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The Importance of Good Coffee

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Governance and Leadership: Introduction

Governance in Jesuit colleges and universities decides all manner of policies from broadest to the most modest, and means to implement them, given limited resources. A form of governance sets the who and how of decision-making. Until the 1960s, Jesuit colleges and universities were directly governed by the Society of Jesus. For example, philosophy and theology requirements at my university were ultimately decided by the provincial, though in consultation with local authorities, all of whom were Jesuits.

Post-Vatican II (1965 and after), Jesuit superiors in the United States recognized, in consultation with university authorities, that our colleges and universities could not and should not be governed directly by them. Hence governance models common in American higher education were generally adopted, though the precise character and the date of adoption

varied greatly from school to school. The common models themselves had been challenged and changed by movements for more participatory forms of democracy, characteristic of the 1960s. Governance forms and practices remain imperfect. Academic shared governance conflicts with corporate management models. Effective governance and leadership engage the knowledge and commitment of all members according to their particular institutional roles and their particular individual gifts. Each of our contributors describes shared governance or leadership in a different context: in a small college, in a college with collective bargaining, and in a large university with several schools/colleges.

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The Importance of Good Coffee

Building Community among Faculty at Xavier University: The Center for Teaching Excellence

By Michael J. Graham, S.J.

What does the faculty want? It's a perennial question, often provoking myriad responses from faculty and consternation among administrators. For many years, in multiple public forums, when faculty at Xavier were asked some variation of the question, one faculty member in particular would stand up and state, "Two words: dining room." Aside from the attraction of easily accessible food, the statement succinctly captured the faculty's desire for opportunities to meet and interact with other faculty across the University, in a venue that promoted good conversation and fellowship, that is, community. Even at a moderate-size university like Xavier, it seems that faculty have difficulties getting to know each other. We can't assume that community emerges naturally, at least beyond departments, and certainly not outside of colleges. Facilitating community has to be intentional, and what better way to achieve this than to build upon what our faculty does best – teach and educate our students. Xavier's new Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) has begun to foster community while supporting faculty members' efforts to become more reflective and effective teachers.

The Center

The conceptualization, design and realization of the CTE unfolded over several years, with faculty input along the way. The CTE officially opened in August, 2010, in dedicated space in the University's new Michael J. Conaton Learning Commons in the very heart of campus. The Center is co-directed by a faculty director and an administrative director who report to the associate provost for academic affairs. An advisory committee of seven faculty members assists in planning the CTE's programming.

The CTE's mission is to "support Xavier faculty in creating rich, collaborative learning environments that challenge our students intellectually, morally, and spiritually. The Center promotes effective teaching that is reflective, engaging, creative, and informed by both pedagogical and disciplinary knowledge." In fulfilling the mission, two of the CTE's fundamental goals speak directly to building community among faculty. First, the CTE cultivates environments and relationships to build networks and communities of learning

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and scholarship. Second, the Center inspires faculty to reflect on their work as well as to share and learn from the experience, diversity, and expertise of their colleagues. The CTE provides a broad range of programming, including speakers, workshops, faculty panels, brown bag discussions, and a number of signature programs — Faculty Learning Communities, Faculty-in-Residence, Teaching-Mentoring pairs, and faculty fellows.

During the 2010-2011 academic year, 185 different faculty members, well over half of all full-time faculty on campus, representing all three colleges and 33 departments, attended at least one CTE program. On average, faculty members participated in 2.6 programs. Assessment results confirm that community-building is an important outcome. In a survey sent to all faculty members at the end of the year, 86 percent agreed or strongly agreed that "it is important that the CTE build community among faculty," and 69 percent agreed or strongly agreed that "it is important that the CTE build community among faculty and staff."

The CTE fosters community in a number of ways, including providing a variety of programs of potential interest to a wide range of faculty, distributing a weekly email to all faculty describing upcoming events and deadlines, and co-sponsoring and/or providing space for other faculty-relevant programs. However, three characteristics of the Center are particularly significant for its community-building capacity.

First, the CTE is *centrally located on campus*, within the University's new Conaton Learning Commons, and provides physical space that supports a variety of functions. Two classrooms are used for observing classes and for workshops. A kitchenette and lounge support informal interaction as well as some programs, such as brown-bag discussions. Office space is provided for the directors and the CTE faculty fellows. The configuration of the space allows traffic to flow easily from one space or activity to another. In addition, the CTE's central location on campus and its close proximity to complementary spaces and services, such as the library, classrooms, an auditorium, and instructional technology and design services, draw faculty from across the campus.

Faculty small groups

Second, the Center *supports a number of programs that intentionally and purposefully foster community* among faculty around teaching. Most effective in this regard are three of the CTE's signature programs: Faculty Learning Communities, Faculty-in-Residence, and Teaching-Mentoring Pairs. Xavier's Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) implement a widespread model based on the work of Dr. Milt Cox

at Miami University. Communities are cross-disciplinary groups of 8-12 faculty members who engage in a year-long collaboration dedicated to exploring one theme or issue related to teaching and learning. The FLC is guided by key questions and directed toward results defined by the group, and incorporates both individual and group projects. Whenever possible, FLC membership represents multiple colleges and includes no more than two faculty members from a single department. Each FLC is expected to share their results with the wider campus community. Fifty-one faculty members, drawing from 21 different departments, participated in five FLCS that began in 2010-2011, and thirty-eight faculty members will participate in five FLCs that will begin in 2011-2012.

Building community is an obvious expectation and outcome of the FLCs. A survey administered to faculty midway through their FLC found that 92 percent of the members hoped that their FLC would lead them to feel more connected to the faculty community, and 89 percent hoped to develop deeper relationships with other faculty. At the end of the year, among faculty who had participated in an FLC, 94 percent agreed or strongly agreed that FLCs have the potential to improve the climate among the faculty community, and 87 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they have the potential to improve the climate among the larger University community.

An additional program that supports community building is the **Faculty in Residence Program** that provides faculty and staff with access to some of Xavier's most talented and experienced teachers, through two primary components. First, the Faculty in Residence periodically teaches a selected course in one of the CTE classrooms and opens it to faculty observers, followed by a discussion of the class. Second, the Faculty in Residence offers a series of lectures related to the course, designed specifically for staff members across the university. During the fall of 2010, 25 faculty members from 15 departments attended one or more class observations, and 19 staff members attended at least one lecture.

Faculty pairs

A third CTE activity that promotes community is the **Teaching Mentoring Pairs** program. Pairs of faculty from different academic departments, at similar or different stages of their careers, observe one another's classes on two occasions, and after each pair of visits, the CTE pays for lunch to allow the members to discuss their observations with each other. During the spring of 2011, 32 faculty members (16 pairs) from all three colleges and 15 departments participated. In an open-ended evaluation of the program, several

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All Xavier photos courtesy of Gregory Rust.

All students at Xavier must take theology classes as part of the core curriculum, which are taught by the University's most published group of faculty, including Sarah Melcher, chair of the Department of Theology.

participants spoke directly to the community: "it was nice to get to know another faculty member outside my department/college. We plan to get together once a semester to talk about teaching," "the opportunity to meet and get to know colleagues from other departments has great social value for me, helped me learn more about Xavier culture, and form a stronger connection to the faculty, and "developing relationships with faculty in other disciplines is an important aspect of this opportunity."

Art, books, and lunch

Significantly, the CTE's space and programs promotes community among faculty specifically around teaching. A final characteristic of the CTE that builds community in general is that it provides ample opportunities for informal interaction among faculty. The kitchenette and lounge, furnished with high-top tables, chairs, and sofas make the CTE a comfortable space for lunch, coffee between classes, and conversations with colleagues. Rotating faculty art exhibits as well as reading and browsing materials, including *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and articles and books related to pedagogy and issues in higher education, makes the CTE a comfortable place for faculty to pass time.

The importance of good coffee cannot be overestimated! Perhaps less obvious is the importance of actually programming informal interaction. During the first week of the new academic year, the CTE hosts a Week of Welcome that provides food and prizes throughout the week and culminates with a happy hour in the faculty lounge. Continental breakfast is provided in the lounge during the first and final weeks of each semester. One of the more popular informal CTE programs is monthly happy hours, held on Friday afternoons, and sponsored by campus offices or programs, including the Office of the President. Ninety-two percent of respondents to the end-of-the-year survey agreed or strongly agreed that the lounge should be an informal gathering place for faculty, and 94% agreed or strongly agreed that the lounge should actively host programs and events that draw faculty together.

Results from the end-of-the-year survey emphasize the community-building potential of the CTE. Fifty-two percent of respondents indicated that during a CTE program they had met at least one new person, 38 percent met several new people, 65 percent had at least one good conversation with another faculty member, and 56 percent caught up with faculty they don't often see. More generally, 63 percent felt more connected to the faculty community, and 44 percent felt good about the University investment in its faculty.

A faculty dining room may or may not be in the cards someday – although a section of the new university dining hall will help in that regard. But the Center for Teaching Excellence is well on its way to helping Xavier faculty build an enhanced sense of community centered on those activities and interest that are at the heart of university life. ■