



REPORT ON FACULTY DEVELOPMENT FOR CASE-METHOD TEACHING

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UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA TEACHING RESOURCE CENTER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Teaching Resource Center (TRC) is essentially what the name suggests: a *resource* of services and information for teachers across the University of Virginia. As such, the Center's programming depends upon the requests of varied parties at the University and is rarely required for participants; i.e. participation is voluntary. If the TRC were a business, it would be a successful entrepreneurial small business led by Founder and Director Marva Barnett, who as a French professor in 1990, took advantage of historic opportunity for teaching improvement to secure both the Center's establishment and her director position. Overall, the Teaching Resource Center's mission is broadly defined, its programming flexibly diverse, its management centrally aligned, and its development impressively growth-based.

HISTORY: *GROWTH*

In 1989, there was growing concern across the University over various faculty development issues. The Chair of the University Board of Trustees' Committee of Educational Policy drafted a report stressing the lack of teaching done by faculty. The Student Council reinforced the report by arguing how teaching associates did all the teaching while professors researched. The Dean of Arts and Sciences also agreed by noting how the University's doctoral students do not receive enough support by faculty.

By the spring of 1990, the University sought to establish a program for training teaching associates. They wrote a proposal to the Virginia Department of Education requesting for the "Funds for Excellence" grant.

At the time, Marva Barnett, in addition to being a full-time member of the Arts & Sciences faculty, was already coordinating faculty development in the French department. After the University won the "Funds for Excellence" grant, Marva wrote a plan sketching the groundwork for a Teaching Resource Center. Having trained at the Harvard Bok Center as a graduate student, and having led a similar center at Indiana University, Marva won credibility

from the administration. Her plan was approved and she was chosen as the Director of the Center.

In July 1990, after much one-on-one planning¹, the Teaching Resource Center opens. At the time, there was no involvement from the graduate schools, even from the Education school. Marva, in hopes of building University-wide support for the Center, adopted a "Never Say No" policy, consenting to any and all teaching-based projects proposed by any party at the University. Soon enough, the TRC received a small grant to videotape excellent faculty teaching, thus building support from the faculty.

In September 1990, Marva hired two full-time employees: one administrative assistant and one teaching consultant. In the meantime, Marva continues to spend most of her time visiting key members across the University and building support for the Center. The Engineering School becomes the first graduate school to request work, while the Nursing School followed soon afterwards.

In its third year, demand for the Center's programs exceeded its supply of labor. This affords Marva the opportunity to request for additional staff, and the University grants her three additional employees: an Associate Director and two faculty consultants, hence doubling the staff size.

In 2003, the TRC wins a \$300,000 grant from the National Endowment for Humanities. Matched by alumni donations, the Center receives a total of \$1.2 million. Such grants together form a "slush fund" allowing the Center to make more money than it uses. Thus, if the TRC at any time needs additional funding for new programs, Marva simply needs to ask the Provost and the money is offered.

¹ It is important to note that the TRC never employed a steering committee nor had a faculty advisory committee. Marva won credibility and support essentially through personal relationships—visiting key members of the administration and faculty one by one and involving them in the planning process.

INTERVIEW: Professor Marva Barnett

Friday, September 17, 10:00am

Marva is a Professor of French at the University of Virginia, and since the Teacher Resource Center's (TRC) founding in 1990, has been the Center's Director.



Why did you choose to become Director of the TRC?

In 1990, while involved with faculty development in the French department and with the administrative movement for university-wide faculty development, I saw an opportunity to switch career paths from teaching to administration. At the time, I desired the career change and took initiative in writing an original plan for a Center for teaching based upon my experience leading a similar center at Indiana University.

In retrospect, I accomplished what I aspired for—a leadership role in founding and managing a successful center for learning—while still continuing to teach French and pursue research interests.

How does the TRC measure its success?

It is difficult to measure success in teaching, let alone effectiveness of faculty development initiatives. The TRC submits an annual report to the Provost proving its success mainly by qualitative standards: noting how some program participants initially received low course evaluations on teaching, but after being involved with TRC programs, won numerous prizes for outstanding teaching. Along with the report, we note the number of participants attending each of our programs and highlight the growth of activity.

We have attempted to quantitatively assess the TRC's effectiveness, but have found significant drawbacks to student evaluations and participant comments—so significant that we have abandoned them altogether.

What is the biggest challenge for establishing a center for faculty development?

The biggest challenge would be getting support from all parties, especially the faculty.

Other challenges include:

- lobbying for more funding
- balancing routine and innovation in programming
- managing your own time as to not burn out
- balancing your administrative responsibilities with your academic ones: one solution was to provide all members in the Center (with the exception of the two office assistants, all members have advanced degrees) *research leaves* so that members keep up with their academics

What advice do you have for Professor Takagi in establishing a center for faculty development?

Involve yourself on committees and organizations throughout the University to not only market the Center but to also stay updated on where the University is headed; it is important to know where the University will be in a few years and then place the Center there—always before the University catches up. In this way, peer support and funding will always be abundant.