

The Kaneb Center's Strategic Plan

The Kaneb Center of Teaching and Learning is a small unit. Its staff consists of two full time professional specialists who assist faculty with teaching (strategies, practices, and enhancements using technology), one full time program and marketing manager (organization of the program of workshops and presentations), a coordinator of office services (administration of the office), and a part time director. Therefore, the energy that the Kaneb Center generates and the impact that it can have are necessarily limited. Indeed, it functions primarily as Notre Dame's collective conscience about teaching, as "that little voice" that raises the level of consciousness for teaching on the campus and invites faculty and departments to reflect about their practices. In more precise terms, it is the mission of the Kaneb Center within the university's academy to

- stimulate reflection about teaching and learning,
- emphasize that an effective teaching and learning environment is not only a locus where relevant facts and concepts are transmitted, but also an interactive forum that allows students to develop a mindset of informed and critical assessment and an ability to communicate knowledgeably and articulately,
- sponsor a program of workshops, presentations, and consultations that highlight the best teaching practices and learning environments and encourage and assist the efforts of Notre Dame's faculty and teaching assistants to nurture and sustain these, and
- be an advocate for the enhancement of practices and structures related to the university's teaching mission.

A. An Effective Program about Teaching and Learning

If it is to maximize its effectiveness vis-à-vis the goals described above, then the Kaneb Center needs to connect itself more fully and credibly to the teaching agendas and student learning objectives of the university's colleges and departments. A strategy that has been underutilized in this regard will be at the center of this effort. Namely, the Kaneb Center will adapt its program of presentations, panel discussions, and workshops to the expressed interests of the departments and colleges, and in so doing, have its message informed by the most prominent scholars/teachers at Notre Dame. Effective teaching cannot be a matter of "having arrived," but needs to be energized by ongoing reflection and exploration on a front of concerns ranging from the curriculum to responsive practices in the classroom. Many among our faculty and departments are committed to such reflections and have turned these into successful practice. Such "best practices" have been and will continue to be highlighted within the center's programming. The Kaneb Center's 2003/04 program, the Kaneb Faculty Fellows Program, the departmental faculty meetings about teaching led by the Kaneb Center (during the academic year 2002/03 and expected to continue in 2003/04), and the essay *Addressing Teaching at Notre Dame* (see the attachment ADDRESSING.doc) are ongoing initiatives towards this goal. In recognizing that the ownership of the university's teaching mission resides within the departments, the Kaneb Center sees itself as a catalyst to help bring about and sustain best practice.

This strategy should address some critical observations from the External Review of the Kaneb Center (a review that gives the Kaneb Center's development a very warm round of applause overall. See the attachment ExternalReview.doc) conducted by the directors of the teaching and learning centers of Georgetown, Harvard, and Stanford:

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. ... 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. ... 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. ... 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 need for “ownership” of the Center’s programs by departments and individuals within them also seems clear... .¹

B. Enhance Mentoring and Evaluation of Teaching

Incoming faculty will be introduced to Notre Dame's teaching culture and the resources available at the Kaneb Center before classes start in the fall. (This needs to involve more faculty than the inaugural lunch/presentation in the Fall of 2003.) More than maintaining a raised level of consciousness about teaching with its programs, the Kaneb Center needs to be a constructive advocate for departmental initiatives. The most important aspect of this was articulated by President Malloy over ten years ago:

... each department must put in place the means, sometimes specific to particular disciplines, for the collegial mentoring and measuring of teaching effectiveness.²

The impression exists, and my own experience on departmental Committees on Appointments and Promotions (CAP) as well as the Provost's Advisory Committee (PAC) confirms, that the quality and effectiveness of such mentoring and measuring varies widely from department to department.

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.³

¹ External Reviewers' Report on the University of Notre Dame's Kaneb Center for Teaching and Learning, January 31, 2002

² Final Report, Colloquy for the Year 2000, A Report Submitted by the President, Rev. Edward A. Malloy, C.S.C., to the Trustees of the University of Notre Dame, May 7, 1993.

³ External Reviewers' Report on the University of Notre Dame's Kaneb Center for Teaching and Learning, January 31, 2002

The most important initial step towards raising the quality of these departmental structures is for PAC to insist that the department's evaluation of the teaching of a faculty member up for consideration for three-year renewal, tenure, and promotion be considerably more robust. There is currently an imbalance in the evaluative energy that goes into a candidate's research (letters of assessment, grant activity, organizing of conferences, colloquia activity) and that going into teaching (primarily TCE analysis and a few "snapshots" from classroom visitations by faculty peers). Indeed, the perception lingers (in part even among some senior Kaneb Faculty Fellows) that teaching is but a secondary component in the PAC's tenure and promotion analysis. It is an important part of this strategic plan to encourage PAC to engage in a discussion as to how the departments might enhance the evaluation of a faculty member's teaching, and in particular to suggest strategies to the departmental CAPs – in the form of formal Recommendations - as to how to best embed the student generated TCE assessments into a broader evaluative context.

*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. ... 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.*⁴

C. Enhance and Expand Programming for Teaching Assistants (TAs)

The Kaneb Center's program for TAs during the academic year is being coordinated by Michelle Whaley, a faculty member in the Department of Biological Sciences, who has done a commendable, indeed admirable, job. It has the dual purpose of preparing our graduate assistants for the Notre Dame classroom and (if applicable) for their teaching careers. This needs to be a strengthened collaborative effort between the center, the Graduate School and the departments, with the center a facilitator and organizer of a common denominator of workshops, summer courses, and orientations, and the departments as providers of discipline specific guidance. This dual approach requires coordination and cross-fertilization. In this regard, what is already done in the College of Science might serve as a campus wide model. There, the TA teaching programs of the Kaneb Center and the departments are linked by bringing together a faculty mentor and teaching assistant from each department to exchange ideas and experiences throughout the academic year.

The inaugural orientation/workshop for "first time in the classroom" TAs of the College of Arts and Letters was held in August of 2003 before the beginning of the Fall Semester. On two consecutive afternoons it featured faculty presentations on four topics: *The Notre Dame Student*, *The First Day of Teaching and Setting the Tone for the Semester*, *Leading Discussions*, and *Assessing and Grading Student Work*. This

⁴ External Reviewers' Report on the University of Notre Dame's Kaneb Center for Teaching and Learning, January 31, 2002.

introduction of our TAs to Notre Dame's teaching culture is also intended to be a lead-in to the Kaneb Center's (year long) programming for TAs. As these presentations were very well received, the plan is to hold them before the beginning of the Spring and Fall semesters, invite all TAs, obtain the explicit endorsement of these events from the departments, extend the program to TAs in the Colleges of Science, Engineering, and Business. A closely related issue that has already arisen in the College of Science is how to improve the quality of tutorials (break out sessions for the large lecture classes) in mathematics and physics. Other teaching centers assess the readiness of graduate students for the classroom by testing the English ability of international TAs and by providing "microteaching" experiences. The inclusion of such activity in the Kaneb Center's program will be discussed. The expansion of the existing English as a second language program and the possibility that it be made mandatory (in cases where this suggests itself) will be considered.

It is a responsibility of the Kaneb Center, again in collaboration with the departments and the Graduate School, to bolster the credentials of graduate students who plan academic careers with a teaching certification. Discussions to make this certification program more extensive and to possibly include "job talk" and "job interview" experiences have begun.

*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.*⁵

D. Explore Teaching Strategies and the Role of Technology

Technology and teaching is a subtle interface. There is little doubt that learning takes place differently in an age that is perhaps best captured metaphorically by the films that merge the real and the virtual. The Kaneb Center needs to promote the integration of effective technology into the teaching and learning environment. On the other hand, it is equally clear that "face-to-face" and "mind-to-mind" communication as exemplified by a dynamic seminar needs emphasis as never before. This is the polarity that teaching strategies and their implementation need to respond to. In the words of Derek Bok (in a recent PBS interview) we need to "experiment until we get it right." The Kaneb Center should promote the recognition that

*There is a need to bring greater innovation to the curriculum and to the teaching and learning process. The refined computing skills of incoming students need to be taken into account in the incorporation of this and other mechanisms of instruction. This exploration of alternate modes of instruction is even more imperative in the teaching of foreign languages and in the context of instruction for the fine and performing arts.*⁶

⁵ External Reviewers' Report on the University of Notre Dame's Kaneb Center for Teaching and Learning, January 31, 2002.

⁶ *Fulfilling the Promise*, Strategic Planning Document Submitted by the President, Rev. Edward A. Malloy, C.S.C., to the Trustees of the University of Notre Dame, May 2003.

The technological assistance – in the form of animations, simulations, imagery, digital videos, WebCT, and PowerPoint – that the Kaneb Center’s technology lab makes available to the faculty ought to be broadened. Especially because the efforts of both Kevin Barry and Chris Clark in this regard have received much praise, more faculty should be encouraged to use these technologies in order to enrich and organize the learning experience of their students. Towards this goal, the Kaneb Center has begun to collect a directory CoursePages@ND of Notre Dame courses that have a web presence that adds considerable intellectual substance to the course (and goes far beyond the simple posting of syllabi and assignments).

This is also the general realm in which further interaction with OIT, the Library, and the First Year of Studies deserves consideration. The relocation of Kevin Abbott of the OIT and his ongoing interactions with faculty to the Kaneb Center technology lab has already occurred, a collaborative Tablet PC pilot project with OIT has been launched, and discussions with Nigel Butterwick of the Library about, e.g., e-reserves are continuing. Finally, the Kaneb Center should continue to support a modest program on the scholarship of teaching, a concept that provides an essential framework for systematic examination, reflection, and exchange on issues of student learning.

E. Enhancing the Academic Environment for the University’s Undergraduates within the Departments

It appears to be the case that the quality of the departmental academic environments for undergraduates varies greatly from department to department. This is a domain that stretches from curricular matters to the vitality of student faculty interactions to undergraduate colloquia and organized undergraduate clubs. It also includes the consideration of capstone courses and experiences and access to undergraduate research. Recent reflections by President Malloy put the latter issue this way:

We must foster increased undergraduate participation in research and in departmental capstone experiences. Both research and anecdotal evidence suggest that the best way to foster excitement and enthusiasm for the intellectual life is to provide multiple opportunities for undergraduates to participate in research with their faculty and graduate student colleagues. This has become a common characteristic of many of our best undergraduate majors. Undergraduate research may take many shapes and forms, from in situ projects far from the campus to laboratory based collaborative endeavors to computer facilitated interaction with students and faculty on multiple campuses. ... In the same way that undergraduate research can open up new ways of seeing reality and provide clarity about one's future professional goals so capstone experiences can help synthesize what one has learned during the several years of an undergraduate curriculum and provide an opportunity to articulate for a broader audience the fruits of that labor.⁷

The Kaneb Center should encourage departments to energize such efforts. It should continue to support curriculum initiatives, especially in the context of the enhancement

⁷ *Fulfilling the Promise*, Strategic Planning Document Submitted by the President, Rev. Edward A. Malloy, C.S.C., to the Trustees of the University of Notre Dame, May 2003.

of the university core requirements that the new Curriculum Committee will oversee. Current initiatives in this context that the Kaneb Center is supporting include the curriculum reevaluation of the Department of Chemistry, and an effort to connect the performance of Stoppard's *Arcadia* (to be performed in the DeBartolo Hall for the Performing Arts in the Spring of 2005) to the academic experience of our undergraduates (by exploring its inclusion in the university seminars, the writing program, and the core course).

F. The Kaneb Center as Facilitator

Whenever an appropriate opportunity arises, the Kaneb Center should act as a facilitator for education related initiatives of our faculty. One example of this has been the assistance that the Kaneb Center has recently provided to a faculty member with an NSF CAREER Award application. Another example is an ongoing exploration of an initiative of the nanotechnology group at Notre Dame. If successful, it would place an NSF funded Center for Research/Learning/Teaching of Nanotechnology at Notre Dame. More explicitly, NSF solicitation 03-0344 calls for a very ambitious partnership of institutions and units dedicated to both research and education. The conversation, organized in part by the Kaneb Center, now includes (in addition to the Nanotechnology Research Center in Engineering) CAPP (Computer Applications Program), Psychology (cognitive group), the Institute for Educational Initiatives, the Quarknet Program, and units (e.g., Indiana University) that would supply components (e.g., assessment) not available at Notre Dame.

G. Summary and Implementation

In addition to having the university's prominent scholar/teachers enhance the Teaching/Learning program of the Kaneb Center, the Center will promote the following:

An effort to encourage PAC during its current Fall 2003 session to issue a Recommendation to the departmental CAPs that will call for the broader and deeper evaluation of the teaching of renewal/tenure/promotion candidates along the lines suggested in *Addressing Teaching at Notre Dame*. Such Recommendations would accomplish two things directly: raise the level of consciousness about teaching on our campus and energize the interaction between the Kaneb Center and the academic departments. Without such an initiative, Kaneb-Center-sponsored-discourse on teaching will continue to be viewed by faculty and departments alike as having largely marginal significance. The Teaching Orientation for incoming faculty members will be expanded and the attempt will be made to involve (more of) the deans. The consultations about teaching with departments – both practices and structures – will continue.

The expansion of the program for Teaching Assistants and the promotion of intertwined discipline specific programs by departments will receive continued attention. An important aspect of this is the expansion of the Fall/Spring Orientation Program for TAs in the Arts and Letters, as well as the widening of the umbrella to Science and Engineering. The expectation is that this will be in place for Fall 2004. A strengthening of the program that certifies the teaching of TAs and introduces them to the academic professions is also planned for the current academic year in proposed collaboration with the departments and the Graduate School.

The effort to increase the awareness of faculty about the possibilities of technology will continue. The hope is to increase the activity of the Kaneb Center's Technology lab considerably. The directory CoursePages@ND will lead this effort off.

Conversations to connect the performance of the play *Arcadia* (slated in the new facility for Spring 2005) to Notre Dame's undergraduates have begun with the Department of Film, Theater and Television, appropriate deans, as well as physicists, mathematicians, and philosophers on the faculty.

My contract as director of the center ends after the academic year 2005/06. During the Spring semester of 2006 a broad scale faculty survey measuring their interactions with the Kaneb Center will be carried out. This was last done in the Spring of 1999.

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Director
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