

Center for Teaching Excellence Proposal and Implementation Plan

Prepared by
the Committee for the Encouragement and Evaluation of Teaching

Approved by the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Approved by the UNK Faculty Senate

PURPOSE The commitment of the University of Nebraska at Kearney to be the state's premiere institution for undergraduate education requires a parallel commitment to recruiting, developing and supporting outstanding university teachers. A key aspect of the university's efforts to fulfill that commitment is the establishment of a Center for Teaching Excellence to provide services and resources that encourage and support excellent teaching.

OBJECTIVES The development of a Center for Teaching Excellence at the University of Nebraska at Kearney will contribute to the essential mission of the university-high-quality undergraduate education-by providing resources and support that enhance faculty development. When established, the Center will offer:

- a program of workshops, symposia, and other seminars on teaching strategies, styles, methods, and other issues;
- a resources center with a library of materials on various elements of teaching, including such items as participatory methods, distance learning, and uses of instructional technology;
- a publication series consisting of a web-site, newsletter, handbooks for teachers, and an occasional papers series on selected topics;
- a grant program to support faculty participation in conferences and programs that develop teaching, as well as faculty development of new courses, teaching approaches, applications of instructional technology, and other teaching improvement activities;
- a voluntary consulting program to provide specific assistance to individual faculty seeking aid.

PLAN The establishment of a Center for Teaching Excellence will be implemented in phases that allow for regular evaluation and fine-tuning of the program as it is developed. In effect, later phases will be determined by planning and evaluation in earlier phases. A phased implementation will also allow the Center to make important contributions to the UNK teaching mission more quickly, while building resources and assets over time for a fuller program of teaching improvement activities.

Phase I

The first phase-initiation-will last for two years and will involve basic, low-cost steps designed to produce immediate contributions and longer-term program development to institutionalize the Center for Teaching Excellence in the university community. Beginning in the fall of 1999, this phase will include, at the least, the following actions:

- the hiring of a Coordinator from the UNK community (this position should be filled by the end of the Spring 1999 semester);
- the establishment of an Advisory Committee (refer to the Addendum) to work with the Coordinator on the Center's activities and planning (this committee should be established by the end of the Spring 1999 semester);
- the securing of an initial budget and the acquisition of grant support from external sources to aid in the initial activities and development of the Center.

The Coordinator and Advisory Committee will focus their activities in this first phase on the initiation of four program items:

1. developing an immediate workshop program bringing faculty from the university together on a variety of topics related to teaching;
2. producing a web-site, newsletter and faculty teaching handbooks, as well as planning for a regular topical "papers" series;
3. acquiring resources for a resource library;
4. planning the development of the Center's teaching excellence program for the future (as a part of this item, it is expected that the Coordinator and/or members of the Advisory Committee will attend appropriate conferences concerned with professional development).

Phase II

The second phase-institutionalization-will entail an additional two years and will involve the consolidation and expansion of a regular program of teaching improvement support and resources for the University of Nebraska at Kearney community. In terms of infrastructure, this phase will continue to rely on a Coordinator and the Advisory Committee from the UNK community to administer the Center's activities. Additionally, a small staff should be assigned to support the Center's activities and an expanded budget should be established by the university administration. Programmatically, during this phase, it is expected that the Center will establish:

1. A regular program of faculty development workshops and conferences drawing on UNK faculty and invited participants from outside UNK. This workshop program should include, at the least, annual new faculty orientation workshops, focused workshops on specific teaching topics, styles, methods, etc., and additional colloquia on tips, techniques, and problems.

2. A regular series of publications to support teaching improvement, including web-delivered publications.
3. An extensive set of resources on which faculty can draw to hone their teaching skills and styles, including instructional material and financial support for teaching improvement activities such as course development/revision, use of instructional technology, and participation in conferences on teaching.
4. A voluntary consulting program through which faculty can acquire assistance in enhancing their teaching, preparing teaching and course portfolios, and developing courses.

Phase III

The third and final phase-professionalization-will involve the establishment of a physical center on the UNK campus, the appointment of a full-time director or its equivalent, and the completed assignment of a dedicated staff for the Center's activities. Subject to the program development led by the Coordinator and the Advisory Committee in the previous phases, the Center for Teaching Excellence should, by this fifth year, have a regular program consisting of new faculty orientation and development, workshops and conferences, publications, a resource library, voluntary consultation opportunities (especially peer-networks), and funding for faculty development activities.

Addendum

As approved by the UNK Faculty Senate, the Advisory Committee will be comprised of:

- five elected faculty, one from each college and the Library;
- one student, selected by the Student Senate;
- one faculty, selected by the SVCAA;
- one faculty, selected from the Graduate Council;
- the Director of Sponsored Programs (ex officio, non-voting).

The members of the Advisory Committee will advise and assist the Coordinator in all aspects of planning and implementing the Center for Teaching Excellence at the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

