Guest Editor's Introduction

Teaching to the Choir

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As one of twenty-five faculty members identified as teachers of excellence, I was invited to lunch a year ago by the new president of our university. Being mindful of the critique of excellence made by Readings (1996) and others, I wanted to explain that I was not a teacher of excellence, but a teacher of writing and writing teachers. There was no chance to do so, and I was not going to turn down a free lunch because of momentary discomfort with a term I am sure was meant as a compliment, so I just accepted it and sat down. After we had been overfed, the president spoke briefly of his own love of teaching and the debt he owed to the teachers he had encountered along the way to becoming a surgeon. He then invited us to share our own stories of teaching.

Most of my colleagues immediately recognized the occasion as epideictic, calling for speeches celebrating the deep pleasures of engaging with inquisitive students, recalling the moments when former students dropped by to share their successes or mourn their losses, and confirming our communal commitment to the classroom as the site of our greatest achievements. A few did not stand and testify but engaged instead in table talk. Some of the conversations were a bit cautious and turned on questions of the president's motives in inviting us. By what criteria had we been selected? What were we going to be asked to do in repayment for this celebratory lunch? (Everyone there had either read Robert Heinlein or knew him by the famous aphorism, "There is no such thing as a free lunch").[1] Other conversations took on a more skeptical tone. What was the point of celebrating teaching? If the university

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really valued teaching, the lecturers occupying more and more offices in our departments of English, history, and foreign languages, people who teach four or five classes a semester, would not be drawing salaries among the lowest in the university.

The luncheon, it turned out, had a more benign and potentially more redeeming purpose. The president wanted to know what we thought should be done to enhance the teaching of undergraduates. Then he wanted to know, if he invited us back, if we, in turn, would invite another faculty member we thought was a teacher of excellence to come with us. After that, we would be asked to drop out, and those folks we invited would be responsible for bringing in another teacher, and so on. The aim was to activate a succession of people committed to undergraduate education, eventually cascading into a pool of faculty whose highest priority is the pursuit of excellence in teaching.

I recall this story because it crystallizes for me some of the best and some of the most ineffective approaches to the professional development of teaching, issues that serve as the focus of the essays collected here. The lunch was invitational, rather than imposed — a great practice — but since those attending the first two meetings were never invited back, they failed to create a sustainable community. That failure rendered a great start ultimately ineffective. This volume is, in many ways, an attempt to make future efforts more effective.

I have told this opening story in the first-person singular, but this special issue is the result of a collaborative effort among the three of us who edited it and all of those who contributed. A number of us met at a conference in the summer of 2006 and presented papers on various facets of the professional development of teachers. The conversations generated by those presentations continued well past the appointed break time, and we agreed that the subject of professional development in the humanities needed greater scholarly attention than it had garnered.

One impetus for the project came from our own experiences of providing professional development activities for our colleagues, newly hired faculty, and teaching assistants. We brought with us a broad range of experience. Most of us have taught both English literature and composition, and some of us have administrative positions at our universities — Deborah Minter is the vice chair of English at the University of Lincoln – Nebraska, Margaret Marshall is the associate director of the Re-Invention Center at the University of Miami, and a number of us direct either composition programs, WAC programs, or writing centers at our universities. These experiences and positions have impelled us into professional development activities, and we

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bring that experience to bear in our essays here. But we also sought to move beyond narratives of those experiences to think through our practices and discern underlying principles that might help us to theorize more carefully what the professional development of teachers involves and how it should be conducted. We also wanted to problematize those experiences, in part by listening to and including the voices of those who are often treated as the objects of our efforts rather than as participating subjects.

A second and perhaps more pervasive impetus came from our awareness of a slow shift in our institutions toward increased attention to teaching. Historically, recurring campaigns for improved public literacy have launched projects to improve teaching. In the last twenty years, those campaigns have come to include calls for the improvement of teaching at the college level, due in part to Ernest Boyer's work. Publication of his book *Scholarship Reconsidered: The Priorities of the Professoriate* in 1990 and the 1998 Carnegie Foundation *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities*, commonly called the Boyer Report in honor of Boyer, who died shortly after convening the commission that eventually generated it, have increasingly influenced postsecondary institutions to professionalize the teaching practices of their faculties.

All of these engagements with professional development raise questions for us. Some of them are theoretical: How are questions of institutional mandates and faculty autonomy negotiated to support or constrain the intellectual pursuit of knowledge through teaching? How does the rhetoric of professional development structure the relationships between administrators and teachers? How do we draw together our disparate and local knowledges about the development of teaching faculty to produce a theory of professional development that offers a strong description of reality, a fair prediction of outcomes, and an ethical perspective?

Others of our questions are methodological: What makes professional development efficacious? What kinds of faculty development programs can be sustained? How can we assess the effectiveness of professional development efforts? What role do second-tier and contingent faculty play in the delivery of professional programs?

Still other questions are institutional: How do we motivate faculty who are materially rewarded for publication to engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning? How do we motivate faculty who are neither required to nor rewarded for performing research to engage in the scholarship of the field? How do we avoid letting our bids for professional development evolve into administrative surveillance of our teaching faculty?

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This publication begins to answer some of those questions and to lay out lines of inquiry that deserve to be pursued.

We have altered the usual format of this journal to better match our purposes. We found that our work did not fit well into categories of articles and classroom practices because all are to some extent theoretical, while simultaneously drawing on our practices. We have instead arranged the essays in two parts: Local Initiatives and Institutional Initiatives. Margaret Marshall's essay on teaching circles opens this first section and addresses some of our questions about the roles that second-tier or adjunct faculty play in professional development activities.[2] Marshall's critical reflection on her initiation into and engagement with Teaching Circles provides a theoretical perspective for fostering professional development. Her essay models the dialogic nature of this kind of professional development that allows the voices of other participants in the circles to comment on her own account of it. That dialogue also makes visible the tension between efforts to treat all participants as equal and the recognition of the value of expertise that arises from sustained engagement in the scholarship of the field. Margaret Willard-Traub provides a different perspective on the role adjunct and contingent faculty play in professional development. She provides a critical description of the possibilities professional development offers for creating a community of learners as well as a reflection on the institutional structures that constrain such an effort. Beth Daniell, Laura Davis, Linda Stewart, and Ellen Taber's collaborative essay brings perspectives from four faculty members, each from a different faculty category. The essay begins by asking what faculty development would look like if the underlying assumption isn't that the teachers are the problem. The essay reviews and critiques the development of in-house conferences as a model of professional development, providing readers with a method for structuring one of their own while simultaneously addressing questions of sustainability.

In "Rhetoricians, Facilitators, Models: Interviews with Technology Trainers," Michelle Sidler proposes that sometimes the best professional development of teaching occurs as the result of activities focused on something else. Drawing on her own experience as a technology trainer in the humanities, as well as the experiences of other technology trainers in a variety of institutional positions, Sidler argues that technology training is a complex rhetorical activity involving a strong sense of *kairos*, context, and audience. Her essay emphasizes the necessity of attention to context for the success of professional development efforts, as several other contributors note, just one of the points of intersection emerging from this collection.

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The second section inquires into three institutional structures for professional development. Dana Kinzy and Deborah Minter explore the dynamics that underpin teacher development efforts, particularly as they are increasingly initiated and conducted by persons from outside postsecondary teaching. They argue for a deeply contextualized form of professional development that accounts for differences in communal values and commitments and that provides for teacher agency in institutional change. In "Interdisciplinary Work as Professional Development: Changing the Culture of Teaching," Joan Mullin draws on the work of Krista Ratcliffe, David Bartholmae, and Mikhail Bakhtin to propose a model of professional development that works from the inside out — from inside disciplines, from inside classrooms, and from inside personal assumptions and value systems. Such a model, she suggests, will allow us to redefine the terms that presently constrain our possibilities. My own essay begins with a reflection on the effects of the two key Carnegie Foundation reports mentioned earlier, *Scholarship Reconsidered* and the Boyer Report. Noting that the two have prompted significant scholarship on teaching and learning, as well as the establishment of centers for teaching and learning, I argue that the revolution the reports sought to incite has, in many ways, failed to materialize. I turn to a seminal entry in rhetorical scholarship, Lloyd Bitzer's "The Rhetorical Situation," to make sense of the failure and propose that the real key lies in the fact that many faculty simply do not believe that the exigence cited by the reports — teachers are not teaching well — is real, which is why it does not work to motivate change. Understanding this, I propose, calls us to consider the real exigence for a transformation of teaching — a dramatically altered terrain of learning — and to develop ways to make that visible to faculty.

We have also shaped the reviews differently than in most issues of *Pedagogy* in order to bring to readers a compilation and evaluation of a number of works worth the attention of anyone contemplating offering or participating in activities meant to contribute to our development as teachers.

Linda Bergmann examines three books that focus on theories and practices developed in and for writing centers, but she proposes that they offer perspectives, theories, and strategic practices that can be extended to other arenas. Most importantly, she argues, all three envision professional development as "collaborative processes of education and reflection, not as episodes of training or developing skills . . . [and] suggest models for faculty development that would encourage faculty to rethink their practices, not just conform to changing laws, rules, and pet projects of administrators with the authority to impose them."

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Tiane Donahue's essay turns outward, providing an international perspective on faculty development. The three edited collections she reviews consider how institutes of higher education increasingly operate as international businesses and how market-force interests and ideologies shape intellectual exchange and collaboration. Donahue's review traces the connections between the three works, disclosing intersections and divergences often overlooked when we work from disciplinary and national perspectives. She suggests that, taken together, the three collections offer "the kinds of knowledge and contexts we need in order to maintain a meta-perspective and not become complicit in uncritical expansion of faculty activity."

The final entry in this special issue is aptly titled "Faculty Development in English Studies: An Overview of Resources and A Suggested Sequence." This ambitious entry is sui generis — neither review, nor essay, nor compendium, but a little of all three. Glenn Blalock provides, as his title suggests, an overview of more than thirty books, journal articles, and Web sites that he has arranged in three topic areas: Learning about Learning and about Teaching for Significant Learning; Using, Valuing, and Producing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning; Creating and Maintaining Departmental Communities of Knowledge and Practice. Blalock provides readers following his sequence a critical course in faculty development. His work on locating, critically evaluating, and arranging these materials has prompted him to initiate an interactive Web site that readers of this journal are invited to use and expand.

The first entries on that Web site are two essays that reflect on personal experiences that illuminate professional development activities from two different insider perspectives. Lynne Rhodes tells the tale of initiating and sustaining a junior portfolio program writing assessment at her institution, a project that has grown to include cross-campus collaborations that operate as a form of powerful professional development outside of formal development structures. Suzanne Smith, alternately, reflects on twenty years of being the object of professional development, providing a perspective often missing from our professional development activities and ultimately making a persuasive case for the inclusion of marginalized faculty in the planning and execution of professional development projects.

Had we published this special issue before I was invited to lunch, and had my president already read it, the promise of that lunch might have been realized. It was invitational. It began with the assumption that we were already great teachers. The president was poised to listen. As these essays show, those attributes are critical components of the kind of professional

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development that actually change things. But these essays also clarify why some of our sincerest efforts fail. Professional development effort has to do more than preach to the choir; it has to reach faculty members who are not persuaded that they have anything to learn about teaching. The kind of change that significant learning requires must be sustained through ongoing involvement with a community; two lunches and you are out fails to create a sustainable community. If institutional leaders are serious about change, they have to do more than buy lunch and listen to what we say; they must enter into the dialogue and change themselves in response to it.

These essays argue that the professional development of teaching should be context-sensitive, disciplinarily specific, dialogic and collaborative, bottom-up rather than imposed from the top down, sustained in a community that has institutional support, and focused on learning rather than instruction. The ethical perspective we were seeking arises from the invitation that is issued rather than imposed and from the dialogue that respects and values all participants.

We could not answer all of the questions we raised, and our attempt to do so frequently just raised more questions. How should we negotiate between expertise and egalitarian collaboration? What are our ethical obligations toward our profession when our institutions resist or simply benignly neglect the kinds of professional development we desire? Is the offer of psychic rewards often implied by our invitations to teacher development workshops ethical? We hope this special issue raises questions for you as well and that your pursuit of answers will sustain the dialogue we carried on here.

Notes

1. The adage is variously represented by the acronym TANSTAAFL, "There ain't no such thing as a free lunch," or by TINSTAAFL, "There is no such thing as a free lunch." It refers to the economic argument that anything that appears free actually carries a hidden cost.
2. The term *adjunct* refers to a variety of job types — faculty who teach part-time with no benefits, faculty on a regular but reduced schedule, and non-tenure-track, full-time faculty. We use the term *second-tier* to designate the rank of this latter group. At the University of Toledo, those faculty members are called "lecturers." They have full-time continuing contracts with health care and retirement benefits, but not the benefits of full governance or research support that tenure-stream faculty have.

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