

Chapter 1: Overview and Reputation

Introduction and Context

This self-study report was compiled to facilitate the 2014 program review of the University Center for the Advancement of Teaching (UCAT) at The Ohio State University. While Ohio State has a long history of regular reviews of its academic programs and departments, this assessment has not usually extended to academic support units. In fact, the current review of UCAT is the first review of an academic support unit to be regularly scheduled at Ohio State. Other support units will be reviewed using a similar process in the future. The template for this self-study was adapted from that used by academic units (see <http://oaa.osu.edu/programreview.html>), revised to fit the mission, objectives, and activities of UCAT. The first eight chapters present the current situation and recent past of UCAT, based on an analysis of the best available data. Chapter 9 summarizes key issues raised by that data and analysis and suggests potential steps to address those issues.

Overview of Unit and History

The University Center for the Advancement of Teaching (UCAT) is the central teaching support unit at The Ohio State University. UCAT can trace its roots to the Instructional Development and Evaluation unit of the Office of Learning Resources, which was created in 1980 to add instructional consultation services to a media services unit. An orientation for Graduate Teaching Associates was begun in 1981.

While the first teaching center in higher education, the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan, was established in 1962, Sorcinelli *et al*¹ note that the 1980s saw an "upsurge in faculty development programs" (p. 3). Ohio State was in sync with national trends with creation of a central unit to support teaching at the time it did.

In 1987, Ohio State's Instructional Development and Evaluation unit became Faculty & TA Development in the Center for Teaching Excellence, a move designed to highlight the teaching emphasis of the mission. Although the unit retained that name until 2009, the parent organization became the Center for Instructional Resources in 1993-1994, and the unit reported to Academic Technology Services. In 1994, the unit was separated from media and computing services and assumed a dual reporting line to the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) and the College of Education.

¹ Sorcinelli, M.D., Austin, A., Eddy, P., & Beach, A. (2006). *Creating the future of faculty development*. Bolton, MA: Anker.

In 2000, the unit began a generational shift in its professional consulting staff and a significant revision of its services. The unit refocused efforts to prioritize course redesign, learning outcomes assessments, and technology-enhanced teaching and learning. These new priorities enabled longer-term professional development for Ohio State faculty, staff, and GTAs, as well as significant new service areas. New areas included greater support to academic units on teaching-related issues, such as GTA support, peer review of teaching, and curriculum development and assessment. In addition, the unit began to promote and assist faculty to engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning. With the Faculty & TA Development unit advancing these new priorities, new areas of service, and greater support to academic units, Ohio State was again in sync with national trends.

Reporting lines were streamlined in 2005, so that the unit now reports only to the OAA. Since that time, the unit has aligned its focus with that of OAA, to “stimulate and enable academic excellence.”

As the unit continued to expand and develop, we found that the name Faculty & TA Development expressed neither the range of services nor the mission, vision, objectives, and core principles of the unit. In addition to providing support to individuals, our unit offers programs, communities, departmental partnerships, and interdisciplinary collaborations. Thus, in 2009, the unit was renamed the University Center for the Advancement of Teaching. In 2011 the unit engaged in an internal restructuring and, since that time, we have revised both the mission statement and philosophy of teaching statement.

Mission

This mission is primarily in support of The Ohio State University’s Core Goal #1: **Teaching and Learning:** to provide an unsurpassed, student-centered learning experience led by engaged, world-class faculty and enhanced by a globally diverse student body.

<http://oaa.osu.edu/vision-mission-values-goals.html>

Our mission at UCAT is to support and advocate for all who teach at Ohio State. We aim to help Ohio State’s teachers approach their work in a scholarly and reflective way, engaging with the research on effective pedagogies, thus promoting continuous improvement of student learning. We likewise strive to create a community wherein student-focused teaching principles and practices are valued and in which teachers feel connected to each other. Taken together, we believe these things engender a campus culture where teachers have access to the tools, support, and recognition they need to be confident, fulfilled, and effective in their pedagogical roles at Ohio State.

Goals

In 2013, UCAT staff used the backwards design process advanced by Wiggins and McTighe² to identify the unit's major goals and articulated observable and measurable objectives. The goals reflect how teachers with whom we work will be different after using the services. There are seven goals that are listed below and 49 corresponding objectives that are listed in Chapter 5.

- A. Teachers take a scholarly approach to teaching
- B. Teachers are reflective about teaching
- C. Teachers foster student learning
- D. Teachers feel connected to a teaching community
- E. Teachers demonstrate confidence in and derive satisfaction from their teaching experience
- F. Ohio State recognizes UCAT as an effective advocate for teaching.
- G. UCAT contributes positively to the field of Educational Development

Philosophy of Practice

While it is common for university instructors to create statements of their philosophy of teaching, and not uncommon for individual educational developers to have a philosophy of practice, it is perhaps less typical that UCAT consulting staff have developed a shared statement of the unit's philosophy of our practice. Beginning in 2004, UCAT consulting staff collaborated to negotiate a shared set of guiding principles and to explicate how we try to enact those in our work as we strive to meet our goals. This document has undergone two major revisions since. Below is a summary of the document (see Appendix A for our full statement of our unit philosophy of practice).

The support and services we provide are guided by the core principles of Community, Service, and Scholarship.

Community

We believe knowledge is most effectively produced in a diverse community of learners. To that end, we continuously strive to foster relationships with and between clients to encourage growth in the context of teaching, forming a collaborative community in which people can share and learn from one another's expertise and experience.

² Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J.(2005). *Understanding by Design* (Expanded 2nd Ed. USA). Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Scholarship

As members of the academic community, we understand that scholarship is the core value and practice of our institution. We believe that this culture of analytic rigor and evidence should guide teaching and service, just as it does discovery-focused research. We adopt the view of our late colleague Donald H. Wulff of the University of Washington who described the relationship of educational developers to scholarship as a three-legged stool: we help faculty apply scholarly strategies to their teaching, we are critical consumers and interpreters of the literature on teaching and learning, and we are actively engaged in producing scholarship on teaching and learning and scholarship on educational development practice.

Service

Our role within the University is to support teachers at all levels of their development, in order to advance the institution's ultimate goal of enhancing students' academic success. We do this by meeting the individualized needs of teachers, working with university departments, programs, and administrators, and creating a student-centered community and culture of teaching.

Guided by the mission, goals, and philosophy of practice, UCAT staff members cultivate a broad and deep expertise across the entire field of post-secondary pedagogy and to assist Ohio State instructors with selecting and implementing the most appropriate, effective, and evidence-based teaching tools for their situation, their style, and their students. Moreover, we strive to be effective change agents for institutional development and advocates for world-class teaching and learning.

External Reputation

Many of our core services and objectives are common across the field of educational development in higher education. Most teaching centers seek to enhance the quality of student learning by supporting the work of instructors in a scholarly way. However, our scope of work is broader than many other centers. We support our clients across the span of their careers, from brand new graduate teaching associates to senior faculty and emeriti. We work not only with individuals but also with academic units ranging from small departments to entire colleges. Additionally, we sponsor teaching focused communities and groups and support multi-unit projects and institutional initiatives of all sizes.

In addition to providing services for the Ohio State community, UCAT professional consulting staff members participate in national and international conversations about university pedagogy at the highest level. We regularly present at conferences and serve in a

wide variety of leadership positions in professional associations that deal with college teaching and faculty development, such as the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education, the International Alliance of Teacher Scholars, and Ohio Teaching Enhancement Programs. We are often invited to consult with and present at other institutions on college teaching and learning and on faculty development. UCAT professional consulting staff members are very well regarded as leaders in several areas of the scholarship of educational development. We have authored chapters on the assessment of teaching centers, based on our long-term engagement with the topic, in both of the central texts of the field. We have studied the comparative outcomes of one-time events and longer-duration efforts in educational development and are beginning to incorporate those findings in our practice. We are also among the leading scholars on graduate and professional student development and course design institutes (CDI). CDI is one of the more interesting and important current emerging national trends in educational development.

UCAT has a strong reputation among our counterparts in the field of educational development. Several of our former graduate associates, both consultants and interns, have gone on to professional positions in the field.

UCAT as a unit has been involved in several national projects on the improvement of college teaching, including serving as lead institution for the Building Scholarly Communities cluster of the AAHE/Carnegie Campus Program. We have participated in both the Graduate Teaching Competencies consortium and the Faculty Professional Learning Communities consortium. We have also provided faculty and organizational support for the Institute for New Faculty Developers.

Further discussion of staff scholarship and service follow in Chapters 2 and 4, and a full list of activities appears in the appendices.