparation and my lack of ease in front of students made me think that maybe I wasn't cut out to teach after all. This was a major categorical mistake on my part. Although it took a few years to realize this, I eventually came to understand that a strong memory and natural ease in front of students does not equal good teaching. In contrast to these more superficial aspects, excellent teaching relies on sound principles that transcend a teacher's personality, ease in front of a classroom, or good memory.

**Excellent teaching begins with backward design.** Backward design is the process of planning a course by first specifying course goals, deciding what evidence demonstrates that students are meeting these goals, and building instruction and

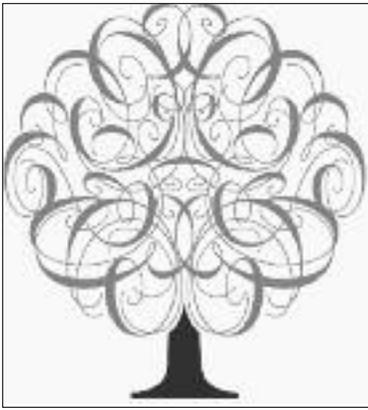
learning activities in light of the goals and desired evidence. This approach provides the structure to know what concepts or activities should be added to or removed from a course and to evaluate how well the activities, assignments, quizzes, or tests align with the specified learning goals. Without this intentional goals-first, evidence-based process, teaching success in the classroom would be defined by instructor popularity instead of by the educational value added to learners. This value is directly evaluated by well-designed assessments that match the articulated goals.

**Assessment of student learning is a necessary component of excellent teaching.** Assessment is our window into understanding what our students have actually learned. Without it, we have no way of knowing if what we are doing in and out of the classroom is making a difference in moving our students toward our goals for them. Perhaps the most important aspect of assessment, however, is what we do with that knowledge. This is referred to as “closing the loop” and is an essential part of excellent teaching. Assessment guides an instructor to modify course material, assignments, goals, or even assessment tools themselves, ultimately to iteratively build and modify a course that optimizes student learning.

**You’re not alone!** Excellence in teaching is encouraged and

sustained by a community of engaged faculty who care deeply about student learning, and CTE provided this community for me. Being around faculty working to improve their teaching not only gave me more ideas for innovative teaching practices than I knew what to do with, but also provided the categories necessary to understand and evaluate my own teaching practices.

In sum, CTE leaders gave me both an intellectual framework by which to understand the various components of teaching and the tools necessary to achieve teaching excellence. I will always be grateful for what I learned from them.



# Where do we go from here?

Andrea Follmer Greenhoot

Director of CTE and Gault Teaching Scholar/Professor of Psychology

CTE owes much to the vision and leadership of the other contributors to this volume. Our history as an intellectual community that explores teaching improvement and innovation is the foundation of all of our current work.

Former directors Fred Rodriguez and Dan Bernstein developed programs that created new opportunities for faculty to exchange ideas, challenge each other to think in new ways, and ultimately advance teaching and learning. These programs, combined with Dan's signature efforts to make teaching visible through online course portfolios (see our gallery of 100+ portfolios at [cte.ku.edu/portfolios](http://cte.ku.edu/portfolios)) have moved teaching from a solitary, and at times proprietary, activity to a much-appreciated subject of intellectual discourse on campus.

After 20 years, many faculty members who participated in CTE programs are now department and university leaders, and this has had a meaningful impact on the teaching culture at KU. More people today recognize that effective teaching involves more than just sharing disciplinary wisdom with students; rather, it

is complex intellectual work involving thoughtful design of courses around learning goals and evaluating whether students are meeting those goals.

It is probably no coincidence that these conceptions of teaching are embedded throughout KU's recent campus-wide efforts to enhance students' educational experiences and outcomes. These efforts have stimulated much of CTE's current activity. We are being relied upon by entities across campus to help the University reach its goals of creating more engaging, higher-impact learning experiences for our students, and seeing more students earn degrees and make meaningful contributions to society. For example, the University has invested in large-scale course transformation efforts aimed at incorporating active and collaborative learning into courses along with increasing structure and accountability for out-of-class work. These efforts have significantly expanded CTE's work helping faculty transform courses and curricula. We now lead the postdoctoral teaching fellows program, which embeds disci-

pline-based teaching and learning experts in departments to guide and support course transformation, and the C21 Course Redesign Consortium, an intellectual community of faculty, staff, and students who share ideas and work together on course transformation. The learning-outcomes based KU Core curriculum and the degree program learning outcome assessment initiative have brought greater attention to strategies for documenting and advancing learning, and CTE has been able to increase its support of these efforts with a full-time assessment specialist, funded by the Provost's Office.

The creation and expansion of units such as the Center for Online and Distance Learning, Office of First Year Experience, Center for Undergraduate Research, Center for Civic and Social Responsibility, and Office of Multicultural Affairs have expanded CTE's opportunities for partnership to support adoption of high-impact and inclusive educational practices.

The scope of CTE's work has moved beyond KU; we have

been increasingly involved in national networks and organizations. Dan Bernstein's long-standing leadership in the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, which includes some of the most forward-thinking scholars on teaching and learning, has built strong connections between CTE and that community.

Teaching and learning at KU has become increasingly visible within ISSOTL, KU faculty are bringing new ideas to their teaching from this community, and current and former CTE graduate assistants are now in leadership positions in the organization.

Much of our current work on assessing learning has been shaped by our involvement with the Association of American Colleges and Universities VALUE rubric initiative. Several years ago, Dan and I piloted some of the rubrics and developed models for organizing and representing the data. These rubrics are now a major resource for campus work on learning assessment, and they are being used by many higher education institutions.

CTE's work has also been enriched by our role in the Bay View Alliance, a consortium of nine research universities in the US and Canada that are working to implement and study strategies to promote widespread adoption of 21st-century, student-centered teaching methods. KU leads one BVA research cluster, focused on course transformation

programs as catalysts for change in teaching practices and culture, and we are contributing to several others. Our BVA work led to our grant from the National Science Foundation, to lead seven universities (the TRESTLE network) in implementing local adaptations of KU's program to promote course transformation and improve undergraduate education. The grant enables us to enhance support and resources for faculty and expand the intellectual communities into the cross-institution network.

Finally, we have become increasingly involved with the Association of American Universities Undergraduate STEM Education Initiative, which recently awarded us a grant to create a program to help faculty harness institutional data to address questions about teaching, learning, and student success.

Where do I see CTE's work going in the near future? Many of our recent efforts have focused on programs that engage and support work at the department level. Departments are best able to see which of their roles might enhance learning, and they best know how to generate and sustain activity related to it. We also know, based on the success of our department teaching grants and the postdoctoral teaching fellow program, that innovative teaching is more likely to be rewarded and sustained when a critical mass of department faculty are engaged and when that

work reflects a shared vision across a department.

Related to this point, I would also like to see CTE deepen its work with departments to help them develop more effective ways of documenting and evaluating faculty teaching. Drawing on Dan's and others' work on the peer review of teaching, we have developed a framework to help departments develop a shared vision of effective teaching and to provide greater structure for the review and evaluation processes.

Another direction for CTE will be promoting distributed leadership in teaching and learning on campus. Our newest program, the Diversity Scholars, was explicitly designed around this idea. Participants in this year-long faculty seminar are designing or redesigning courses to foster inclusion and respect for diversity, and they are developing plans to work with colleagues in their own units to help them make similar changes or address similar issues. The goal is to develop and support a network of leaders across KU.

Even with a focus on department work, we have no plans to leave individuals behind. We will continue to offer programs and resources such as Best Practices Institute, C21, and course transformation grants. We will also focus on assessing and improving the work we are doing to ensure that we are helping KU faculty members and the institution as a whole meet their goals.

