

**EXTERNAL REVIEWERS' REPORT
ON THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME'S
KANEB CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING**

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INTRODUCTION

In the spring of this year, we accepted an invitation to visit the University of Notre Dame at a future date, eventually decided on as November 19, to carry out an external review of the Kaneb Center for Teaching and Learning. In early November, we received a draft, 39-page Self Study, prepared by Kaneb Center staff and accompanied by several appendices. Both our initial letter of invitation and the Self-Study suggested—albeit with slightly different wording—the following questions as a framework, though not a restrictive one, for our review:

1. Is the Kaneb Center's mission appropriate, complete, and useful?
2. Is the Kaneb Center assessing its own outcomes in appropriate ways?
3. Are current Kaneb Center budget, staff, and strategies balanced and structured in the best possible way to achieve its mission?
4. How does the Kaneb Center compare in its budget, staff, activities, and national visibility with similar centers at institutions such as Vanderbilt, Princeton, University of Chicago, Stanford, Duke, Georgetown, Northwestern, and similar institutions?
5. Is the Kaneb Center making optimal use of its resources of time, money, space, and influence to achieve its mission?
6. What are the chief strengths and weaknesses of the Kaneb Center? What actions and what levels of funding and staffing would you recommend for the future to enable the Kaneb Center most effectively to fulfill its mission? How might it most effectively monitor and assess its effectiveness?

Since a large part of our task was to evaluate what the Center has been doing and what it could be doing, we were fortunate to have a breadth of faculty development and technology experience among the three of us reviewers. Originally a Sinologist by training, Marincovich is currently Assistant Vice Provost and Director of Stanford University's Center for Teaching and Learning, one of the oldest faculty development offices, since—like the Derek Bok Center at Harvard—it was established in 1975. She has spent almost 25 years in the field and has served as Executive Director of the leading faculty development professional association, the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education (POD). Wilkinson was trained as a European historian, and has taught modern European history and literature

for more than thirty years at both Harvard and Boston Universities. Since 1988 he has been Director of Harvard's Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning. Bass has been working in faculty and curriculum development since 1993, with particular emphasis on educational technology and the scholarship of teaching and learning. Bass is Executive Director of the Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship, and associate professor of English, at Georgetown University.

Our time on campus was devoted to a series of highly informative meetings with the Kaneb Center staff; high-level administrators, including the Center's cognizant Vice President, deans, and an associate dean; and faculty. We were also able to tour the Center's excellent facilities and its new Learning Technology Lab.

The criteria we brought to bear on the evidence we heard and read was a mixture of: our own highly developed professional sense of what a teaching center at a research university should be; our previous experiences as external reviewers; our interviews while on campus; and our analysis of what the Kaneb Center thought it should be accomplishing. We have also paid particular attention to the University of Notre Dame context, since it is an axiom of our field that a teaching and learning center must, first and foremost, intimately understand and respond to its own particular campus culture.

With this background, we begin our review and our answers to the six questions posed above. Please note, however, that we have organized our responses chronologically—where the Center has been (including the questions of whether the Kaneb Center's mission is appropriate, complete, and useful and whether it has been assessing its outcomes in appropriate ways), its current status, and its future.

WHERE THE CENTER HAS BEEN

A new Center faces the challenge of launching actual programs and activities while at the same time deciding on its mission and philosophy, its place in the university, its priorities, and its own internal evaluation procedures. In our opinion, the Kaneb Center has made a fast and strategic start and has developed a very strong array of programs in its first five years.

In terms of its offerings to faculty, it provides them with all the elements of a state-of-the-art faculty development program: individual consultation, workshops, connection to national movements such as the Carnegie

Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching Scholarship of Teaching and Learning program, new faculty orientation, a library of print and video resources on teaching, and a program to enhance faculty's skills with technology in instruction. In fact, at a time when many Centers are struggling with their relationship both to instructional technology and to other technology offices on their campus, Barbara Walvoord's leadership of the TLTR at the University of Notre Dame seems to have placed the Kaneb Center in a strong and central position for its technology work.

Its work with faculty has also shown a sensitivity to the delicate balance that professors at a research university must keep among their teaching, research, and service responsibilities. The Kaneb Center Self Study uses the wonderful phrase that teaching at Notre Dame must be "time-efficient and time-limited." It thereby sidesteps the fruitless debate over whether teaching or research is more important when, of course, both are essential to this kind of institution.

For a variety of reasons, activities for TAs are also essential to a faculty development center in a research-university environment: faculty are often introduced to new ideas in teaching and technology by their graduate students and teaching assistants; a not insignificant proportion of undergraduate teaching is usually handled by teaching assistants; and, third, research universities bear the obligation of preparing future academics for their teaching responsibilities as well as their research role. Even though the Kaneb Center did not start its TA Program until 1998, here too it seems to have quickly developed substantial and well-conceived offerings. Much credit for this must go to Professor Michelle Whaley who, while on only a five-hour-a-week appointment at the Kaneb Center, seems to have attracted both interest and collaboration from TAs, departments, and a group of especially dedicated graduate students called Kaneb Center Teaching Associates.

Several TA developments in these first years seem especially noteworthy. A workshop and certification program, together with a series of credit-bearing courses, enables TAs who want to expand their teaching knowledge to choose among several learning opportunities and to emerge with an official record of their efforts. An apprenticeship program in the Departments of English and History also seems quite promising as does an externship/internship program. A "Teaching Well Using Technology Program" for graduate students was begun this fall to introduce TAs to WebCT and PowerPoint. TAs who not only attend workshops but complete a defined project can receive a certificate for their participation. Importantly, the Kaneb Center even started an award program for

TAs to supplement the meager number of awards (two campus-wide prizes) that had previously existed to recognize and reward outstanding TAs.

Nor has the Kaneb Center neglected more specialized needs among TAs. It has developed a special web-site for International TAs and expanded its library holdings with books for this group. Individual departments can also request workshops for its ITAs. The Kaneb Center is also helping graduate students facing the job market to bolster their credentials through teaching portfolio and other teaching-documentation assistance. Since the strength of a graduate program is influenced by the job market success of its members, the university as a whole benefits when its graduate students are mentored through the academic job market process.

Clearly, we are impressed with what the Kaneb Center has achieved for faculty, TAs, and other instructors in its first five years. It's worth stating why we think it has made such a strong start.

First, the mission of the Center strikes us as well conceived and well stated. The statement's emphasis on student learning made it clear from the beginning that although the services of the Center would be directed at faculty, other instructors, and TAs, its ultimate objective is to enhance the learning achieved by Notre Dame students. This is an essential emphasis at a university that has ratcheted up its research expectations of faculty but remains committed to a high level of personal attention to its students. Second, in order to carry out its mission, the Center has articulated and spelled out both its general philosophy and its strategies. These strategies, six in all, are a comprehensive and state-of-the-art guide to practice and success. They pay attention not just to specific services and activities but to the institutional context at Notre Dame and to the realities of the kind of curricular and values reform that is entailed in successful faculty development. Third, the Kaneb Center has not tried to carry out its mission alone. It has reached out to schools, departments, other offices, the library, and a myriad of potential partners on and off campus. It has contributed to the national discussion on improvement of teaching and learning. Fourth, it appears that high-level administrators positioned the Center well in the beginning, recruited successfully for a forceful and effective founding director, and have afforded that director certain opportunities, such as the leadership of Notre Dame's TLTR, that were thoroughly taken advantage of (in the most positive sense of those words). Fifth, those staffing the Kaneb Center (especially until the last year or two when it was able to secure additional FTE) achieved results far beyond their numbers by their thorough

commitment to their cause and their imaginative use of resources and collaborative arrangements.

Sixth, though still young, the Kaneb Center has already undertaken a substantial amount of internal assessment. In addition to having its clients fill out the usual kind of end-of-activity evaluation form, it has taken advantage of faculty/TA questionnaires and interview data to maximize its understanding of faculty/TA needs and preferences. In our interview with him, Mark L. Gunty of the Institutional Research office confirmed that Barbara Walvoord has made extensive use of the research from that office in order to inform the Center's efforts and to make faculty more aware of relevant student data. In our conversations with Center staff, we also observed that they had drawn sound conclusions from their reading of the data, such as a need to emphasize outreach to departments more in the future.

THE CENTER'S CURRENT PROGRAM AND SITUATION

As noted in the preceding section, the Kaneb Center has come a long way in a short time. And it has done so with an admirable spirit of collegiality and cooperation. We were struck with the strong loyalty to the Center expressed by both clients and staff. Those whom we interviewed (though admittedly a biased sample) expressed a high degree of satisfaction. The staff are motivated and highly professional, while conveying the impression of a well functioning team. Indeed, the Center's current reputation—both on campus and beyond—must count among its most valuable assets.

The Center's six "strategies" provide a broad and ambitious menu. They balance the needs of different constituencies—faculty, TAs, administration, and the world beyond South Bend. As a university resource, centrally located in a state-of-the-art classroom building, the Kaneb currently makes a strong statement about Notre Dame's commitment to maintain or increase the quality of teaching while increasing its research role on a national level. Some campus teaching centers exist—physically as well as culturally—on the periphery; symbolism of the Kaneb Center's prime location and generous facilities is an additional asset.

In our opinion, the current budget level of the Center at \$780,000 is appropriate for its level of activities and staffing. Its faculty and staff outlay, at roughly \$73,200 per FTE, compares favorably with Harvard's \$80,857 (10.5 FTEs with a staff budget of \$849,000); Stanford's \$79,670 per FTE (9 FTEs with a staff budget of \$717,031); and Georgetown's \$78,600 (10 FTEs with a staff

budget of \$786,000). In other words, the personnel costs per staff member at Notre Dame's Kaneb Center are between \$7,387 and \$5,400 *less* than those at our three institutions. This is what we would expect for a first-class center that is operating in a fiscally prudent way (perhaps we should all take a lesson from the Kaneb in this regard). But though the budget seems very much in line, the sources of funding rely too heavily on gift income. Specifically, the Kaneb Center depends on a single (annually renewed) gift for more than a quarter of its overall budget. To be that dependent on soft money, from however generous a donor, seems to us unwise. We recommend a change from this practice in section #1 of "Future Directions and Recommendations," below.

The Kaneb Center's achievements over its first five years provide justifiable grounds for pride. We see evidence, however, that the Center now has reached a sort of natural limit with its current set of programs, finances, and clientele. As one of our interviewees noted, the Center currently provides "a locus and focus for those faculty interested in teaching." It is typical for new centers to focus their efforts on faculty already attuned to the need for pedagogical improvement, and often advanced in their own teaching skills. The reasons for this choice are obvious. Lacking means of coercion, and intent on building a base of faculty as well as administrative support, a new center naturally concentrates on those who most desire its services, rather than on those who most need them. Similarly, a new center's time resources are often disproportionately spent on single events, such as workshops, rather than on mid- or long-term training with a smaller number of individuals. Again, the logic to this choice is clear; single events touch a broader audience.

Here the Center's sterling reputation on campus may in fact absolve faculty from having themselves to reexamine their teaching practices. As an institutional symbol, the Center speaks loudly and positively about Notre Dame's commitment to teaching excellence. Several of our interviewees noted that the Center is perceived by faculty as a university institution rather than one with strong links to departments, and that its offerings are generic rather than discipline-based. They are pleased that it exists, but feel it somewhat peripheral to their own teaching concerns. In its self-study, the Center itself noted the need for more outreach through hiring "liaisons within each college."

There are, of course, very real constraints of time and money that limit the outreach of any teaching center. But the current situation of the Center, functioning as an icon or "golden dome" of good teaching, should not obscure the existence of large areas where its influence has not been felt. By our rough

calculations, based on the 1999 faculty survey, well over half of the faculty have not been served by the center in any way. (Although the number of participants and non-participants was about equal in the survey, since the return rate was 45%, we can infer that perhaps a quarter of the Notre Dame faculty had some sort of direct contact with the center by 1999.) Going beyond its natural constituency of faculty already interested in teaching will require new strategies, bearing in mind the different teaching cultures that coexist on campus.

The same faculty survey suggests that some colleges and departments are more responsive to attempts to highlight teaching issues than others. In response to the question whether “faculty have conversed about teaching more” than three years ago, fully half of those polled in Science and in Engineering agreed, whereas in Law it was a fifth, and a third each in Arts and Letters and Business. About half of the respondents in Arts & Letters, Business, and Engineering reported that the Kaneb Center produced an impact that was somewhat positive, positive, or strongly positive, as compared with a third in Law and Science. This degree of variation is normal, but the need for “ownership” of the Center’s programs by departments and individuals within them also seems clear.

The Kaneb Center’s effort to attain national visibility, though successful, has come at a price. Even were Barbara Walvoord to remain as Center director, 40 annual presentations at national conferences and campus visits are a degree of external commitment that is, in our judgment, simply not sustainable. The Center clearly benefits from a high national profile, and Notre Dame is enriched by the inflow of new concepts in post-secondary pedagogy. But as will be discussed in the next section, the Center needs to determine a less costly manner of remaining “plugged in” on a national level.

In sum, the Center’s chief strengths at present appear to us to include its staff, location, reputation, and the care it devotes to a satisfied core of clients. Its ability to integrate pedagogical expertise with instructional technology, through exercising leadership within OIT and the TLTR, are noteworthy. Areas to target for attention include its relatively restricted clientele, its failure to devise programs that address departmental needs (rather than more generic workshops), and a strategy for national exposure that relies heavily on the efforts of a single individual. Thus we feel that the balance among the six strategies—a balance that has served the Kaneb Center well in the past—needs to be altered for the Center to meet the challenges that remain.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Kaneb Center owes much of its acknowledged success over the past five years to a happy combination of strong internal leadership and strong institutional support. Both factors will, of course, play a vital role in the Center's future as well as its past. In our judgment, however, the next five years should not simply repeat the activities—however successful—of the previous half decade. Instead the time has come for the Center to expand its core activities and strengthen its relationships with academic departments in a systematic manner. We see a well-funded and integrated organizational *structure* as key to the success for the next five years of the Kaneb Center, as it seeks to reach out beyond the circle of satisfied clients that have hitherto been its primary focus. To this end, we offer four broad recommendations.

(1) Maintain strong leadership and improve institutional support:

The search for a new Center director is clearly an immediate priority. She or he should command the same national respect as outgoing director Barbara Walvoord. To attract such a candidate, and to ensure continuity in its programs, the Center's finances need to become more secure. Having proven its worth to the campus, it deserves permanent institutional support at or beyond its current levels. Specifically, we recommend:

- The new director should either come from outside the Notre Dame campus or have strong ties to the national community of teaching centers.
- The new director of the Kaneb Center should sit on the Council of Deans, both as a sign of Notre Dame's commitment to the centrality of teaching excellence, and as a means of improving the link between the Center and schools and colleges.
- The current budget levels, which compare favorably with those of other teaching centers nationwide (including Georgetown, Harvard, and Stanford), should be maintained.
- The current reliance of the Center on annual gifts for a major part of its support should be phased out in favor of endowment or guaranteed institutional support.

(2) Focus more on departmental and discipline-based outreach:

For understandable reasons, Center activities have focused heretofore on those faculty most interested in its services, and have tended to be one-time workshops rather than longer-term, iterative training. As successful as the

Kaneb Center's general workshops have been with this core clientele, we recommend that it shift its priorities to make room for an expanded client base.

- The Kaneb Center staff should shift from its focus on general workshops and individual consultations to include more focused programmatic and assessment activities, undertaken in concert with departments and clusters of disciplines.
- The Kaneb Center should devote some effort to "multiplier" activities such as encouraging systematic mentoring of new faculty by experienced colleagues within specific departments, and "training the trainer." The Center staff should not be the only ones delivering training to faculty, but should play a catalytic role in increasing the number of individuals offering such training, and ensuring its quality.
- The Kaneb Center should work more closely with the Graduate School and departments with graduate programs to ensure accountability in TA and professional development support. Departments should be encouraged to make pedagogical training an integral part of the graduate education offered to their doctoral students, with Kaneb Center guidance and support.
- The Kaneb Center should support both general and discipline-based pedagogical innovation by creating more print and electronic materials on teaching resources, expanding its web site, and generally expanding the help available from handouts and media.

(3) Continue leadership in pedagogy and technology, with an increased emphasis on collaboration with the campus library:

One key strategic path toward reaching more faculty is through leadership on the integration of pedagogy and technology and related collaborations with the campus library on research pedagogies and information literacy. To this end, we recommend the following:

- The Kaneb Center's responsibility for campus leadership on integrating pedagogical expertise with information technology should continue. The library, OIT, and the Kaneb should explore additional joint ventures. Such integrative activities, involving key institutional players on campus, is consistent with national trends, as well as the need for synergy among those groups committed to improving teaching at Notre Dame.

- The University should be encouraged to consider one or more jointly operated, integrative facilities for teaching and technology. The University should be open to the possibility of joint operation of one or more collaborative spaces between the Kaneb Center and the Library, or an integrated Kaneb, Library, and OIT facility.
- Some of these collaborative activities could be best pursued in satellite facilities, or localized labs with disciplinary (or discipline cluster) focuses in individual colleges.
- The Teaching, Learning, and Technology Roundtable should continue, but would benefit from new membership, bringing new energy and commitment. Those who have served the Roundtable in the past deserve to be relieved by the next shift. The TLTR should continue to be convened by the Kaneb Center.

(4) Better align faculty development activities with key institutional thresholds in faculty careers:

A final key strategy for deepening the impact of the Center is to bring its support of teaching excellence and innovation into closer alignment with promotion and tenure procedures. As noted above, the Kaneb Center has an excellent track record of understanding and promoting the links between teaching excellence, efficient use of time, and scholarly productivity. Yet there remain additional avenues—institutionally supported—through which the Kaneb Center can intersect with faculty professional development. We recommend four specific strategies:

- The Center should endeavor to work more with newer faculty. To this end, consideration should be given to how Notre Dame as an institution directs and encourages its faculty to take advantage of the Kaneb's services and support.
- The Kaneb Center should continue to work with faculty (especially junior faculty) in documenting and assessing their teaching. While such activities should ideally be evaluated locally within departments, not pursued centrally or hierarchically, the Kaneb Center can nonetheless aid departments in developing guidelines for peer review of teaching, teaching portfolios, and other means of critically reflecting on instruction.
- The Kaneb Center should continue to provide guidance and leadership on the scholarship of teaching—a concept that provides an essential framework

for systematic examination, reflection, and exchange on issues of student learning.

- The Kaneb Center should encourage graduate TAs and junior faculty to attend national conferences on teaching excellence, such as those sponsored by the American Association of Higher Education, by expanding the support it currently gives to this end.

Overall, we foresee a bright future for the Kaneb Center, both because of its proven track record and because of the evident interest of those whom we interviewed for the Center to do more, not less, on campus. We hope that the above recommendations will prove useful to the Center and the University as they ponder how the Center can not only continue to play a critical role on campus, but also strengthen and expand its capacity to help all faculty more fully realize Notre Dame's commitment to excellence in its teaching mission.