

ACS Mellon Foundation Faculty Renewal Grant

Final Report

Project Title: Workshop on Engaged Learning across the Curriculum

Institution: Centre College

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Amount Awarded: \$ 5900.00

Dates of Project: August 2008-August 2009

As the title indicates, the bulk of this grant defrayed the costs of conducting a workshop on Engaged Learning across the Curriculum at Centre College on August 22, 2008. This workshop replaced the faculty retreat typically held at the start of each academic year. In addition to the refreshments, most of the expenses arose from purchasing a copy of Ken Bain's *What the Best College Teachers Do* for each faculty member at Centre and the cost of inviting a guest speaker, Andrea Bakker of Miami University, to address us on the issue of assessment. (The choice of Ken Bain's book was a change to the original proposal, in which we had budgeted for a speaker with the reputation of someone like Ken Bain. Unfortunately, it was impossible (and too expensive) to acquire a speaker of that caliber. We decided, therefore, to purchase a copy of Bain's book and seek a speaker of lesser stature.) The workshop's goal was to spur thoughtful discussion of engaged learning and the strategies that might promote it.

The workshop began with a large-group discussion during which we developed a definition of "engaged learning" and related it to the material in Bain's book (see the attached agenda). Break-out sessions to continue our discussion of Bain then followed. We entitled this section "What We Can Steal," and asked each small group to develop a list of ideas from Bain that might be worth implementing in our own classrooms, as well as a list of concerns that might arise from such "theft." These lists were then posted in a common area for all to examine. Following some time for informal discussion of those lists, Dr. Bakker, Coordinator of Assessment at Miami University, then spoke with the entire group on the topic of assessment. During this presentation, she asked each of us to pair up and to share our own criteria and tools for student assessment in a particular course. Following lunch, and

some time for questions for Dr. Bakker, we again broke into smaller groups to discuss specific strategies for fostering student engagement. (See the attached agenda for the list of these strategies.) Finally, at the close of the day, all interested faculty were asked to join us for a brief informational session on our plans to continue this discussion of engaged learning throughout the coming academic year.

During the course of the academic year 2008-2009, a group of approximately 20 faculty members met twice during the fall term and once again in the spring to discuss varying issues arising from the implementation of the strategies discussed during the workshop. Our first meeting, in September, focused on sharing the various strategies we had adopted for our fall-term classes. This was followed by a meeting in December to report back on those efforts and to address a specific concern each of us continued to share – assessment. We met again in February to continue our discussion as we began a new term. Finally, in preparation for the “Engaged Learning Guidebook” that we have compiled as a result of this grant, we asked the faculty of Centre College to share with us some of the strategies they have used in the past that might benefit other teachers. This guidebook will shortly be posted on the Centre College Center for Teaching and Learning’s website and can easily be made available for colleagues in the ACS.

By all accounts, this experience was a success. Attendance at the workshop was strong, especially for a noncompulsory summer meeting, with 66 of approximately 100 full-time faculty at Centre College participating (not counting the 6 grant authors). A survey of workshop participants yielded responses from 50, or approximately 76%. Of these, when asked if the workshop motivated them to examine their teaching strategies, 36% answered that they “strongly agreed” and 52% responded that they “agreed.” When queried about focusing our morning discussion on Bain’s book, 38% strongly approved, while 52% approved. In addition, fully one-fifth of the faculty committed to continuing the discussion of engaged learning after the retreat. A follow-up survey a little less than one year after the workshop indicated that engaged learning remains a topic of great interest among the faculty. Over 80% of respondents implemented some form of engaged learning over the past year, while over 40% of those who did so were motivated by the workshop.

The chief lessons learned from this experience include the identification of a wide array of engaged learning strategies that our colleagues currently employ, the applicability of engaged learning to all disciplines, and the recognition of the fact that engaged learning does not require the wholesale alteration to current courses. Indeed, by maintaining the focus on the students’ active commitment to their own education, we become cognizant of the myriad ways such a commitment can be elicited. Engaged learning demands a reorientation, but not necessarily a dramatic overhaul of previous strategies. As one colleague put it, engaged learning doesn’t require you to “re-invent the wheel.”

Overall, we have documented an enduring commitment to engaged learning from a broad spectrum of Centre’s faculty that this workshop only intensified. By making more public and intentional our colleagues’ many conversations about teaching and their experiences in the classroom, this workshop has improved our institution by providing a springboard for further analysis and discussion of an aspect of our professional lives that can all-too-often be taken for granted. As one of our respondents put it: “Thanks for bringing these issues to the forefront. I don’t think there is enough genuine sharing and discussion of these ideas/techniques on campus, and this was a good kick-start for the community.”

CENTRE COLLEGE
Faculty Retreat

Friday, August 22, 2008

- 8:30** Breakfast
Evans-Lively Room, Carnegie
- 9:00** Introduction: Wrestling with Engaged Learning
Evans-Lively Room, Carnegie
- 9:30** Small Group Discussions: "What Can We Steal..."
Crouse 301, 302, 313, 401, 405, 468
- 10:30** Reconvene: "Engaged Milling"
Vahlkamp Theater Lobby
- 11:00** Assessing Student Engagement Workshop
Andrea I. Bakker, Ph.D.
Coordinator of Assessment
Office of Liberal Education and Assessment
Miami University

Vahlkamp Theater
- 12:00** Lunch
Evans-Lively Room, Carnegie
- 1:00** Q and A with Dr. Bakker
Evans-Lively Room, Carnegie
- 1:30** Collaborative Workshops
Active Discussion Techniques – Andrea Abrams
Role Playing and Simulations – Steve Beaudoin
Process-Oriented, Guided Inquiry Learning in Lab and Lecture – Jeff Fieberg
Making the World Your Classroom – Sarah Goodrum
Addressing Student (Mis)conceptions – Lori Hartmann-Mahmud
Using Technology to Enhance Engagement – Keeta Martin Holmes
Building a Syllabus with Students – Julie James
Craftwork: Creativity and Engagement – Ken Keffer
Writing as Engagement – John Kinkade
Creating Rubrics and Scoring Guides – Donna Plummer
Low Risk, High Return Assignments – Peggy Richey
- 2:30** Next Steps: Implementing Engaged Learning in 2008-2009 (Optional)
Evans-Lively Room, Carnegie